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## **The Body, Politics and Soccer in Colonial India**

The body has been an important analytical tool in recent years in studies of South Asian history and culture. Two main sources lay behind this focus. On the one hand, Edward Said's work emphasized the place of cultural constructions of the body in manufacturing the ideology of Western superiority and non-Western inferiority that was so important in legitimating the colonialism of Europe and indeed that has continued to feature in the collective denigration of groups such as Arabs and Muslims. By representing in literature, art, journalism, etc., the physical manifestation of individuals deemed to belong to such groups as somehow "different," "corrupted," and "unpredictable" alongside the "normal" bodies of those from the West the control of those featured as "normal" over those seen as "different" was justified and made to seem part of a natural order.

Foucault, of course, was the second source of the focus on the corporal as an analytical tool in South Asian Studies. He argued that the body became central to the operations of the modern state from the end of the eighteenth century onwards. Modern systems of production and government control demanded that individuals be able to submit their bodies to regular and repeated work organized around timetables, deadlines and the techniques of mass production. Watching, recording, regulating, and anticipating the functioning body of the individual therefore became of the highest importance to modern states. Foucault points out that a range of institutions and technologies were devised to ensure large populations of strong and regulated bodies ready for work and for duty. This paper will use the body as an analytical tool in approaching the colonial history of football in south Asia. It will demonstrate that football there acted for the colonizers as an idiom and as a technology for imagining and transforming the Indian body. However, and perhaps more importantly, it will show that the game also became implicated in Indian attempts to resist these colonial corporal politics.

The body is central to understanding the introduction of football into colonial India by the British and its subsequent spread and development. By examining football in this context, it is possible to make three conclusions. First of all, football was one of the means through which the British sought to control and transform Indian bodies into units suitable for colonial projects, not only in the schools but in the Army as well. Secondly, the language of the game was an idiom in which the British attempted to construct discourses about Indian bodies that suited colonial rule. Finally, the footballer's body was one of the sites where Indians contested these colonial discourses about their bodies.

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