

Alfred James, *Ratu Kadavu s Fijian Cricket XI in Australia 1907/08. The Author, Sydney, 1993. Illus. pp. 82 plus appendices. From Alf James, 65 Billyard Avenue, Wahroonga NSW 2076. \$15.00 including postage.*

Minor tours from the lesser cricketing countries have attracted very little attention in the past and few cricket buffs would be aware that Fiji has twice toured Australia (the second time in 1959/60). Fiji also toured New Zealand in 1947/48 and 1953/54.

While the tours may not loom large on the world cricket scene, they do provide fascinating insights into Australian cricketing paternalism and racial attitudes in cricket. James points out that Australian players and international teams, which occasionally visited Fiji, have helped to stimulate the game there.

There are some interesting parallels between this tour and the 1868 Aboriginal tour of Britain even to the point that the Fijians had distinctive nick-names including Punch, Ping-Pong, Friday, Bunny, The Wild Man, King Billy, Wee McGregor, Tit Willow, Flibbertigibbet and Cockroach. The August *Sydney Morning Herald* contained a lengthy report of a Sydney match, which confirmed popular racial stereotypes about the exotic 'fuzzy wuzzy' islanders who played cricket in bare feet. Their appearance, rather than their cricket, was clearly the big attraction:

The Fijians marched on to the ground headed by their captain Prince Ratu Kadavu Levu and what a fearsome sight they presented Eight of them wore their national costume, beads, etc., with the addition of short white trunks ... The sight was a novel one ... they were a fine body of men and when they lined up to give their war cry the ladies close at hand put their fingers in their ears to deaden the sound ...

When the men took their places in the field there was an opportunity of scrutinising their dress. The skirt was the principal article of attire. It seemed to be made of seaweed and as the men ran it blew out behind them, exposing their running shorts. Round their necks they wore another

contrivance, apparently of seaweed, which fell to the waist and formed a loose blouse ... Boots and shoes were tabooed. Only two men wore caps. The other members of the team were bareheaded if such a term can be applied. There was no fear of their being sunstruck, for each man had more hair than twenty white men put together. That perhaps accounts for the absence of caps, for to fit them a cap would have to be as big as a football. In addition, they have all undergone a special greasing or oiling operation to temper the effect of the rays of the sun on the bare skin of their legs and bodies.

There is much fascinating material in this book about the way these cricketers were regarded by the cricketing public and authorities. Some of the treatment was truly bizarre. When Fiji played a match against a NSW XI (a 'second' eleven, drawn from some of the leading grade players), they began their match on the SCG number 2 (because a Shield match was being played on the main ground). The Fijian match was moved on the second day to the SCG number 1 when it took only three balls to complete the Shield match. When the Fijians played a match against a South Australian team they played on a roped off northern section of the Adelaide Oval. The southern half of the Oval was off limits, it was preserved for a Saturday district game. Despite their lowly cricketing status the Fijians drew reasonable crowds and performed creditably.

This book provides some fascinating insights into cricket colonialism and a tour which included twenty-six matches over sixteen weeks in five states. Most of the Fijians were drawn from the tiny island of Bau which had a population of some 300, with only some sixty adult males.

This is a welcome book which will sit on the shelf alongside *Cricket Walkabout* by Mulvaney and Harcourt. Hopefully it will encourage to explore further the themes of cricket, race and colonialism.

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