Development of the Movement to Boycott the 10th Far Eastern Championship Games (FECG) in Japan*

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The purposes of this study were to focus on the campaign against participation in the 10th Far Eastern Championship Games (FECG) in Japan and examine the historical meaning thereof. The FECG was canceled because of the conflict between Japan and China over the “Manchukuo” problem in 1934. The Japan Amateur Athletic Association (JAAA) negotiated with China and the Philippines regarding the problem, but China did not recognize it. Consequently, Manchukuo was unable to participate in the 10th FECG. At that time, those involved in Manchukuo and a right-wing political party criticized and protested against the JAAA, demanding that the Japanese national team not participate in the games. However, the JAAA declared that the team would participate. Those involved in Manchukuo and the right-wing political party attacked the Japanese national team to prevent their participation in the games. Manchukuo, founded as a result of the Manchurian Incident, was supported by many Japanese citizens, and its impact spread to sports. The present study clarifies the tension between politics and sport resulting from Japan’s enthusiastic support for Manchukuo.

Keywords: Manchukuo, the world of Asian sports, sports and politics, the Japanese national team

1. Introduction

The first Far Eastern Championship Games (FECG) was held in February 1913, and with the 10th games in May 1934, a nearly 20-year history ended. The cause of this situation was an intractable conflict between the Japan Amateur Athletic Association (JAAA) and China National Amateur Athletic Federation (CNAAF)1 over the participation of “Manchukuo.”

The Manchurian Incident of 1931, which began with an explosion near a railway line on the South Manchuria Railway in the vicinity of Liutaiohu in northeastern China, created the puppet state of Manchukuo. The state’s creation was endorsed by the majority of Japanese citizens. Blocking international negative criticism, Japan chose to leave the League of Nations, intensifying its isolation from the international community. This affected the FECG, in which Japan, the Philippines, and China were the principal participating members.

After the 10th and final FECG, the Japan Amateur Athletic Federation (JAAF) asked officials and athletes to record their impressions of participating in the games. These were compiled and published in Manila Enseiki (Report on the Manila Expedition) in August 1934. Masao Ichihara ran the 400 m hurdles, winning third place after closely losing to a Filipino athlete. Reflecting on his own struggle in his essay, he notes the reason for his defeat as the difference in real ability between himself and the Filipino athlete who won: “After this, I will train hard, fight hard, and be committed to cultivating my real ability. In due time I will defeat them, and I have to prepare for the coming Berlin games” (Ichihara, 1934). He uses this defeat as sustenance, pledging to work even harder in preparation for the Berlin Olympics two years later in 1936. However, his thoughts on the topic do not end there.

Be that as it may, I remember the various incidents that occurred at the time of departure involving participating. Did we not push through even while branded as unpatriotic traitors? Today, on my way back to my country on board the Heiyomaru, I have...
now changed these things into good memories of the past. How joyful we are to be heading back to the fatherland with the grand gift of having solved the problem of Manchukuo’s participation in the FECG. Now, who was it who truly loves our country, who is concerned about our country? (Ichihara, 1934)

Ichihara was selected to represent Japan in the regional international games, in which national athletes from Japan, the Philippines, and China gathered in one place. However, he was “branded” as “unpatriotic, a traitor” when he departed Japan. Of the 42 national athletes whose essays were published, 15 mentioned the “various incidents” Ichihara mentions surrounding participation in the games. Some also reported being disparaged as “unpatriotic.” In addition to the track and field athletes, national athletes competing in other matches and events chronicled their impressions of the games and mentioned these various incidents, which refer to the movement to boycott the 10th FECG because of the problem of Manchukuo’s participation therein (below, “the boycott movement”).

Until now, studies focused on the problem of Manchukuo’s participation in the FECG, which can be summarized as follows. Japan promoted the participation of Manchukuo, while China opposed it. Furthermore, the country was backed by a movement against Manchukuo participation in China. As such, the two nations were in conflict. Furthermore, this entangled the Philippines, which was hosting the 10th FECG, and the IOC, which had licensed the FECG as an athletic meeting, throwing “sports in the Far East” into turmoil. The FECG was dissolved, and sports in the Far East reorganized with Japan at the center (ABE, 2003; Goodman, 2011; Iike, 1989; Ka, 1999; Ko, 2008; Takashima, 2008, 2010b, 2012). The problem of Manchukuo’s participation in the FECG indicates that the political climate in the Far East was reflected in international sports and materialized as a shifting era for sports in the region. Each constituent’s engagement in the problem of Manchukuo’s participation has been clarified. However, what effects were evident in Japan? One effect was the boycott movement. According to Takashima (2010b), political organizations and military circles actively engaged in the boycott movement, although others note that interest in the movement was low. However, in addition to the Ichihara citation referenced at the beginning, Shuhei Nishida, selected as a national track and field athlete, later said, “The racket about whether or not to participate in the Moscow Olympics had nothing on that uproar” (Waseda University Athletic Club, 1984). Even if Nishida had embellished his recollections, this impacted the Japanese national athletes selected for the 10th FECG. Thus, this study elucidates the boycott movement in Japan surrounding Manchukuo’s participation in this FECG, and considers the effects of the creation of Manchukuo on the sports world of Japan.

The following chief historical records were used: JAAA-related materials such as the 10th Far Eastern Championship Games Report and the Olympic (a JAAA bulletin); 12 newspapers whose possession could be confirmed from among those published in Tokyo (see works cited); Manshu Nippou and Dalian Shinbun, published in Dalian in Kwantung; and Shinkyo Nichi Nichi Shinbun, published in Shinkyo, the capital of Manchukuo.

2. Manchukuo’s participation

Previous studies including a detailed study by Takashima (2008) highlighted the problem of Manchukuo’s participation in the FECG. This section outlines the process that launched the boycott movement against the Japanese national team with reference to Takashima’s work (2008).

2.1 The process of the problem of Manchukuo’s participation in the FECG

Manchukuo’s wish to participate in the FECG was first expressed in an official form in May 1933. Organization members had to unanimously agree when a new constituent wished to participate in the Far East Games. Opposed by CNAAF, Manchukuo’s participation was rejected in September. Seeking a solution to ensure Manchukuo’s participation, the JAAA board of directors met in November. Zensaku Mogi of the Manchukuo Amateur Athletic Association (MAAA) attended the meeting, emphasizing that the Association did not want Japan to withdraw from the Far East Athletic Association over the issue and that they would be satisfied to participate on an invitational basis. Hearing this, the JAAA sought a solution that consi-
dered both official and invitational forms of participation. At the start of December, the Philippine Amateur Athletic Federation (PAAF)3 proposed a meeting between representatives from Japan, China, and the Philippines to resolve the issue; however, CNAAF announced that they would not attend the meeting, and it was cancelled (Takashima, 2008).

From late January to early February 1934, the Manshu Rikujyo Kyogi Kakushin Renmei (Manchurian Reformist League of Athletics)4 and Board for the Preparation of International Games5 were formed consecutively in Manchukuo to resolve the problem of its participation in the FECG. On February 10, JAAA received a telegram from the MAAA withdrawing Mogi’s remarks from November and stating its firm wish to participate in the FECG. On February 15, Heita Okabe of Manchukuo’s Manshu Rikujyo Kyogi Kakushin Renmei as well as Kanzo Kubota and Zensaku Mogi of the MAAA visited the JAAA, requesting support to realize Manchukuo’s FECG participation (Japan Amateur Athletic Association (JAAA) Compilation, 1934). Okabe released a statement on February 17, denouncing CNAAF’s rejection of Manchukuo’s participation as “plain contempt.” The statement also criticized the JAAA for deciding to participate regardless of the possibility of Manchukuo’s participation as “plain contempt.” The discussion, the opposing arguments of JAAA and Okabe ran parallel, and the meeting concluded that for now, both parties agreed regarding implementing Manchukuo’s FECG participation. After the discussion, JAAA sent the Inter-University Athletics Union of Japan President Tadaoki Yamamoto to China and the Philippines to resolve the problem of Manchukuo’s participation in the FECG. Around the time that Yamamoto was sent to negotiate with Shanghai and Manila, JAAA sent Toshimitsu Shibuya and Shigemaru Takekoshi to Manchukuo to explain the state of JAAA’s response to its participation in the FECG to the MAAA (Takashima, 2008).

In this way, after Okabe and others came to Japan, the problem of Manchukuo’s participation became an uproar involving various people other than sports officials. Although they agreed about the goal of letting Manchukuo participate in the FECG, the opinion of the JAAA absolutely conflicted with the one of Okabe and other regarding the solution were contradictory. The next section reviews the assertions of the JAAA.

2.2 Assertions by the Japan Amateur Athletic Association

In the April 1934 edition of Olympic, JAAA published the article “The problem of Manchukuo’s participation in the Far Eastern Championship Games” (Dalian Shinbun, February 18, 1934, evening paper). After Okabe and others visited Tokyo, a Tokyo Committee6 was formed by Manchukuo officials in the city, which began working toward implementing the state’s FECG participation in Japan. The scope of that work did not stop at JAAA officers, physical education, and sports officials. It spread to politicians, right-wing organizations, and students, and organizations holding assemblies to back Manchukuo’s participation began to emerge (Takashima, 2008). Furthermore, House of Peers member Yoshinori Futara demanded a response regarding the problem of Manchukuo’s participation from Minister of Education Ichiro Hatoyama during the Budget Committee meeting on February 26. The problem was even raised in the National Diet (Cabinet Official Gazette Bureau, 1984).

In response to the actions of Okabe and others, JAAA held a panel discussion with them and other organizations pressuring it on March 2. At the panel discussion, the opposing arguments of JAAA and Okabe ran parallel, and the meeting concluded that for now, both parties agreed regarding implementing Manchukuo’s FECG participation. After the discussion, JAAA sent the Inter-University Athletics Union of Japan President Tadaoki Yamamoto to China and the Philippines to resolve the problem of Manchukuo’s participation in the FECG. Around the time that Yamamoto was sent to negotiate with Shanghai and Manila, JAAA sent Toshimitsu Shibuya and Shigemaru Takekoshi to Manchukuo to explain the state of JAAA’s response to its participation in the FECG to the MAAA (Takashima, 2008).
chukuo were not recognized they should withdraw, just as at the time of the League of Nations, they stated that countries other than Japan had objected. With the FECG, they considered that PAAF approved of Japan and that conditions were advantageous. In addition, because there was "sufficient hope for a solution" at the periodic general meeting held during the 10th games, it would not have been good to "withdraw in anger." Furthermore, the 10th games were to be held in Manila, and as "the Philippines is using one whole small island and devoting enormous sums of money to preparations," deciding not to participate because Manchukuo was not recognized would "turn the 10th athletic meeting into something without substance." This would not be the best option from the perspective "of international good faith." Finally, regarding the "Emperor Cup" bestowed on the nation that won the overall FECG by Emperor Taisho, they stated that "in any case, in the background of the decision that we should appear at the 10th athletic meeting was the largest reason, which was the fear that this might in some small way implicate the Emperor Cup." Therefore, they refused to not participate in the 10th games.

Regarding sports diplomacy, JAAA had "the power to integrate mutual feelings between citizens, but its power to purge evil or punish dishonesty is hardly worthy of mention." Furthermore, "sports and exercise are extremely inappropriate for invoking movements that divide and alienate citizens and races from one another." Consequently, they noted that "to get to the heart of it, we wonder if this might be the most inappropriate use of sports," highlighting that those criticizing JAAA were seeking to resolve the problem of Manchukuo's participation politically. Thus, what did JAAA consider sports' contribution to national policy? This was "to hammer the peoples of Asia into one, as the leader of East Asia," and therefore, they needed to "reconstruct this in a difficult situation, whether or not China strongly opposes, and absolutely without ostracizing and vilifying China." They insisted that "sports should be invoked for this purposeful, major national policy."

Under this assertion, JAAA advanced solutions for the problem of Manchukuo's participation in the FECG and preparations for participating in the 10th games. JAAA insisted that sports enriched mutual understanding, and should not widen the gap between people. To JAAA, while China was a difficult negotiating partner that opposed Manchukuo's participation, they were not to be "ostracized and vilified." The problem of Manchukuo's participation in the FECG was limited to Japan and China. Depending on the results, the effects could extend to the Philippines as the host of the 10th games and to their relationship with the IOC, which had authorized the FECG as a sporting event. JAAA thought this problem would not be solved through immediate withdrawal, and attempted to respond to the criticism from Okabe and others from the perspective of foreign affairs, domestic affairs, and the utility inherent in sports. Therefore, with what criticism did Okabe and the others respond to these reasons? The next section reviews the opinions of Heita Okabe, the vanguard of the opposition against JAAA.

2.3 Assertions by Heita Okabe

Key to understanding Okabe's assertions about Manchukuo's participation in the 10th games is in the editorial, "The Truth About the Manchukuo FECG Participation Alliance." This was published from March 13-15 in Manshu Nippou at around the same time as JAAA's official opinion, as mentioned in the previous section.

Okabe asserted that Manchukuo was an independent state and that there was no justifiable basis for refusing its participation in either the Olympics or the FECG. If colonies like the Philippines and India received services in the sports world as a "nation (state)," why was it possible to refuse Manchukuo's participation, even though it was an independent state? From here, Okabe's argument asserting the legitimacy of Manchukuo's participation turned to criticizing the JAAA. Why did the JAAA not support Manchukuo, despite that "Manchukuo's assertion is correct in the sports world"? He repudiated JAAA's policy, questioning their participation in the 10th games regardless of Manchukuo's participation or lack thereof. He added that JAAA's contentions to Okabe until then "had weak grounds for argument," and "by no means make us agree." JAAA made the following three assertions to Okabe.

First, in good balance with the Olympics, JAAA was concerned that "Japan would eventually [have to] withdraw from the worldwide Olympics if it fol-
allowed Manchukuo’s assertions to their logical conclusion.” To this, Okabe responded, “I can unhesitatingly reply ‘of course.’” If Manchukuo’s participation was not recognized, Okabe wished for actions that would keep Manchukuo and Japan in a similar situation to the end, “whether it is the Olympics or Davis Cup, going as far as to withdraw graciously and look ahead at the image of a solemn and isolated Japan.” However, because a different number of countries participated in the Olympics and FECC, the time needed to find a solution would differ. He demonstrated awareness that this matter was a different case and not directly connected.

The second was that JAAA considered trying to resolve Manchukuo’s participation at the Far East Association general meeting held during the 10th games. Regarding this, Tadaoki Yamamoto was being dispatched to the Republic of China and the Philippines to negotiate, and although he refrained from references because solutions were being sought and advanced simultaneously, he stated, “the FECC constitution should not be amended using the methods considered by JAAA’s directors.” This refers to the amendment of the FECC’s rules (constitution), which stipulate that to officially participate in the FECC, all participating nations must unanimously agree. However, amendments to the rules can be made with a two-thirds affirmative vote by participating nations. JAAA had been making a last-ditch effort to change the official participation terms by amending the rules.9

Finally, the third point was the “issue of the Emperor Cup.” Okabe thought it natural that if another country had the Emperor Cup, “Japanese athletes would always find some reason to rush out and retrieve it.” However, the overall winner of the 9th games was Japan; thus, the Emperor Cup was in the country’s possession. The Emperor Cup was “bestowed to the FECC based on the peace of the people of the Far East when the games were conducted as a symbol of lasting peace.” He added that “when the peace of the FECC is being thrown into disarray, there is room to question whether to give the Emperor Cup and appear at the games at all.” Furthermore, the Emperor Cup would not underlie the reason for Japan’s participation in the 10th games.

Having criticized these three points, Okabe highlighted that the “freedom” inherent in sports is “relative.” In other words, “freedom” appears only when there is mutual, shared understanding, and now, “freedom” was being “violated” by CNAAF’s refusal of Manchukuo’s participation. He asked JAAA officials and athletes, “is it not the duty of athletes to stand at the front and fight this injustice?” If colonies were able to participate in international sporting events, why should the independent state of Manchukuo not be allowed to do so? To the people of that time, Okabe’s assertions about Manchukuo’s participation were clear-cut, and stemmed from a persuasive line of inquiry. Finally, he scathingly criticized that the JAAA’s “unique methods as a sports organization (JAAA, 1934)” did not apply to CNAAF.10

2.4 Impossibility of Manchukuo’s participation in the 10th games and Japan’s announcement to participate

Having departed on March 8, Tadaoki Yamamoto had a conference with CNAAF’s Wang Zhengting on March 12. However, unable to discuss the problem of Manchukuo’s participation with Wang, the meeting ended on a low note. Next, Yamamoto headed to the Philippines, attended PAAF’s special meeting on March 22, and advocated for Manchukuo’s participation in the 10th games. Consequently, it was decided at that meeting that a special conference would be held to debate the participation problem. Yamamoto was optimistic that Manchukuo’s participation would be approved (Takashima, 2008).

However, at the special conference in Shanghai on April 9 and 10, PAAF claimed it would not be possible to approve Manchukuo’s participation if it was not recognized according to the current FECC constitution. According to the PAAF’s opinion, it would be impossible to approve Manchukuo’s participation without unanimous approval by the delegates of the three countries at the special conference. Yamamoto insisted on Manchukuo’s participation by comparing it to British India’s participation in the 9th games, but CNAAF objected, and regarding PAAF’s assertion, this was not a persuasive comment. Thus, with one month remaining until the games, the plan to ensure Manchukuo’s participation in the 10th FECC was rendered impossible (Takashima, 2008).

At the JAAA board of directors’ meeting held after the failed negotiations for Manchukuo’s partici-
pation at the special conference, they were “pushing toward Japan’s immediate non-participation” (JAAA compilation, 1934). Attendee Takahi Gou said, “In the present condition, the mood of today’s directors’ meeting was dominated by the idea that non-participation would be inevitable (Tokyo Nichi Nichi Shinbun, April 12, 1934).” As such, Japan’s non-participation in the 10th games had become a considerably real option. However, directors’ meeting attendee Yotaro Sugimura remarked that “it would not be proper to make hasty decisions from the viewpoint of Japan’s current international standpoint.” This led to the decision to send a telegram to the Philippines urging them to reconsider (Editorial Department, 1934). The telegram was also sent to Yamamoto, but it emerged that there had been a misunderstanding between him and JAAA about his “agreement” with PAAF (Takashima, 2008). JAAA sent another telegram to avert a misunderstanding with PAAF, which responded at around 3 pm on April 14. The telegram stated that they sought a legitimate solution to the problem of Manchukuo’s participation in the FECG for JAAA in accordance with the FECG rules, and that if JAAA sought a solution, “the Philippines would carefully consider this with the utmost amicable spirit and sufficient sportsmanship.” For JAAA, the content of the telegram was sufficient to be considered a vow “to cooperate with the utmost amicable spirit” (JAAA Compilation, 1934). At the general meeting at 6:30 pm on April 14, immediately after the response was received, JAAA decided to participate in the 10th games, and sent a reply telegram to PAAF. Furthermore, a JAAA statement in the form of a conversation with JAAA Vice President Ryozo Hiranuma and a statement to Manchukuo were issued (Hensyubu, 1934). Immediately following the special conference, a tendency toward non-participation in the FECG emerged, but through Sugimura’s proposal and dealings with Yamamoto and PAAF, JAAA decided to go ahead as planned.

Having received news that Manchukuo would not be able to participate in the 10th games, the Tokyo Committee to which Okabe belonged approached JAAA on April 12 to hold a joint meeting with the association and MAAA. However, it was notified by JAAA about its participation in the 10th games on April 15 (Manchukuo Government Compilation, 1969). Okabe responded, “This is truly unthoughtable, a disgraceful model of diplomacy,” criticizing JAAA for prioritizing its relationships with China and the Philippines over Manchukuo. “We already have no choice but to sever relations with JAAA and fight on the whole” (Manshu Nippou, April 16, 1934, evening paper). Furthermore, Manchuria Athletic Association (MAA) Director Hayashida stated that “if Manchukuo’s participation is not possible, I think we should like to have Japanese athletes refrain from participating,” demonstrating an awareness that it would be difficult to accept JAAA’s participation (Manshu Nippou, April 16, 1934, evening paper). Finally, the Tokyo Committee announced that it was severing relations with JAAA.

After this, JAAA planned a panel discussion for April 17, which was cancelled because of the lack of attendance by Manchukuo sports officials (JAAA compilation, 1934). The same day, Okabe released an “Announcement for Japanese Athletes” “appealing to their hearts.” Okabe argued that “this meeting violated the spirit of sports and righteousness of the FECG [author’s note: the special conference],” “now the great cause of the 10th FECG has been ruined, and its justification has run into the ground.” “How many years and months,” “how much national investment,” and “the precious sacrifices of 125,000 spirits of the war dead,” “when you think of the national policy of the Empire of Japan that staked its nation’s destiny on the founding of this country, do you not remember the pulsing of blood in your young veins as a member of the Yamato race?” In this way the problem of Manchukuo will be expanded into a boycott movement.

2.5 Newspaper editorials

Before discussing the development of the boycott movement, I review the editorials of each newspaper. When Manchukuo’s participation was rendered impossible, the newspapers focused on JAAA’s next move: Would they participate in a FECG that Manchukuo could not, or cancel their attendance? Immediately after the special conference ended, newspapers reported that perhaps Japan would not participate in the FECG. Tokyo Nichi Nichi Shinbun, Miyako Shinbun, Yorozu Chohou, and Manshu Nippou opposed Japan’s participation immediately following the special confer-
ence. Although opposition was strong, *Jiji Shinpou* lamented Japan’s non-participation, stating, “This gloomy political hostility will be a regrettable incident that will disgrace what should be a cheerful sports world” (*Jiji Shinpou*, April 12, 1934). However, as mentioned, JAAA declared it would participate in the FECG. Having been notified about JAAA’s decision to participate, *Tokyo Nichi Nichi Shinbun, Manshu Nippou*, and *Niroku Shinpou* criticized JAAA’s lack of understanding of the problem of Manchukuo’s participation, attacking the disgrace of making Manchukuo lose face.13 Similar to Okabe’s contentions, the opinions in these three newspapers contended that Japan did not need to participate in a tournament in which Manchukuo could not. On the other hand, the three newspapers *Yamato Shinbun, Miyako Shinbun*, and *Tokyo Asahi Shinbun* agreed with JAAA’s decision. *Yamato Shinbun* reported that “from the standpoint of a leader” in the Orient, Japan “had many issues it needed to teach” other participating countries, and as such, “although Manchukuo’s non-participation is regrettable, this makes Japan’s participation more meaningful” (*Yamato Shinbun*, April 20, 1934, evening paper). *Miyako Shinbun* and *Tokyo Asahi Shinbun* anticipated that the issue would be resolved at the general meeting during the 10th games, supporting JAAA. According to the *Tokyo Asahi Shinbun*, if the issue were not resolved at the 10th games, it would be inevitable to cancel the FECG:

“If Japan’s current attitude of generosity and zeal for correcting the development of sports, leading up to sending a great number of athletes to the Philippines while enduring great difficulties, is not reflected somehow in this general meeting, and if it ends as before, with the reality of Manchukuo’s solemn independence ignored, the FECG will ultimately remain in name only. There will be no reason to discuss participation or non-participation, as the existence of the games will have no value (*Tokyo Asahi Shinbun*, April 29, 1934).”

The views in each newspaper were divided between agreeing with and opposing participation. However, even among those that agreed with Japan’s participation, this agreement was only for the 10th games. All the newspapers were unified on resolving the problem of Manchukuo’s participation and allowing it to appear on the international sports stage. Since the Manchurian Incident, Japanese newspapers reported on all things concerning Manchukuo under the support of military circles.14 Regarding newspapers published in Tokyo, as far as I know, all newspaper companies reported to some extent on the problem of Manchukuo’s participation in the FECG. In this period, when 10 million copies were printed throughout Japan (Kato, 2011), the problem of Manchukuo’s participation was communicated to the public, drawing attention and support for the cause.

### 3. Development of the boycott movement

JAAA’s declaration of participation in the 10th games was criticized by Okabe and others. Newspapers published editorials, and the issue received much domestic attention. Following this, criticism of JAAA emerged from various organizations and military personnel in Japan, as well as universities to which the Japanese team belonged, fueling the boycott movement.

#### 3.1 The boycott movement begins

Various organizations and military circles voiced their dissent. Organizations’ actions first emerged on April 17, when an introductory meeting was held for track and field teams that would participate in the 10th games. However, uninvited student groups converged on this meeting to demonstrate their opposition to participation (Kiyoshi Kitazawa Recollection Record Committee, 1982). Furthermore, track and field team coach Yoshio Okita was surrounded by right-wingers while out shopping with athletes, who told them not to participate (Mokutai, 1988). Table 1 shows declarations opposing participation in the 10th games, and near-daily withdrawals after players and officials were visited and urged to oppose participation.

In military circles, a resolution was made to oppose Japanese athletes’ participation at Toyama Army School on April 21 (*Yomiuri Shinbun*, April 22, 1934), when at the Imperial Palace, Emperor Showa, who had demonstrated concerns about young commissioned officers participating in the Manchukuo problem, ordered Chief aide-de-camp Shigeru Honjo to investigate. He later reported that young commissioned officers took little part in the
3.2 Japanese national athletes withdraw from participation

After Nishida announced his withdrawal from the national team, non-participation resolutions successively emerged: Meiji University Athletic Association (Tokyo Asahi Shinbun, April 25, 1934), Bunri University Volunteers, Keio University Track Division (Nihon, April 26, 1934), Takushoku University Student Tournament (JACAR, B04012508700), Ritsumeikan University (Yomiuri Shinbun, April 27, 1934), Kansai University Student Meeting (Tokyo Nichi Nichi Shinbun, April 27, 1934), and Waseda University Track Division (Dalian Shinbun, April 28, 1934, evening paper).

At Meiji University, Eikichi Nagamatsu, who had been selected as a boxing athlete, “leaked his intention to resign.” By informing his seniors, a non-participation resolution for athletes belonging to Meiji University was made at a combination conference for Meiji University Athletic Association leaders and officials on April 24 (Tokyo Asahi Shinbun, April 25, 1934). Upon hearing this news, Meiji University alumnus and Japan team coach Ichiro Kaga stated, “We were selected from track and field associations to represent Japan, and not selected from Meiji University,” showing non-compliance with the non-participation resolution. On the morning of April 25, two representatives from the Meiji University Athletic Association went from Tokyo to visit the boarding house and held a discussion with athletes selected from Meiji University and officials (Tokyo Asahi Shinbun, April 26, 1934, evening paper). That night, Kaga and swim team official Yutaka Nakamura left the boarding house for Tokyo, met with Meiji University officials on April 26, and agreed to “leave the issue at the players’ discretion” (Tokyo Asahi Shinbun, April 27, 1934).

With this, it was thought that the issue of Meiji University athlete participation was resolved; however, on the day Kaga and Nakamura went to Tokyo, Hideo Yabe of the sumo division and Saburo Hayama of the judo division visited the boarding house, demanding to meet with the athletes. Yabe argued that if the athletes did not withdraw, “if by some chance you say that you will participate regardless, we have full authorization from the Athletic Association,” implying the tough measure of “expulsion” (Tokyo Asahi Shinbun, April 27, 1934). A meeting was held the next day on April 27 at around 9:50
am. Yabe and Hayama pressed for the athletes to withdraw, although some fought to participate, and the discussion ended in a stalemate. Near 11:00 am, with no solutions found, their bid to get the athletes to withdraw ended in failure (Tokyo Asahi Shinbun, April 28, 1934). Unable to make them return to Tokyo, Yabe and Hayama expelled the five Meiji University athletes at the Athletic Association general meeting on April 28 (Tokyo Nichi Nichi Shinbun, April 28, 1934). This was confirmed at the Athletic Association emergency full committee meeting on April 30 (Tokyo Asahi Shinbun, May 1, 1934). The expelled athletes submitted their notices to leave the club on the night of April 28, and without obeying their university’s Athletic Association resolution, chose to participate in the 10th games, determined to “leave the club” (Tokyo Nichi Nichi Shinbun, April 29, 1934). Meiji University was not the only place to try to obstruct participation in the 10th games by expelling athletes. The Waseda University Track Division approved of athletes leaving the club if they had rejected the recommendation to not participate on April 29, and withdrew from the Nippon Intercollegiate Athletic Union (NIAU) (Tokyo Asahi Shinbun, April 30, 1934). Each university’s athletic association, track division, or student meeting resolved to not participate; however, the Tokyo Imperial University Athletics Union (NIAU) (Tokyo Asahi Shinbun, April 28, 1934), Chuo University Track Division (Yomiuri Shinbun, April 26, 1934), and Maru, Nihon University Track Division Coach (Yorozu Chohou, April 28, 1934), supported participation in the 10th games, encouraging their athletes.

Amidst this, boarding house attacks took place. The Koshien Sportsman Hotel, which was the boarding house for the Japanese national team athletes, was attacked in two instances on April 25 (Yorozu Chohou, April 28, 1934). Utohisa Osaki, a student who had been selected as a swimming athlete, recollected the following.

At around 8:00 pm, amid loud sounds of running in the halls and angry shouts of “Traitors! Wake up!” and “Stop this tomfoolery! What are you doing, idiots?!” I heard whacking sounds. ... The next instant, my body had flown out the window and onto the roof. ... I could clearly make out the sight of Hamuro defending himself from two people beating him with green bamboo, but we could not do anything about it (Osaki, 1991).

Among the athletes, some “fought back with bamboo used for pole vaulting or javelins” (Yoshio Okita Recollection Publication Committee, 1968), but the boarding house temporarily fell into confusion because of the ruffians’ attack. The boycott movement had finally caused direct harm by force.

With the non-participation resolutions of affiliated universities and violence, eight people aside from Nishida eventually withdrew. Of these, track and field athlete Chuhei Nanbu had an injured right leg (Tokyo Nichi Nichi Shinbun, April 29, 1934), and baseball player Saburou Miyatake withdrew because of his wife’s poor health (Tokyo Nichi Nichi Shinbun, April 28, 1934). These incidents were not due to the influence of the boycott movement. However, the remaining six athletes were influenced by the boycott movement. In track and field, Shoichiro Takenaka announced his withdrawal in accordance with the resolution of Keio University Track Division (Nihon, April 28, 1934); Shizuo Takada withdrew because of his family’s opposition (Chuo Shinbun, April 28, 1934, evening paper); Zensuke Tatenaka because of circumstances at his workplace (Yomiuri Shinbun, April 27, 1934); Kichizou Sasaki because the Aichi Prefecture Athletic Association did not permit him to participate (Chugai Syogyo Sinpou, April 26, 1934); and Kazuyoshi Okada, employed as a teacher in Saitama, had to withdraw because the Kanto Government Office ordered him to move to a new job at Houten Heian School (Yomiuri Shinbun [Saitama Edition], April 20, 1934). In boxing, Nagamatsu, who had provoked the Meiji University expulsion controversy, withdrew, because “thinking about Manchuria, I do not have the heart to participate” (Chuo Shinbun, April 25, 1934). In addition, Masao Ichihara was ordered to return to his alma mater of Ritsumeikan University (Yomiuri Shinbun, April 27, 1934); Mutsuo Taniguchi announced temporary withdrawal because of circumstances at Sumitomo Bank, his employer (Yomiuri Shinbun, April 27, 1934); and Hiroshi Uchida would have violated the law if he participated, as he was an elementary school teacher (Yomiuri Shinbun [Saitama Edition], April 19, 1934). As such, they each had their own misgivings about participating.
3.3 An open letter and a rebuttal

On April 21, Tetsutaro Kobayashi attended a meeting between JAAA and the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, delivering a letter of close questioning called an “open letter.” Although this open letter was under Tetsutaro Kobayashi’s name, it was summarized from “resolutions of sympathizers from each organization,” and was similar to a collective opinion of each organization conducting the so-called boycott movement in Japan (JAAA Compilation, 1934).

The “open letter” demanded that only officials, and no athletes, be sent to the 10th games. It explained this in three parts: national diplomacy, the long-range plan for the Asian century, and duty of the path of sports. For national diplomacy, the letter notes that Japan’s sole participation would destroy relations between Japan and Manchukuo, and that Japanese athletes’ participation would “show no concern among Japanese citizens” regarding Manchukuo. Backed by a Lytton inquiry commission report, this contended that it would not do for Japanese athletes to participate independently. Regarding the long-range plan for the Asian century, China’s opposition to Manchukuo’s participation in the FECG despite that the nations of Asia must first band together and oppose the West would destroy the “great Asian unity.” The letter argued that because Japan, as the leader of Asia, must urge China to reconsider and seek cooperation from other countries to resolve this issue, Japan must send officials to resolve the Manchukuo problem, even if it did not send athletes. Finally, in the section about the duty of the path of sports, Kobayashi questions the meaning of participating in sports as a “sportsman” as not someone who competes based on skill alone.

Running fast, jumping high, swimming well, throwing far. In a competition of these things alone, notwithstanding any kind of athlete, it would amount to a “thoroughbred,” amount to a bird, amount to a fish, amount to the natives of New Guinea.

Why bother spending public funds to have athletes participate in a tournament? If the supreme challenge of participating in an international sporting event is not merely to win, the significance is turning out great numbers of “youths overflowing with the spirit of the nation,” which is a point of pride. However, this current decision to have Japan participate alone ignores this meaning, and the letter contends that “neglecting to stand by the athletes of Manchukuo, the land where our ancestors shed their blood, and compete to the end of a match for personal gain is like athletes ... losing sight of the true duty of this sports path.”

JAAA released a rebuttal to Kobayashi’s open letter. Since announcing its participation, JAAA had not stated an official opinion, but aware that the open letter was nearly the collective opinion of each organization, it took this opportunity to highlight its opinion (JAAA Compilation, 1934). JAAA responded that the participation of the Japanese national team in the 10th games would “assertively guide Manchukuo to the international arena” (Hiranuma, 1934).

Regarding national diplomacy, the participation of the Japanese team would not destroy relations between Japan and Manchukuo; rather, JAAA denied that this was supported by the Lytton report. Furthermore, there were rules for the FECG, and it would be impossible for Japan to push past them for its own convenience. In addition, because the causes of the problem of Manchukuo’s participation in the FECG were rooted in defects in the FECG rules, and since Manchukuo could participate if these rules were amended, JAAA proposed that Japan and Manchukuo work together to realize Manchukuo’s participation. Regarding the long-range plans for the Asian century, while they essentially agreed, JAAA stated that it would not be grounds for non-participation in the 10th games. Regarding the duty of the path of sports, they sympathized with the opinion, stating that “matches should not only train the body, but also train the mind, on this point, we agree with your opinion.” As JAAA was working hard to realize Manchukuo’s participation in the FECG, they criticized as irrelevant the assessment of “neglecting to stand by the athletes of Manchukuo, the land where our ancestors shed their blood, and compete to the end of a match for personal gain.”

JAAA released its declaration on April 24. To participate in the FECG was “to carry out old public commitments to the amicable countries of East Asia and act in good faith.” They added that they must wait for the general meeting in Manila to resolve the problem of Manchukuo’s participation, because “the final decision would originate in con-
stitutional interpretation.’’ JAAA’s standpoint on the Manchukuo problem was consistent from start to finish, with the exception of the period immediately following the special conference, when they leaned toward non-participation.

3.4 Departure of the Japanese team and dissolution of the FECG

After their boarding house was attacked twice, the Japanese national team embarked on the Heiyomaru on April 28 to await their departure one day later, escorted by around 50 mounted and plain-clothed police officers. While being escorted on their way from the boarding house to Kobe Port, “it felt bizarre to be racing non-stop along the Hanshin National Road under traffic restrictions” (Ozaki, 1991). On April 29, the leader of the 10th games Japanese team, Ryozo Hiranuma, greeted the athletes just before their departure. He encouraged them, saying, “Undaunted in the face of all kinds of violence, and unflinching in the face of persecution, we bravely surmounted all difficulties to attend the Far East Championship Games. At the annual general meeting there, we will expend all efforts to earn the consent of the Philippines, succeed in amending the constitution, and resolve Manchukuo’s participation. Overall, I expect that we will make a magnificent and triumphant return” (JAAA Compilation, 1934).

While anchored at the wharf in Kobe Port, members of the Japan Production Party distributed flyers opposing participation and held banners stating, “Banish Traitorous FECG Athletes” (Tokyo Nichi Nichi Shinbun, April 30, 1934, evening paper). Meiji University officials sought to board the ship to present their final appeals (Tokyo Asahi Shinbun, April 30, 1934, evening paper). As whispers spread among the Japanese national team about “rumors that the right wing is going to use airplanes to sink the ships” (Yoshio Okita Recollection Publication Committee, 1968, p. 103), the Heiyomaru departed Kobe for Manila. Hiroshi Ueno, a selected soccer player, recalled the following of the time of departure.

Before the time of departure, a raucous discussion focused on the rights and wrongs of participating. It reached the point of violence, and the circumstances were such that the police were protecting us when we left Tokyo and boarded the ship in Kobe.

The Japanese national team had inevitably departed in a state of high alert, and when they stopped at Shimoseki on route, some athletes avoided disembarking from the ship to ensure their safety (Shibuya, 1934). They left Japan and headed for Manila as if being chased.

With the departure of the Japanese national team, it became impossible to obstruct Japan’s participation. Regarding Japan’s solo participation, the National Advocacy Association moved to denounce the government’s responsibility in this matter. To my knowledge, this was last mentioned in an article in Dalian Shinbun on May 1. No reports followed; thus, it is impossible to verify the movement. Perhaps the boycott movement concluded, because it had been unable to obstruct Japan’s participation. After this, newspapers began reporting on whether the Manchukuo participation negotiations at the general meeting would succeed or not, alongside the prospects and results of the games.

The opening ceremony of the 10th games was held on May 12, and the FECG general meeting took place over two days from May 19 to 20. The two-day FECG general meeting focused on discussions about amending the rules surrounding Manchukuo’s participation. As the discussion climaxed, representatives from CNAAF left mid-way. After their departure, JAAA and the Philippines criticized CNAAF’s behavior. The next day, May 21, they dissolved the FECG and established a new Amateur Athletic Association of the Orient and Oriental Championship Games, which sidelined China and approved Manchukuo’s membership (JAAA Compilation, 1934).

The dissolution of the FECG was reported immediately, even in Japanese newspapers. In the Yomiuri Shinbun, JAAA’s negotiations were perceived as successful, “ending in an amicable settlement (Yomiuri Shinbun, May 22, 1934).” However, the Tokyo Nichi Nichi Shinbun editorial emphasized that even though they overcame domestic opposition to participate, they were unable to persuade China. Furthermore, in addition to Japan, China, and the Philippines, the meeting should have been attended by the Dutch East Indies and French Indochina, both of which became members in the
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10th games. The editorial criticized the meeting for not maintaining the current format (Tokyo Nichi Shinbun, May 22, 1934). With the results being criticized, the JAAA decided at the board of directors’ meeting in June that its officers would resign en masse for “causing a controversy.” However, there is no evidence that this was done, and the matter remained unsettled (Yomiuri Shinbun, June 12, 1934). The dissolution of the FECG was also criticized, but seems to have been accepted based on the approval of Manchukuo’s participation in an international tournament. Finally, we return to the athletes’ reflections. Tadao Najima, who participated in the 10,000 m race, reflected as follows.

We were so happy when we heard the good news about the success of the meeting. The people called unpatriotic finally succeeded. Now, the actions of those who properly love and care about their country have been proven. Was not the final victory in the hands of justice? Our dreams came true. We withstood everything for this result. Let us set foot in our native land of Japan, having sought and attained this one ray of hope (Najima, 1934).

To the athletes who had endured many disturbances before their departure from Japan, even if the dissolution of the FECG were inevitable, the establishment of the Oriental Championship Games, which was created to remove China and include Manchukuo, was “the good news of the success of the meeting” and a “victory.”

4. Conclusion

Manchukuo demonstrated a desire to participate in the FECG, and JAAA planned to move toward this aim. However, to Okabe and other Manchukuo sports officials, this was unsatisfactory, and the two resolution methods conflicted. Okabe and others did not want the Japanese team to participate while Manchukuo could not, but JAAA decided to take part regardless. Thus began the boycott movement in Japan. After JAAA announced its participation, various organizations and military circles opposed it. They made official announcements in newspapers regarding written resolutions and statements, and took action by handing these statements directly to JAAA officials. Furthermore, in addition to written resolutions, some conspired to have direct talks with the athletes, which developed into violent attacks. Military circles also pressured the athletes. Every day, newspapers publicized the written resolutions of organizations and military circles, reported on their actions, and shared their own editorials. Facing this outside pressure, representative athletes were urged to oppose the participation of their universities and track and field clubs. Eventually, nine athletes withdrew (two for reasons not related to the boycott movement), but others left their clubs to participate in the 10th games. Excepting the period immediately following the special conference, JAAA continued to assert their participation in the 10th games, regardless of the possibility of Manchukuo’s participation. The context included three main points: issues surrounding international good faith toward organizations such as PAAF and IOC, the organizations hosting the 10th games; the domestic situation of the “Emperor Cup”; and JAAA’s awareness of the utility of sports.

However, the JAAA’s assertions did not persuade Okabe and organizations opposing the participation of the Japanese national team. Representative athletes boarded the Heiyomaru a day ahead of time and anchored at Kobe Port to ensure their safety. Their concerns were substantiated by the fact that until the day before departure, the boycott movement had been growing at the wharf. Ultimately, JAAA was unable to persuade Okabe and others of the faction that opposed the Japanese national team’s participation in the 10th games. The curtain closed on the boycott movement with the deadline of the representative athletes’ departure.

It was once said that “Manchuria and Mongolia are Japan’s lifeline.” The relationship between northeastern China and Japan further strengthened with the founding of Manchukuo, and this extended to the sports world. Even though JAAA spoke about international good faith, domestic conditions surrounding the sports world, and the utility of sports, Manchukuo materialized in front of the Japanese sports world as a solid existence that surpassed that. The boycott movement aroused public opinion, directly affected representative athletes, and harmed them. As “the Japanese public greeted the Manchurian Incident with wild enthusiasm” (Tsurumi, 2001), this was also expressed in its march into the sports world. This demonstrates the expression of the political situation in Japan in
sports, through which the blind support of Manchukuo provoked a raw and tense relationship between sports and politics.

Notes

*1 Founded by the Republic of China in 1924 as Physical Education Association. The chairman at that time was Wang Zhengting, diplomat, who was an IOC member.

*2 Invitational form is considered to be “allowing participation even without approval by official members” (Takashima, 2008). In short, this means that the constituent can participate with only the approval of the host country, even if they do not pass voting.

*3 Founded in 1911 as the Philippines’ Athletic Association.

*4 Manshu Rikuyo Kyogi Kakushin Renmei (Manchurian Reformist League of Athletics) was a private organization centered on Heita Okabe and set up by “a large number of senior members of the Manchurian track and field world” to plan “the restoration and improvement of the current Manchurian track and field world” (Manshu Nippou, January 31, 1934 evening paper). It criticized the China National Amateur Athletic Federation for rejecting Manchukuo’s participation, and released a statement that if its participation in the FECG was not approved, “we anticipate the dissolution of the Far East Olympics Association.” The statement criticized JAAA’s conduct: “They must ask themselves where is the dignity and honor for Japan’s world of sports in the Far East in the refusal of Manchukuo’s participation because of China or allowing this to go unquestioned. Japan, which is withdrawing from the League of Nations because of Manchukuo, should align its views regarding this tournament as well” (Manshu Nippou, February 1, 1934, evening paper).

*5 The Board for Preparation of International Games was founded to “rectify the China National Amateur Athletic Federation’s distrust that blaspheemes the sports world of East Asia, and anticipate the penetration of our assertions.” The president of this board was Minister of Foreign Affairs Xie Jieshi, and Ryusaku Endo, State Council General Affairs Agency Chief, was the committee chairman. Others include Naoki Hoshino, Kiichi Sakatan, and Takayuki Furumi, who were sent to the Manchukuo government from Japan (Manchukuo Government Compilation, 1969).

*6 Formed at the same time as the statement, “Manchukuo’s FECG participation is an extremely significant thing for national policy. We will work tirelessly in anticipation of this accomplishment.” Members included Okabe, Kubota, and Mogi, as well as Cyuichi Ohashi, Shintaro Imada, and Haratake (Manchukuo Government Compilation, 1971, p. 896).

*7 The citations in this section are from the Japan Amateur Athletic Association (JAAA) (1934).

*8 In this section, if there is no annotation indicating otherwise, citations are from the Manshu Nippou, March 13, 14, and 15 morning papers, 1934.

*9 No references regarding why Okabe was dismissive about this method of amending the rules are made. However, if the issue was not resolved, even at the general meeting at the 10th games, after planning to amend the rules, Okabe’s indications would be pertinent.

*10 Okabe was at the forefront of pushing for Manchukuo’s participation in the FECG, but the following affected his contributions to the problem of Manchukuo’s participation in the FECG. According to Takashima (2010a), after Okabe migrated to Manchuria, he used sports to enhance his networking with Zhang Xueliang and Feng Yong, influential people in northeastern China. However, Okabe was caught by the Kwantung Army, because Feng Yong had a “change of heart” when the Manchurian Incident erupted. Okabe’s life was spared because of an appeal for clemency by those around him. Former JAAA director Masaji Tabata noted in his later years, “He [Okabe] pressed us with support from the Kwantung Army. ... The Kwantung Army seemed to have bought Okabe’s power, and seemed to believe that he had influence in the Japanese sports world. Therefore, they used Okabe and sent him to persuade us” (Mokudai, 1988). In this way, in the unexpected attack regarding the problem of Manchukuo’s participation by Okabe and Manchukuo officials, JAAA assumed that this pressure from military circles would emerge.

*11 Takashima (2010b) points out that Yamamoto, who had been entrusted with the negotiations until the special conference, “had thought that China’s approval of Manchukuo’s participation would be a ‘miracle,’” and that the “agreement” was “Yamamoto’s lie.” See Takashima (2010b) for more information on the actions of Yamamoto and PAAF at the time of the special conference.

*12 The question around the events from JAAA’s independent participation announcement until the Tokyo Committee’s announcement that they would be severing ties was whether a “joint declaration” was exchanged between MAA and Shibuya and Takekoshi, who had been dispatched to Manchuria in March. The joint declaration stated that if Manchukuo’s participation was not approved, Japan would also call off their participation. JAAA explained that the joint declaration was indicated in a private meeting between Shibuya, Takekoshi, and MAA, and was not its official opinion (Takashima, 2010b).

*13 Editorials were published in the following newspapers: Niroku Shinpou, April 17, 1934, morning paper; Tokyo Nichi Nichi Shinbun, April 17, 1934, morning paper; Manshu Nippou, April 18, 1934, morning paper; Tokyo Nichi Nichi Shinbun, April 25, 1934, morning paper; and Tokyo Nichi Nichi Shinbun, April 26, 1934, morning paper.

*14 After the Manchurian Incident erupted, Osaka Asahi Shinbun, the sister newspaper of Tokyo Asahi Shinbun, constantly emphasized the theory of disarmament from a “national finance and economics standpoint”. However, the views of the newspaper as a company changed, “considering the development of the clashes between Japan and China, and this significant time for the nation... We aim to support military circles as Japanese citizens and unite with public opinion.” It was decided that “our sister newspaper Tokyo Asahi will also persist in the same kind of policy” (Akira Fujiwara and Toshihiro Kunugi (eds.), 1983). Furthermore, around this time, not only newspapers, but also “books, magazines, films, records, and other popular amusements” “have a lively market because of Manchuria ... [and were] glorifying military actions, seeing the Kwantung Army as heroes, and enthusiastically praising the founding of Manchukuo” (Young, 1999/2001).

*15 Five athletes were selected from Meiji University: for track and field, Takeshi Yoshizumi, Tadao Najima, and Yoshiro
Asakuma; and for swimming, Kentarou Kawatsu and Gen Ishiharada.

*After the FECC ended, Meiji University was censured for the expulsion controversy and expelled from the Inter-University Athletics Union of Japan by the union's representative committee (Tokyo Nichi Nichi Shinbun, May 26, 1934, morning paper).

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