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## ***The Emergence of the Sporting Cultures in Two Diverse Imperial Territories: Singapore and Australia***

The Victorian-Edwardian era was characterized by rapid political, social, economic and technological change, with colonialism being one of the most effective media for such change. It was during this period that sport became both an institutionalized social form and a global phenomenon. The British Empire was built upon the foundations of military power, economics, politics and diplomacy. The unifying cement that bonded all aspects of British imperialism was provided by the cultural systems and institutions. Sport was a central pillar of the cultural imperialism that flowed to the territories of the British Empire, and it has been suggested that sport is not only one of the significant agents of cultural imperialism but, in the words of Mangan, was “Britain’s chief spiritual export.” It is an immutable fact that the two most enduring features of British cultural imperialism are the English language and sport.

This paper compares the influence of this export in the development of the sport cultures in the two diverse British imperial territories of Singapore and Australia. It considers a range of factors—such as the nature of the territory, its strategic, economic and political role, geographic and climatic factors—and the way these influenced the development of sport. The dominant cultural system at work in both territories at the time when sport was becoming established was obviously British, but the residual sport cultures left by the British in Singapore and Australia were so different that an analysis which illustrates the differing figurational factors at work in these territories during the colonial era provides a better understanding of these sports cultures today. The paper also offers an enhanced appreciation of the influence of sport as an agent of cultural imperialism *per se*. A major thrust of the paper is that a socio-psychological variable—the perception of ownership—was the single most important factor determining the extent and nature of the input of the two sets of Europeans in the development of the early sport cultures of the two territories. Expatriates in Singapore used sport as disportment whilst those in Australia used it as part of the process of establishing their new homes.

The British successfully exported sport and its morality to their colonies and dominions yet the sport cultures of Singapore and Australia did not meekly mirror the exported imperial model. The extent to which British cultural heritage was either adopted or adapted in the post-imperial territories is contentious and this comparative cross-cultural analysis demonstrates that the culture of past imperial rulers was not so static that it could not be significantly creolized and adapted as a result of situational factors. These interrelated factors illustrate that the resultant sporting legacies were a consequence of these situational factors as much as of the overriding dominant cultural ideology.