

J A Mangan, ed., *The Cultural Bond: Sport, Empire and Society.*
Frank Cass, London, 1992. Index. pp. 228.

The Cultural Bond is another in a long line of books edited by Tony Mangan. Following *Pleasure, Profit, Proselytism* (1988), this volume focuses on the spread of British sports throughout the Empire primarily between 1860 and 1914. *The Cultural Bond* is a welcome addition to the growing literature on imperial sports, although it has a few limitations. The book does not produce much that is new conceptually and the quality of the contributions is highly variable. All of the chapters appeared in the *International Journal of the History of Sport* either in volume six, number two (September 1989), or in volume seven, number one (May 1990). This is a blessing for those who find it difficult to afford the *IJHS*, but adds nothing new for regular journal readers.

Several contributors focus on the role played by individuals in the spread of sport throughout the empire. Malcolm Tozer discusses E W Hornung who authored a number of stories stressing the virtues of Australian life to his British readers. Gerald Redmond demonstrates how Canadian Governor-Generals, between Confederation in 1867 and the First World War, sponsored most of the major competitions for trophies which emerged in Canada. Anthony Kirk-Greene also discusses the role of imperial pro-consuls whom, he suggests, may be remembered more for their sporting records than their public acts.

The contributions by Richard Cashman and Ray Jenkins examine individual sporting figures in analysing responses to colonial sporting achievement. In the case of Fred Spofforth, discussed by Cashman, his success was seen as a symbol of Anglo-Australian unity and the possibility for the British race to flourish in colonial settings. Jenkins looks at the case of Arthur Wharton from the Gold Coast who was of mixed Scottish, West Indian and African ancestry. Jenkins' piece is significant in that it demonstrates shifts in attitudes which developed in the 1870s and 1880s

when British administrators in the Gold Coast and elsewhere in Africa became more racist. While Wharton was a member of the local elite, that group's position increasingly eroded both materially and legally. Jenkins shows that the substantial growth of these racist attitudes were reflected in British press reports of Wharton's sporting successes there in the 1880s. Jenkins concludes that if Wharton's arrival in Britain can be explained by the 'cultural bond' it was educational, not sporting. He suggests that in the Gold Coast the cultural 'bond' was weak where Africans and mixed-race people were concerned (p. 74).

A somewhat out of place paper by James Bradley 'The MCC, Society and Empire: A Portrait of Cricket's Ruling Body, 1860-1914' is really an analysis of the continuity of the decision-making elite in the MCC. Bradley obviously suggests that this continuity gave the committee 'a leavening of conservatism'. Although not directly related to the other chapters, Bradley's study points to an often underestimated phenomenon –how the lengthy careers of sporting administrators create and perpetuate conservative sporting organisations.

A most interesting speculative piece by Janice Brownfoot suggests some ways in which analysis of imperial sport can go further. She demonstrates how sport was liberating for Malaysian women, albeit within strictly defined and controlled contexts, which allowed them to gain greater respect and influence in society between the 1890s and the 1930s. Brownfoot's work suggests that much more needs to be done on the spread of female sport in the empire and on the role of sport in mediating localised versions of patriarchy. Brownfoot asserts that white women involved in sport and physical education for Malaysian girls did not exercise the same power over Asian girls or attempt to acculturate them into good imperial subjects as white males tried to do for Malaysian men. She argues that their objectives were more humanist, international and subtle. This may be true, but work in the African context points to a clear assertion of middle-class, male-dominated western ideologies by female missionaries and social

workers who differed little from their male counterparts in their proselytism. The only significant difference was over the relative acceptability of sport for men and women.

G M Hibbins' chapter on the origins of Australian Rules Football discusses an important aspect of sports history in relation to nationalism. Hibbins demonstrates how British-born founders of early football rules in Victoria were virtually written out of Australian Rules history in the 1890s and early 1900s as Australian nationalists searched for Australian founders of their distinct game. This was similar to the process of Americanising the early history of baseball which also occurred in the early years of the 1900s. The re-writing of sporting history by people of different periods and for specific purposes needs more research and Hibbins clearly shows how this was done in the search for Australian founders of Aussie Rules.

The *Cultural Bond*, like many recent edited sports history volumes, lacks a sophisticated, theoretical introduction which generates new approaches or proposes new areas of research. Mangan's main assertion in his introduction is another plea for it to be 'more widely recognised that by the late nineteenth century sport lay close to the heart of Britain [*sic*] imperial culture'(p. 1). Mangan mentions the concept of hegemony (working in reverse!) without detailing how the use of hegemony helps explain the process of imperial acculturation, or indeed how individual chapters demonstrate the workings of hegemony. Following John Field, *Towards a Program of Imperial Life* (1983), Mangan asserts that the volume's key contribution is to add specificity to the role of 'character' in the inculcation of 'Anglo-Saxon' qualities on British and colonial playing fields. He states that the contributors are concerned with the 'moral associations, symbolic interpretations and emotional meanings associated with the idea of empire in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries' (p. 3). What this means theoretically is explained only with loose reference to placing imperial social history in the realm of British social history and with passing reference to Max Weber.

More sophisticated theoretical approaches in sports history are necessary lest it become too antiquarian and descriptive. Individual contributions go some way towards sharper analysis. Despite this, we are left in the end with Harold Perkin's conclusion that 'sport enabled colonies to become nations as they matured enough to beat the British and sport helped the British prepare psychologically for decolonisation'. Surely there is more to the history of imperial sport than the emergence of a colonial 'Oedipal, love-hate relationship with the mother country'(pp. 218-9).

Mangan cites Brian Stoddart's assertion that cricket's ideal of social unity was often illusory outside the 'white' empire. He then goes on to suggest that racism, sexism and imperialism were as valid a trinity as athleticism, militarism and imperialism. Despite this statement, Mangan states that the volume cannot explore 'all the subtleties of the relationship between proselytiser and proselytised'. He does not suggest how theoretical concepts could be used more fully to further our understanding of sport and imperialism.

The Cultural Bond provides readers with a number of different contexts and approaches which only loosely conform with the suggestions of the title and the introduction. As such, the volume suffers. Contributions by Hibbins, Brownfoot and Jenkins point to valuable avenues for further exploration and hopefully their work will spark new research. *The Cultural Bond* demonstrates a wide diversity in research on the diffusion of British sports and should be celebrated on this point. The book suggests that imperial sports historians need to reassess where to go after a decade of focus on 'the cultural bond'.

John Nauright
Department of Human Movement Studies
University of Queensland