2008 Summer Games: Beijing’s Image Campaign

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Beijing, or “Northern Capital” in Chinese, finally attained its goal in 2001 to host the XXIX Olympiad. It is a city of nearly 15 million people sprawling over 17,000 km², with particularly harsh summers characterized by high heat and humidity and unpleasant dust storms from the eroding deserts of Northwest China. In 2008, China will share its nearly 2000 year history with the rest of the world. Beijing narrowly lost the bid in 1993 to host the 2000 Summer Olympics by two votes, but this time around, it was the clear favorite, easily beating out second-place Toronto. During the selection process, China was criticized for issues if human right abuses and an Olympic history of having athletes who used illegal steroids. However, the fact that the country had a government-driven bid helped make Beijing more attractive to the IOC Evaluation Commission and the members ultimately felt that Beijing would be able to meet the significant environmental challenges, “leaving a unique legacy to China and to sport.”

Beijing is obviously aware of the magnitude of the Olympics and the effect it might have for China’s geopolitical position and economic security. China is spending an estimated $2.4 billion on Olympic venues alone and somewhere between $35-$40 billion to remake the city for 2008, including new power, sewer, and water treatment projects and the world’s largest airport terminal, designed to move three million passengers through per day. In addition to spending an unprecedented amount of money to jettison Beijing into the ranks of world class cities in time for the Olympics, the Beijing Organizing Committee for the Games of the 29th Olympiad (BOCOG) is launching an impressive campaign surrounding the

Olympic mascots and mottos that act as the embodiment of the host city’s image of itself. The purpose of this paper is to explore the intense process of selecting the mascots and slogans, as well as an analysis of their artistic and symbolic implications as they represent a way for Beijing to self-reflexively communicate, as well as impart a strategic image to the rest of the world.

Since this paper is an exploration of the 2008 Beijing Olympic Mascots, some discussion of mascots in general is warranted. Mascots have been underexamined in academic literature, almost exclusively focusing on the controversies of American sports teams and the use of Native American themed mascots, which underscores the fact that mascots, although purportedly politically neutral, can have political and racial implications. Before mascots were mascots, they were totems carved on cave walls and on totem poles in order to bring luck to a tribe or clan. It was thought that some of the magic or power in the totem animal would be transferred to the people who either worshipped or wore clothing that depicted the mascot.

The word mascot has an interesting history. It is an English borrowing of the French Provençal word *mascoto*, meaning “piece of witchcraft, charm, amulet,” which can probably be traced back to Medieval Latin *masca*, “witch, specter.” In 1880, the French composer Edmond Aurdran wrote an operetta entitled “La Mascotte,” which was a story about a young farmer girl (calling her a witch or sorceress was intended to be

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humorous) that would bring luck to whoever she met. The operetta enjoyed widespread popularity, running over 1,000 performances in France, Britain and the USA. The title was translated into “The Mascot” and it was the incipience of a person, animal or thing bringing good luck to the people who possess it. The history of the word is especially helpful in that it helps conceptualize the powers supposedly imbued in mascots: they work their magic to bring good luck and a desired outcome.

While mascots started showing up on sports clothing and at sporting events in the 1800’s, the first Olympic mascot made its debut at the 1972 Munich Games in the form of “Waldi,” the rainbow colored dachshund. Since then, mascots have been a mainstay of the Olympic image. Usually, they are designed to be representative of the history and culture of the host city, and up until 1992, the mascots were all a single animal. Kobi the Dog, mascot of the 1992 Barcelona games was an artistic rendering of an animal and from then on, mascots have been both animals and artistic renderings of animals or not animals at all. Non-animal mascots include, Izzy the whatchamacallit of the 1996 Atlanta games, and Athena and Phevos, ancient mythological dolls for the 2004 Athens games. Games with more than one mascot include the 1998 Nagano Winter Games (4), 2000 Sydney Summer Olympics (3), 2002 Salt Lake City Winter Games (3), and 2004 Athens Summer Olympics (2).

Mascot popularity is not always assured, as seen with the criticism of the mascots of both Atlanta and Athens. MSNBC reported that Phevos and Athena were being made fun of all over Greece and were likened to animated condoms and mutants from a nuclear

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6 See What is a Mascot? Available at http://www.aboutface-mascots.com/whatIs.htm
7 See http://collectibles.about.com/od/olympichostingcountry/a/blolypicmascot.htm for a list of Olympic mascots 1972-present.
meltdown but that they were still more popular than the “most-reviled Olympic mascot ever,”9 Izzy of the 1996 Summer Games in Atlanta, which was a computer generated “thing,” and short for “What is it?” Bob Costas had his own answer with “a genetic experiment gone horribly, ghastly wrong.”10 The mascots of the 2000 games in Sydney were markedly more successful. The three mascots, all animals indigenous to Australia were: “Ollie” the kookaburra, “Syd” the platypus, and “Millie” the echidna, were intended to represent earth, air, and water and brought in $200 million in sales11.

In 1998, then IOC President Juan Antonio Samaranch was largely responsible for the creation of a special body of the IOC called the Olympic Games Identification Project (OGIP) which is responsible for making sure that the IOC and the host city’s organizing committee pull off a coherent, well developed Olympic image. After 1996’s particularly poorly managed games in Atlanta, Samaranch hammered home the importance of the Olympic image: The OGIP’s mission is to “ensure the continuity and quality in the exposure of Olympic imagery from one games to the next.” 12 The OGIP is committed to the philosophy that image development and management is symbiotically beneficial for the IOC and the host city, as consistency and unity of image and message is “the best way to export their culture-to globalize their culture.”13 A strong Olympic image is also ostensibly beneficial to the Olympic athletes as well, since “science has already shown the positive effects of color on environment,” it is therefore not hard to imagine that

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10 See supra note 9
13 See supra note 12
“look in a sports venue can create an electric atmosphere, generating spectator enthusiasm and ultimately positively impacting athletic performance.”

During the 2001 bidding process, Samaranch was clearly in favor of Beijing as 2008’s host city in order to make a “grand political gesture by taking the games to China before he [stood] down.” Someone cynical might entertain the conclusion, in light of the importance Samaranch placed on Olympic brand and image management, that there could be no city more naturally equipped to run an efficient image campaign than Beijing. The IOC has found its ideal mate if the purpose of the OGIP is to connect “visually the values of the Olympic ideal within the context of the values of the host city.” Although the values of Beijing are represented in an appealing smattering of mascots and logos, discussed later, it should not be forgotten that image management and message monitoring is a crucial host city value as well. In this case, the OGIP has found an incredibly fertile environment in which to realize its mission statement.

Mascots, according to the BOCOG, are a “significant vehicle for communicating the Olympic spirit to the general public, especially children and youth.” But they are also a significant vehicle for generating revenue for the Olympic committee and the host country itself. The sale of mascots can help defray the costs of hosting the Olympics, with the host committee taking between 10-15% of the proceeds. As mentioned previously, the mascot sales of the Sydney and Athens Olympics both brought in $200

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14 See supra note 12. The article did not provide citation on any academic studies that demonstrate the effect of color on environment, nor any scientific rationale for the link between image, colors, and athletic performance.
16 See supra note 12
17 See supra note 8
million in profits. The 2008 Games are predicted to break the 1984 Los Angeles record for the most profitable games, helped by the fact that there are five mascots instead of only one. It is estimated that the Beijing games could pull in between $300-$400 million in mascot-related sales. In order to boost Olympic product sales, the BOCOG has plans to expand their licensing program to more stores in China as well as overseas,\textsuperscript{19} and it opened its first Olympic store off the mainland in Macao in late January, 2006. The committee decided on Macao rather than Hong Kong because they predicted higher sales due to Macao’s popularity as a tourist destination and its ability to potentially boost sales to the Chinese diaspora.\textsuperscript{20}

**Selection Process**

Jiang Xiaoyu, Vice President of BOCOG, officially opened up the mascot contest in 2002 by mailing out hundreds of invitations to submit designs. The BOCOG also made the submission form available on the internet. According to Zhang Ming, Vice-director of BOCOG Cultural and Ceremonies Department, the mascot “carries the concept of the Games.” Further describing the design submission requirements, Zhang specified that the mascot should lend itself to easy marketing, and look appropriate on different Olympic licensed products, such as T-shirts, bags, cups, pens, etc. The mascot should also “look good on TV, the internet, mobile phones and anything to do with the Olympics. It should be endearing and characterized by Chinese culture. It should be popular with children and liked by men and women of different cultural backgrounds and different age groups.”\textsuperscript{21} Submissions were open to the public as well as other nations and

\textsuperscript{19} See supra note 11
\textsuperscript{20} Macao opens first Olympic store outside the mainland. ASIA FINANCIAL TIMES. Feb. 5, 2006.
the committee received a total of 662 valid entries, 37 of which were from other countries including Japan, Korea, Singapore, the UK, and the US.\textsuperscript{22}

Among the mascot submissions that were submitted by regions and provincial governments in China, western Qinghai province proposed the South China tiger, Gansu advocated for the mythical dragon, and Jiangsu wanted the Monkey King, one of the greatest protagonists in Chinese literature.\textsuperscript{23} Jiangsu province created a bidding team that traveled back and forth from the provincial capital of Lianyungang to Beijing, lobbying for the Monkey King as mascot. Provincial officials felt that the notoriety and recognition of having the mascot chosen from Jiangsu would increase tourist revenue in the province, even if the provinces are not the direct monetary beneficiaries of mascot sales.\textsuperscript{24} Jiangsu has seen a 48.4\% increase in tourism revenue over the past three years, which provincial officials attribute to their mascot efforts. Sichuan province, home to almost all the world’s endangered Giant pandas, spent nearly half a million dollars in public and private funds on its mascot promotion\textsuperscript{25} and promised to award one million Yuan to the designer of the winning entry.\textsuperscript{26} The panda was a national favorite, but its chances were hurt by being the mascot of the 1990 Asian Games in Beijing.

Due to its similarly endangered status, the Tibetan Antelope was also a favorite and its native Qinghai province created a special team that made six Tibetan Antelope

\textsuperscript{23} Gao Peng. Beijing unveils 2008 Olympic mascots. XINHUA NEWS AGENCY, Dec. 5, 2005. Journey to the West, or Monkey, is a mythologized version of the Buddhist monk Xuanzang's pilgrimage to India in order to obtain religious texts called Sutras. The protagonist Monkey’s home, “flower-fruit mountain,” is located in Jiangsu’s capital Lianyungang.
\textsuperscript{24} Yan Hao. China focus: Olympic mascots Monkey King, Panda, or 300 million dollar profits? XINHUA NEWS AGENCY, Nov. 11, 2005.
\textsuperscript{25} See supra note 18
designs for consideration and traveled from province to province seeking support for the bid. In order to involve more people in the selection process, the BOCOG set up an appraisal committee “composed of representatives from various fields” to aid the Judging Committee. There was not a public vote for the mascot as there was for the design schemes of the Olympic Stadium, although there was an online poll in June 2005, in which 5 million people participated. During the nearly three year selection process, the release date was pushed back three times and the particulars of the selection process were kept tightly guarded.

From the 662 suggestions received by BOCOG, organizers reduced the list to 56, which was then handed over to a ten member “expert committee of designers” who then reduced the choices to six. After the winning design was chosen, the IOC approved the choice in August, 2005, but the choice was sealed by confidentiality agreements and thorough copyright protection was undertaken before the announcement in November. Sixty-nine year old sculptor and craftsman Han Meilin was chosen to head the design team to create the Five Friendlies. Han worked around the clock on the designs feeling

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28 See supra note 21. No article provides information on who sits on this panel of representatives.
31 See Beijing unveils mascots for Olympics, available at http://www.fivefriendlies.com/001.htm
32 See supra note 18
33 It is important to note that I found no mention of who actually was responsible for the winning design. All articles state that Han Meilin was the head of the team that is responsible for the final design, but they do not state that he was a submitter of any design during the submission process, nor that any one of the BOCOG’s received submissions was chosen. My interpretation of this vagueness is that the submission process may have been a staged media event in which provinces and citizens were encouraged to “have a voice” and engage in the national Olympic spectacle. It allowed Beijing to reach out the neglected Western provinces and make the average citizen feel like part of the action. Another speculation is that the BOCOG received no submissions that they felt would be appropriate or economically strategic enough, and hired Han Meilin to come up with the design. Another reason for the name secrecy is that the BOCOG had extremely tight copyright protection measures for their emblems and mascots and it may have been
enormous responsibility and pressure: “I feel it is a mission endowed by the 1.3 billion Chinese people, who will keep an eye on me to see what we have worked out for them. I am the man holding a flag and walking in the forefront of a procession. The flag is the Chinese nation and its culture.” The design team went through five or six staff turnovers and drafted over 4,000 designs. On March 11, 2005, traditionally known in China as “dragon raising its head day,” the designs were finished.

After a long three years, and on the 1,000th day before the Beijing Games begin, the BOCOG threw a huge gala at the Beijing Worker’s stadium to unveil the mascots. Amid the fireworks, folk dancing, and singing of the theme song “One world, One dream” thousands of guests in the Workers Gymnasium and the “masses” outside gathered around the Tiananmen Square countdown clock to count down the seconds until the “mascot issuing device” raised up from center stage. BOCOG president Liu Qi gave a speech, characterizing the “Five Friendlies” as representing “not only the multi-ethnic culture of China, but also the traditional Chinese philosophy of harmony between human body and natural environment.”

To the soundtrack of another theme song, “Welcome to Beijing,” the Five Friendlies appeared on a large screen while the larger than life size mascots came out and danced around the stadium among more fireworks. A recording of IOC President Jacques Rogge reading a congratulatory letter was played in which Rogge said he believed that the Five Friendlies “will become the most popular mascots in

34 See Han Meilin: A Loyal Adherent to National Traditions. Available at http://www.fivefriendlies.com/007.htm. One night during the design process, the loyal adherent Han Meilin suffered two heart attacks but continued working through his drafts, taking “cardio-relieving pills” and refreshing himself with a cold shower at 4 A.M. in order to finish.
Olympic history. Especially when the children of China begin to play with them.” The ceremony closed with dancing children, flowers and colored flags bearing the mascots, as well as singing groups from Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan.

The “Five Friendlies” are cartoon renditions of five traditionally significant animals and concepts. Each mascot corresponds to one of the colors of the five Olympic rings. They also represent one of the five elements in ancient Chinese philosophy said to make up the origins of the world- metal, wood, water, fire, and earth. Each one also represents a different “blessing:” Prosperity, Happiness, Passion, Health, and Luck. The first “young ambassador of the Olympic games” is Beibei the little fish. The word fish in Chinese is yu which is also the same sound (but different character) for “abundance,” so the fish symbolizes surplus and long life. The ornamental wave design on the “gentle and pure” Beibei’s head mimics traditionally painted water in Chinese art. She is the blue Olympic ring.

Jingjing, the “charmingly naïve and optimistic” little panda with Song Dynasty ceramic lotuses on his head, symbolizes happiness as he makes children smile and is associated with strength. Jingjing also represents China’s luscious forests and its “desire to protect nature’s gifts.” He is the black ring.

Huanhuan is the “big brother” in the “intimate circle of friendlies” and represents the passion of Olympic sports, inflaming athletes with the desire to run faster, jump higher and be stronger, and wherever he shines, “there is inviting warmth of the 2008 Olympics.” He is outgoing and enthusiastic and the flames on his head are from the

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36 See supra note 35
famous murals of the Dunhuang caves in Northwest Gansu Province. He is obviously the red ring.

Yingying, the fast and agile Tibetan Antelope, is a symbol of the vastness of China’s landscape and his blessing is health that comes from “a body in harmony with nature.” He reflects Beijing’s commitment to a Green Olympics and his ornamentation is representative of the decorative styles from the Western ethnic groups in the Qinghai-Tibet and Sinkiang provinces, and he is the yellow ring.

Nini is the swallow, the most popular design on the kites traditionally flown in Beijing. Her wings spread good luck on the current of the winds. Yan, the Chinese word for swallow, was what Beijing used to be called when it was an ancient capital, so this mascot seeks to be more Beijing particular than the other mascots. She is the green ring. When the mascots’ names are put together, they say “Beijing Huanyin Ni” which means “Beijing welcomes you.” The style of writing used for the Five Friendlies is a kind of character font that is ubiquitous on any product marketed towards children throughout Asia. This character font is therefore familiar and attractive to Chinese children, but it also gives off an air of guilelessness and innocence.

Mascots go to Market

November 12, 2005, the day after the mascots were formally announced to the nation, Beijing launched an extensive marketing effort, releasing more than 300 mascot-related products for sale at 188 authorized vendors around the country. Factories had been busily producing during the time between the design’s finalization sometime in May, 2005 and its release in November. The prices range from 8 Yuan (US $1) to gold.

38 I do not have the actual name for the specific font used, but nearly anyone who has ever been to an Asian country would recognize this style of writing as it is on any school product, children’s clothing, toy, or children’s book cover.
souvenir badges for 100,000 Yuan (US $1,233).\textsuperscript{39} \textsuperscript{40} At the end of 2005, there were only four authorized factories producing the mascot products. Due to a complicated and heavily monitored production process with hand sewing and tight quality control, skilled workers could only produce about 18 toys a day, or 12,000 toys per day per factory, falling far short of market demand. Four hundred sets of the Five Friendlies and 700 mascot toys sold out within one hour at two locations in Beijing, and a similar purchasing fever occurred in major cities in other provinces.\textsuperscript{41} Coca-Cola, praising the number of mascots as a good marketing ploy, immediately introduced mascot-decorated cans after the announcement\textsuperscript{42} and plans to have more mascot-related activities in the future leading up to the games. Almost 5,000 special mascot cans sold out in one hour from a Beijing department store.\textsuperscript{43} To increase Olympic product presence, Han Meilin’s animated film about the mascots, which was introduced at the formal unveiling, was replayed on TV.\textsuperscript{44} The Shenzhen municipal government has been authorized by the BOCOG to use the mascots in a 52 episode 3D cartoon, estimated to cost around $6.2 million. The first of its kind in the history of Olympic Games, the cartoon will tell the story of how the Five

\textsuperscript{39} \textit{Beijing Olympic Mascots to Help Firms Cash in}. ASIA PULSE. Nov. 15, 2005
\textsuperscript{40} BOCOG is also making replicas of the Olympic Seal out of white jade from Hetian of the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region. The “Classic Edition” comes with a brocade box, rosewood box inlaid with silver threads, DVD collection, and book and is around $7,000.00. It takes almost one month to produce one replica of the seal, and Beijing Gongmei Group, the seal's design company, had dispatched over 50 craftsmen to undertake the production. More information available at http://www.look4fuwa.com/en/2005/news-2005-11-13.html
\textsuperscript{42} See supra note 39. Coca-Cola’s presence in China is growing, as it plans to open more production facilities across the nation, as well as focus on advertising in China’s numerous cybercafés. They also have plans to repackage their Sprite brand as a meal occasion-based beverage in a larger 1.25 liter size to make it more attractive as a family dinner drink.
\textsuperscript{43} See supra note 39
Friendlies help the lead protagonists back to the real world after traveling through 100 years of Olympic Games.  

To increase the Olympic presence, BOCOG has authorized the installment of nearly 3,000 (with a goal of 10,000) “City TVs” (referred to as “propagating platforms”) at locations such as government institutions, hotels, and hospitals. Placed in high traffic areas such as elevators, lobbies, and dining areas, the LCD screens are divided into four parts: the center broadcasts programs; the right column displays time, weather, and Olympic countdown, and two scrolling bars underneath show news, stocks and airline information. Operating from 7 AM until 10 PM daily, the broadcasting will include CCTV news, BTV (Beijing TV), and “public advertisements of Olympic Emblem, themed slogan and mascots.” Public service announcements, such as such as water conservation, environmental protection, social order, traffic, and security, are also broadcast. It is clear that Beijing wants the Olympics to maintain a prominent position in the city’s consciousness, and one way to do this is to install ubiquitous television to remind all citizens of the government’s successful efforts in preparation, as well as the inducement to buy the cuddly mascots.

**Olympic Imagery**

A fascinating article by the designer of the logo and pictograms of the 1992 Barcelona Games, Josep Trias, discusses the design process. His challenge was to take into account the specific geography and culture of Barcelona without making the logo and pictograms too specific, because of the necessity of a universal symbolic element.

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He could not run the risk of restricting the “semantic field” of the logo by having
something too “anecdotally” Barcelonian, but one that would universally “represent the
expressive values proper of the Olympic Games, that dimension which could be called
sport-Olympic.” He went on to design a symbol that employed elements of the
Mediterranean character, such as special colors and “dynamism.” The figure resembles a
running or jumping figure, with open arms, but with a static head that “balances the
whole.”

Beijing’s Olympic emblem, the “Dancing Beijing” is an example of this
balancing act between sufficiently local but globally translatable. Dancing Beijing’s
emblem is manifold in its symbolic properties. The emblem is an ancient Chinese seal,
which was (and still is) used to stamp documents by officials and scribes, and every
family or clan usually had its own family seal. Seals are inscribed with the character for
the surname or whole name of the user, or with the official’s position. They are still in
use today in China, appearing on art as the artist’s seal, and as decorative elements on
letters, and almost exclusively using red ink. Dancing Beijing is no exception to the red
rule, and for the purposes of the BOCOG, red is symbolic of happiness, passion, and
luck. “Red is the color of the sun and the Holy Fire, representing life and a new
beginning. Red is mind at ease, symbol of vitality, and China’s blessing and invitation to
the world.” Seal designs were usually carved into stone, wood, and even metal in
recent years. The emblem’s red edges mimic the irregularity of the seal’s ink after

d’estudis Olímpics UAB. PDF available at http://olympicstudies.uab.es/eng/obs_det.asp?id_recurs=171
48 See Appendix
49 See The Olympic Emblem. BEIJING2008.COM, available at
pressing down on paper—it is not a perfect oval of red, giving it an authentic life-like quality of being stamped by an (invisible) hand.

The character that is inscribed in this two dimensional seal is supposed to be a calligraphy rendition of the character jing of Beijing. The ideograph is anthropomorphized into a recognizably human figure, arms outstretched, legs active and implying movement. The inscribed and revamped jing is “carved” in a style of writing called Zhuanshu, or seal script (literally Decorative Engraving Script) and has its origins in the Qin dynasty when Emperor Qin Shi Huang united the warring states and started the dynastic period of an integrated China. Zhuanshu is characterized by lines of even width, straight lines being very straight and horizontal lines clearly being horizontal.50 Used for drawing jing, it marries the image of the seal and the type of writing normally found on seals.51 The BOCOG describes the idiom as portraying the joy of having “friends come from afar” and portraying the “friendly and hospitable Chinese people and the sincerity of the city.” With its “graceful curves, like that of a wriggling dragon” and its arms outstretched, it references the past while welcoming the future and invites the rest of the world to join in the “progress of mankind.”52 To the Chinese eye, it would be an especially meaningful, evocative image because of its power to evoke deep cultural and traditional heritage by drawing on a culturally embedded and historical system of expressive writing styles. To a Western eye, it might be considered quintessentially Chinese looking, something vaguely familiar and satisfyingly exotic and oriental. Seal makers are ubiquitous in tourist areas in Beijing, and they will inscribe names into various materials as souvenirs. As far as a sellable emblem goes, this was a wise choice,

50 See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seal_script
51 See Appendix
52 See supra note 49
as it taps into an existent tourist practice with a visible infrastructure of street artisans to give tourists a working example of the emblem’s cultural significance. There is also a connotation of officialdom in the choice of the seal as the Olympic emblem. Almost any paperwork handled by a governmental agency, like the post office, banks, and immigration documents has at least one prominent red seal on it to represent someone’s stamp of approval. The Olympic seal’s association with official practices should not be ignored as it may be interpreted to imply the close and poised hand of the Chinese government in all things Olympic.

The style of script chosen for the Olympic images is of particular interest in that something seemingly insignificant, like a logo’s typeface, is never neutral and is quite significant in Beijing’s case. Again, drawing on Trias’ article on designing the ’92 Games logo, the typeface was of particular concern because of its symbolic properties. He chose to have the logo in Times Demi Bold (Roman) typography because it possessed “cultural references of antiquity and Romanness, of Latin-ness and seriousness. Helvetica was too “cold” and demonstrated “asepsis.” Futura was too “modern and dry.” Recognizing the ability of typography to provide cultural connotations, BOCOG has done something very interesting with its choice of the typography for “Beijing 2008.” They have taken another of the five main Chinese scripts, Lishu, and applied the style to letters from the Roman alphabet. Lishu is the first system of calligraphic writing in China

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53 The emblem’s dancing or running figure also bears a striking resemblance to the Chinese character for culture, wen, which would also be an evocative character considering the effort to bill these Olympic Games as the “Humanistic Olympic Games” by BOCOG President Liu Qi. The characters in “humanistic,” ren wen mean culture, or humanities. The BOCOG is using the term to express the spirit of the Beijing Games as one that is predominately concerned with human thought and culture. The similarity of the character in the Beijing Seal to the character wen is probably intentional since it is a visual connotation of the official attitude.

54 See supra note 47

55 See Appendix
and most widely used during the Han dynasty (206 B.C.-220 A.D.) and makes full use of the calligraphy brush to emphasize the horizontal strokes and modify the thickness of the lines.\textsuperscript{56} The English letters also have a Chinese calligraphy brushstroke appearance to them, as if a master calligrapher had picked up his brush and applied an ancient and fundamental Chinese craft to form the letters of this very modern event. It is significant to note that Beijing could have chosen a less historically evocative typography, one that didn’t call upon traditional art forms or an antiquated script. They could have chosen something boldly modern, high-tech looking, futuristic, which would have provided a different logic with which to understand China’s image management. The \textit{Lishu} style “Beijing 2008” is a backwards oriented typeface, and it invites Chinese citizens to remember their rich literary history and traditional arts. It is also recognizably “Chinese” to the rest of the world.

The Beijing Game’s slogan, “One world, One dream” required another public submission event for the calligraphic and poster design. The BOCOG received 2,739 submissions and gave out nine Awards of Excellence for the calligraphic pieces, and three first prizes, five second prizes, and thirteen third prize awards for the poster designs.\textsuperscript{57} The “One world, One dream” slogan uses \textit{Kaishu},\textsuperscript{58} or regular script. It is the standard script used today for public functions and printed media and is a further simplified version of \textit{Lishu}, but quicker and easier to write.\textsuperscript{59} It may or may not be worth mentioning that although the English translation of the Chinese characters that form the

\textsuperscript{56} See http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-9048079
\textsuperscript{57} Qian, Wei. \textit{Calligraphic and poster creations on the Olympic theme slogan announced.} HIGH TECH OLYMPICS, Apr. 11, 2006, available at http://www.hitech2008.org.cn/docs/news1/20060411/1144747493899.html. It is again important to note that although one of the names of the second place winners was written in the article, there is no mention of who the winner was of the competition.
\textsuperscript{58} See Appendix
\textsuperscript{59} See http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-9044330
slogan “One world, One Dream,” the character for “One” is not used. Instead, the character *tong* is used, which does not mean one, but “same” or “shared.” The use of *same* implies that there are multiple units that can be compared with one another and deemed to be similar, and doesn’t necessarily imply monism. *Shared* implies that one or more units are coexisting in the same space or that there is a sentiment of cooperation.

Among the peripheral effects of Beijing’s heavy investment in the mascots and imagery of the games is an ironic concern for copyright protection of the Olympic brand. Beijing officials will be paying special attention to counterfeit Olympic products and have put together a counterfeit task force of sorts with members of the Beijing Commercial Administration Bureau and law enforcement officials who have increased their patrols at markets where clothes and small sized commodities are sold. Heavy tourist areas and transport hubs are being subjected to checkups and in the case of infringement against Olympic property rights, punitive measures are taken. All Olympic products are price-controlled and have an “Anti-Fake” label attached. Just days after the mascots were released on the market, they started showing up at some of Beijing’s most notorious counterfeit-goods markets, such as Xiushujie (Silk Alley). Taking advantage of the fact that most locations were completely sold out of Olympic products, officials found vendors selling fake Olympic dolls for 120 Yuan even though the official price is 99 Yuan.

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Riding the coattails of the recent concern about copyright infringement, the Motion Picture Association of America is urging Chinese authorities to open its markets to more American-made films as well as crack down on movie piracy, which has been a sizeable concern to the MPAA in past years. At the 2005 CineAsia festival in Beijing, MPAA chairman and CEO Dan Glickman told attendees in a speech that movie piracy in China costs U.S studios $300 million a year. By the time of the Olympics, “China will be at the center of the world stage,” and he hopes to have more legal than illegal DVDs sold in China by then. According to Glickman, it is virtually impossible to fine counterfeit Olympic goods in China because “fakes dilute the value of the logo, the intellectual property upon which the Chinese have invested to finance the games.” Evidently, the MPAA is hoping that Beijing’s newfound concern for the intellectual and creative property rights of Olympic goods will translate into a more general concern for the protection of foreign commodities overall. It will be interesting to see what lasting implications (if any) the Olympics have on China’s copyright and piracy policies.

There are currently two design submission projects underway: the Olympic Medal design and the Olympic Torch. The Olympic medal competition was launched in January, 2006 and ended March 26, 2006 with the winning designs expected to be announced sometime mid-year. Conforming with the requirements from the IOC, the face of the medal will use the official image of the Greek Panathinaiko Stadium and the standing goddess of victory and will include the wording “XXIX OLYMPIAD BEIJING 2008.” The reverse of the medal is more open to artistic license and according to Zhang Ming, “the medals should be the material vehicles to disseminate the Olympic ideals and the concepts of the Beijing Games, to showcase China's arts, designs and scientific and

63 Boliek, Brooks. MPAA challenges China. HOLLYWOOD REPORTER, Dec. 13, 2005
technological development. They should become the unique legacy of the Beijing Games.” The complete proposal must include the front and back of the medal, the ribbon, presentation box, and Olympic Certificate. A panel of experts appointed by the BOCOG will choose eight designs for the first round and each artist will receive $2,500.00. The second round will reduce it to three who will be rewarded $3,750.00. The final winner will be decided by the BOCOG and the IOC.

The Olympic Torch competition was launched in December 2005, and ended in February 2006. Submitters had to make a three-dimensional model of the torch as well as outline the materials to be used. From the top ten, it was pared down to the top three April 18. Each of these winners received $6,200.00 and the winning design is expected to be announced sometime this summer. The route for the torch relay has not been finalized, although the BOCOG is preparing meticulously for the event and expects to announce it between January-February 2007.

Because there is a veritable black hole of analysis on the message Beijing is sending itself and the world through the use of its mascots and Olympic images, I have more license to editorialize on my interpretation of these important communicative images. Beijing is very open about their goals of making as much money off the sale of Olympic products as it can. With the cost of the games and infrastructure improvements

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65 Olympic medal design competition launched. PEOPLE’S DAILY ONLINE, Jan. 12, 2006, available at http://english.people.com.cn/200601/12/eng20060112_234813.html. Again, no mention is made that the winner’s name will be announced or how much he or she will receive.
running as high as $40 billion, the mascots represent an important source of income that will continue to bring in money even after the Olympics are over and the crowds of tourists head home. Although some of the mascot sales will be to tourists, this is really a marketing effort directed at the citizens of China, and particularly to its children. There is no hiding the fact that Beijing wanted the mascots to be appealing to children, since wherever children are, mothers and fathers with wallets have to follow. Total numbers, whether from tourist bodies, or revenue from Olympic products, is a way for Beijing to gauge exactly how big and how successful of an Olympic Games it was.

It seems China is positioning itself as the face of 21st century communism: this communism is flashy, modern, and cool, but most importantly, it is self-effacing. Beijing is hosting the world’s largest media event which is an excellent platform on which to showcase its Commie-Chic brand. Commie-Chic is not the ascetic, dull communism of yore. It is extravagant and lavish, demonstrating considerable bourgeois excess in the number of mascots and anticipation of record profits, and does its best not to resemble communism at all. Citizens in the throes of consumption should translate well to the West. Coupled with the successful execution of the Olympic Games, this consumption serves to protect and reinforce the status quo in Beijing because it bolsters the central government’s claims to competence, and by extension, claims to governance. If everything goes off without a hitch, if possible protests are squelched, and undesirable situations are sanitized by Beijing’s image machine, what could possibly be wrong with communism or the heavy-handed CCP? The 2008 mascots are strategic in that they are advertisements for a certain image the government wants to project: one of environmental

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68 The IOC notes the 1.3 billion person population and the buying power of that many people, also the process on the mascots are affordable for the average citizen-article
concern, a rich history, diverse cultures, and modernity-things it can pat itself on the back about. The mascot symbolism is conspicuously devoid of any message of human rights or political sentiment. It is likely Beijing has strictly avoided this symbolism because it knows it would be a tough sell. The mascots are cute, cartoony, naïve, innocuously dancing along and distracting everyone from talking about China’s multiple pink elephants. They are the red herrings of the Olympics. They say “let’s keep it light:” Who wants to kick a puppy or yell at a toddler?

The central government is also using the Olympic ceremonial activities to make a political statement as well. As mentioned above, the BOCOG strategically included performers from Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan at its unveiling ceremony, sending a message of national unity and sovereignty to these areas of political tension. Although the official Olympic Torch relay route has not been announced, BOCOG President Liu Qi said that the expected route “should cover as much ground as possible, including all provinces, regions, and Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan,” which will symbolically mark the central government’s territory. Yingying, the Tibetan Antelope mascot, is fraught with political overtures since it is an animal native to a highly contested region. One activist group criticized that “the appropriation of the Tibetan Antelope …is a way of China attempting to assert the legitimacy of its rule over Tibet” and noted that the animal’s initial decimation was caused by Chinese soldiers mass hunting during the beginning of Tibet’s occupation in the 1950’s. Another activist website asserted that “The Chinese authorities' plan is to use the Tibetan antelope as propaganda purporting the

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69 Lind, Jennifer. Dangerous Games. THE ATLANTIC MONTHLY, Mar. 2006. Taiwan’s Premier Hsieh rejected the proposed route, arguing that China and Taiwan are two different countries.  
70 Activists angered by use of Tibetan Antelope as Chinese Olympic Mascot. AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE, Nov. 12, 2005.
unity of the nationalities in China in order to distract from the reality that China has illegally occupied Tibet for more than 50 years,”71 and took issue with BOCOG President Qi’s exploitation of China’s ethnic diversity.

The mascots draw attention to China’s ethnic diversity by representing artistic traditions of these groups.72 Beijing is using the emblematic appeal of the mascots and Olympic imagery to involve distant provinces and implicate them in the national project even though these provinces have been historically neglected by the central government, lacking transportation arteries, sanitary drinking water, health care, and education, which are all responsible for the enormous income73 disparity between the rich East coast and the central and Western provinces.74 These provinces suffer some of the worst poverty in the world, and Beijing might be hoping to gloss over the failures of its “Go West” campaign, launched in 2000 as an effort encourage foreign investment and infrastructure improvements in the poorest provinces. Ironically, one of the current “Go West” projects, a railroad from Golmud to Lhasa, may be further endangering the Tibetan Antelope as it cuts a swath through its natural habitat on the Tibetan Plateau.

Clearly, the 2008 Olympic mascots are much more than simple “ambassadors of friendship” offered to the rest of the world because they are a conversation directed inward was well as outward. They are the ticket to recouping some of the enormous

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72 Beijing Olympic mascots embroidered in 56 colors. PEOPLE’S DAILY ONLINE, Jan. 9, 2006, available at http://english.people.com.cn/200601/09/eng20060109_233971.html. Students in the South West province of Chongqing were taught by a master embroiderer visiting schools to embroider the Five Friendlies using 56 colors, which represent the 56 ethnic minorities of China.
73 Around 600 million in China live on $2/day or less. China has almost one fifth of the poor people in the world. Information from UK Department for International Development (DFID), available at http://www.dfid.gov.uk/countries/asia/china.asp
infrastructure spending as Beijing aspires to become a world class city. Their marketability and total sales are a signal of citizen support for the national project, and a show of solidarity to the government. They are loaded with political and historical symbolism, some of it without a hint of subtlety. The excessive spectacle surrounding the mascots and emblems distracts from criticizing China, which, along with the BOCOG, is performing politics with Olympic symbols from the Seal to the Olympic Torch as it engages in its largest image campaign yet.
Appendix

Example of Lishu calligraphy

Example of Zhuanshu

Example of Lishu and Zhuanshu characters side by side. Also, a good example of the traditional red seals.