



AFRICANS AND FOOTBALL IN HONG KONG

香港的 非洲人與足球

一向有留意本地球壇的朋友，應該會留意到我們的球場上有非洲球員，為數不多，卻不斷增加。這不單印證了香港的全球化，更反映足球在非洲社會的重要位置。歐洲的足球隊一直有從非洲招募優秀的足球員，而在香港，非洲裔職業球員自二零零零年代起亦開始為本地球隊效力，主要來自尼日利亞、加納和喀麥隆，還有的來自南非、博茨瓦納和馬拉維。

Fans of local football games certainly know of a small but increasing number of African players in Hong Kong. This is not only a sign of globalization in Hong Kong but also a reflection of the importance of football in African societies. European football teams have been long recruiting elite footballers from Africa, so do those in Hong Kong since the 2000s – most of whom are from Nigeria, Ghana, Cameroon and some from South Africa, Botswana, and Malawi.

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圖 受訪者提供

Photography Courtesy of interviewees

我從二零一二年開始研究在港的非洲裔尋求庇護者與難民，發現足球在他們的社交和文化生活中相當重要。協助他們的本地非政府機構和教會，主要為他們舉辦的活動都是足球，有時同一個機構甚至組織了多支球隊。他們間中會參與一些慈善賽，企業集團會捐款組隊，邀請這些非洲隊伍對壘。球員清一色是男士，女士則在觀眾席上熱烈打氣。我曾觀看的友誼賽由一所本地教會舉辦，他們有專供非洲人士參與的團契；比賽隊伍是「英語隊」對「法語隊」（此乃在港非洲人口的兩大語言群體），穿上五顏六色醒目球衣的球員腳法、戰術俱備，力爭勝利之餘，也在觀眾心中留下深刻印象，對於不太了解這項運動的人（即是我）來說，實在是大開眼界，於是我決定跟我的非洲朋友們談談足球。

While conducting research on African asylum-seekers and refugees in Hong Kong since 2012, I discovered that football plays an important role in their social and cultural lives. Football game is one of the major activities that local NGOs and churches organize for this population, sometimes having more than one team to represent the same organization. Games are also held for fund-raising purposes, with corporate donors playing against these pan-African teams. While the players are all men, women supporters cheered enthusiastically on the stand. I had attended several friendly matches of English-speaking vs. French-speaking teams (the two major language groups among the African population in Hong Kong) organized by a local church with a fellowship for Africans. Sporting smart colourful jerseys for each team, the players flaunted their skills and deployed tactics to impress and to win. For me who knew very little about football, it was an eye-opening experience. So I decided to talk to my African friends about football.

FROM EUROPE TO AFRICA... TO HONG KONG 從歐洲、非洲到香港

在十九世紀，歐洲諸國在非洲殖民的同時，還把足球帶到了這片大陸。當時最主要的殖民者是大英帝國、法國、比利時、葡萄牙和德國；殖民者利用足球運動，締造「有利歐洲人持續在殖民地生活」的條件，是一種殖民手段。二十世紀初，足球球會在各個非洲國家成立，以推廣職業足球。二十世紀後期，即使不少非洲國家相繼獨立，各國國內的許多社會發展計劃均少不了足球的身影。不論城市或鄉村，足球已自然成為非洲男兒生活舉足輕重的部分，當然對一些女子們亦如是。

Football was introduced to Africa as part of European colonialism since the 19th century. Great Britain, France, Belgium, Portugal and Germany were the main colonizers. As part of colonial control, football was the means to create conditions “favourable for continued European presence.” Football clubs were set up in different African countries in the early 1900s for the promotion of professional football. In the latter part of the century, even when many of the colonies became independent, football had been incorporated into various social development programs. Football became an important part of many African men's and boys' lives, and to a smaller extent women's and girls', in cities and villages alike.





二零一五年「非洲聯合盃」海報
The 2015 African Unity Cup poster



二零零九年，一些在香港錦田居住的非洲人決定舉辦一個「復活節嘉年華」足球賽，慶祝大家的共同愛好和兄弟情誼。參賽的四隊分別叫做「車路士」、「曼聯」、「阿仙奴」和「明星隊」，反映他們相當熱愛英格蘭超級足球聯賽。過去六年，這項賽事規模越發龐大，甚至開始有企業贊助。二零一五年的「非洲聯合盃」有六支隊伍：突尼西亞、南非、喀麥隆、索馬里、尼日利亞和阿爾及利亞。不過，這些隊名並不完全反映各隊隊員的國籍，因為他們其實來自不同的非洲國家，例如「突尼西亞」隊由尼日利亞、岡比亞和坦桑尼亞球員組成，只不過用上「突尼西亞」作隊名罷了。球員來自社會各界：非洲裔香港居民、尋求庇護者，甚至職業足球員。由於對這項賽事感興趣的人越來越多，決賽最終在油麻地櫻桃街公園的球場舉行，讓更多球迷能夠觀賽。賽事發起人說，希望下年度會有香港市民與非洲人一同在場上衝鋒陷陣；也希望非洲各國領事館的人員能到場支持，當然還希望獲得更多企業贊助，令賽事更有規模。這樣，就能向著他們的目標（透過足球融入本地社區）邁進一大步。

In 2009, some Africans living in Kam Tin decided to organize an Easter Fiesta football game to celebrate their commonality and brotherhood. As a reflection of their passion for the English Premier League, the four teams were *Chelsea*, *Manchester United*, *Arsenal*, and *All Stars*. In the last 6 years, this Easter game has since expanded in scale and even had a corporate sponsor. In 2015, the African Unity Cup had 6 teams: Tunisia, South Africa, Cameroon, Somalia, Nigeria, and Algeria. Despite the national ensign, players of each team were very much of mixed nationalities. For example, team "Tunisia" was represented by Nigerians, Gambians, and Tanzanians. Players came from all walks of life: Hong Kong Africans residents, asylum-seekers, even professional footballers. Increasing interest towards the Cup had brought the final to the heart of the city at Cherry Street Park of Yaumatei for more people to watch the game. The organizers said that hopefully next year local residents could play alongside African players, African consulates attend the game, and more corporate sponsors make it a larger event. This would further the goal of integration with local community through football.



二零一五年「非洲聯合盃」其中兩隊參賽隊伍
Two of the Teams at the 2015 African Unity Cup



二零一五年「非洲聯合盃」的「索馬里」隊
Somalia Team in the 2015 African Unity Cup



除了這些非洲人之間的較量，本地華裔和外籍球員跟非洲球員「過招」的機會也越來越多，參與香港業餘聯賽的非洲球員也不斷增加。George（化名）近年也加入過一些業餘隊伍，一星期訓練數次，有時更有機會跟訪港的歐洲職業球隊比賽。身為尋求庇護者，他沒有機會成為職業球員，卻十分珍惜這些提升球技和與朋友交流的時間。正因為這個信念，他還在所屬教會積極組織友誼賽呢。

Besides these games between Africans, local Chinese and expatriates have had increasing opportunities to play with African footballers. Teams on local amateur leagues have a growing number of players from African countries. George has been playing for a number of these amateur teams in the last few years, training a few times a week

and sometimes playing against European professional teams visiting Hong Kong. As an asylum-seeker, he does not have a chance to become a professional. He however values these opportunities to improve his skills and socialize. With this conviction, he also actively organizes friendly matches in his church.



FROM GRASSY TO CONCRETE PITCHES 從草地到石屎地

「足球，就像是我們的信仰。」居港非洲人、「復活節嘉年華」足球賽其中一位發起人Immanuel說。足球是大部分非洲小孩接觸的第一項運動，關於這點，跟我談過的朋友完全同意，因為幾乎哪裡都能踢：街上、後院、空地等等都可以。連學前的孩子們都已視踢球為樂了。Johnny（化名）說，在他家鄉剛果的村子裡，小孩們會用膠袋包著西柚，當成球一般踢來踢去。George更表示，他和許多其他尼日利亞小孩一樣，在開始學踢球時連鞋也沒穿呢！他們沒上過正式的足球學校，而是跟隨較年長的男子們學踢球，還有從電視上學習。他們看球時，會仔細觀察美斯等球星的球技，並試著模仿。

“Football is like a religion to us,” said Immanuel, one of the organizers of the Easter Fiesta football game and a resident of Hong Kong. People I talked to all agreed that football is the first sport for most African children - it could be played almost anywhere: on the streets, in the backyard and of course on any empty lot. Children enjoyed playing football even before they started school. Johnny said that in his Congolese village, small children would wrap a *pamplemousse* with plastic bag and kicked it around like a football. George added that, like many other kids in Nigeria, he didn't wear shoes when he first started playing football! Instead of going to football schools, children learned from older boys and men, and also from TV. They would watch football games and observe carefully how football stars like Messi dribbled, and tried to copy them.

每逢電視播放球賽，街上立刻空無一人，大家都聚到電視前為支持的球隊打氣。「足球帶給我們快樂！」George解釋他們熱衷體育的原因是太厭倦政治，大家都想透過足球，將政治問題拋諸腦後。

Whenever there was a football game on TV, the streets would be empty as people gathered in front of TV sets and cheered for their favourite teams. "Football gives us happiness and joy!" Enthusiasm on sports let them forget about political problems.

Johnny在二零零三年從剛果民主共和國來到香港，一待便是十二年，身份仍是尋求庇護者，無權領取香港身份證，不能工作、讀書甚至參與義工服務。他只好一心投入教會、足球和家庭生活（他的家人最近和他在香港重聚了）。Johnny年近四十，早已放棄了在香港成為職業球員的夢想，卻帶領由非洲籍尋求庇護者和難民組成的足球隊參與本地慈善賽，當中不乏勝仗。「踢球時，你和隊友一定要成為一體！」這是他在足球世界所追求的精神。

Johnny arrived in Hong Kong in 2003 from the Democratic Republic of Congo. Having been in Hong Kong for 12 years as an asylum-seeker and therefore without an HKID, Johnny has been prohibited from work, study, and volunteering. He has devoted himself to church, football, and his family (who joined him recently in Hong Kong). Approaching 40, Johnny has given up the dream of becoming a professional footballer in Hong Kong. Instead, he has led teams of African asylum-seekers and refugees to play and sometimes win in local charity games. "You must be ONE when you play football." This is the spirit he looks for in football.

「為甚麼足球對你們在香港的生活那麼重要？」我問。

"Why is football so important in your lives in Hong Kong?" I asked.

「因為很好玩。因為這是我們生活的一部分。因為它能夠為我們減壓。我們在港非洲人群體流動頻繁，人們總是來來去去、離離合合的。我們的生活又很不穩定，足球能讓我們暫時忘卻這些煩憂。踢球也對身體有益嘛！」

"It's fun. It's part of our life. It takes the stress away. Our community here is affected by constant mobility - people come and go all the time, We also live with a lot of uncertainty. Football takes our minds off these things. It is also good for our health!"



FOOTBALL AS CULTURAL BRIDGE

文化橋樑

剛到香港的時候，Johnny棲身在尖沙咀的重慶大廈，不懂說廣東話和英文，每天就走到九龍公園的球場坐著，看本地人踢足球。「在非洲，我們是在草地上踢球的。看見他們在石屎硬地上踢，真讓我一頭霧水。」Johnny說。有天，其中一隊欠了一名球員。

When Johnny first arrived, he found shelter in Chungking Mansions in Tsimshatsui. He spoke no English or Cantonese. Johnny walked to Kowloon Park every day, sat and watched local people play in the football pitch. "In Africa, we played on the grass. When I saw them playing on the concrete pitch, I was so confused," Johnny said. One day, one of the teams had one person short.

「他們朝我揮手，著我加入。我不會說英語，他們又不懂法語，大家只靠身體語言溝通。我指指我的鞋，表示自己沒穿運動鞋，他們就有人帶我到附近的超市，給我買了一雙『白飯魚』，回來便一起踢球了。一開始時，我緊張得摔了一跤，多想就那樣離開，他們卻鼓勵我踢下去，給予我勇氣完成比賽。這就是我在香港開始踢足球的經過。」

"They waved at me, and said that I should play. I spoke no English and they spoke no French. We just communicated through body language. But I pointed to my shoes - they were not sports shoes - and they had someone take me to a supermarket nearby, and bought me these flat white exercise shoes. So we came back to play the game. When I first started, I was so nervous that I fell down. I wanted to leave. But they encouraged me to play. I got the courage from them. So we played the game. And that's how I started playing football in Hong Kong."

足球，既是非洲人歌頌他們的「泛非洲」身份和兄弟情的方式，亦幫助他們彌合自己與香港的文化差異。這項全球運動超越了語言、膚色及文化背景的障礙，套Johnny的話，就是能讓人們合「一」，即使只在短暫的球賽時光中。香港作為那麼多世界上不同國籍人士共同的家，實在有潛力成為真正的國際大都市。要實現這個目標，體育運動將會是重要的一環。✧

Just as how football is a means of celebrating a pan-African identity and brotherhood, it can bridge cultural divide in Hong Kong. As a global sport, it transcends language barriers, skin colour, and cultural background. Football helps people to become "one", in Johnny's words, however transiently. Being host to people from so many different parts of the world, Hong Kong has the potential to be a real cosmopolitan city. Sports will be one important venue in which this goal could be realized. ✧

