

*Allen Guttman, Games & Empires: Modern Sports and Cultural Imperialism. Columbia University Press, New York, 1994. Bibliog., illus., index. pp. 275.*

One of things that I admire about Allen Guttman is his willingness to confront some of the 'big issues' of sports history. Some of his previous publications include broad-ranging syntheses of sporting definition and history (*From Ritual to Record*), sports spectators, women's sports and the Olympic Games. A book on modern sports and cultural imperialism represents an even more daunting challenge. To write authoritatively on this subject requires a familiarity with the historiography of imperialism and of the colonised indigenes of Asia, Africa and Latin America along

with a vast and expanding literature on ludic diffusion in a host of sports and societies.

Guttman poses a central question at the outset: can the diffusion of modern sports from Europe and the United States to the rest of the world be considered a form of cultural imperialism? To explore this question Guttman opts for selective narrative - 'how some modern sports have been diffused to some more or less representative places' (p. 10). The selected case studies (chapters) of diffusion are: cricket, soccer, baseball, basketball, American Football and the Olympic Games. There are another two chapters on resistance: Tumen and Traditional sports.

This is a very ambitious book. Typical is the first chapter where Guttman deals with the spread of cricket from England to North America, Australia, India and the Caribbean in just twenty-five pages. It is followed by a thirty page chapter on soccer which traces its diffusion to the Continent, Latin America and Africa.

While these brief syntheses cannot convey all the nuances and subtleties of the adoption of sport in many societies, the beauty of these overviews is that Guttman is able to raise many important comparative questions and introduce a range of possible explanations for the variety of ludic diffusion. Why, for instance, was the world-wide spread of cricket far more limited than soccer even though cricket was introduced at an earlier stage of empire? Guttman rejects an intrinsic explanation that cricket was disadvantaged by the 'greater complexity of its rules'. He prefers extrinsic speculation: cricket's disadvantage was that it was exported at an earlier time. By the time soccer was exported:

the awesome power of the British navy, had opened the world's markets, and British entrepreneurs were ubiquitous. Manchester's economic - and cultural - influence extended far beyond the limits of London's political control. And Manchester's favourite sport was soccer football (p. 40).

Guttman follows the path, charted by Everett M Rogers, the leading sociological authority on the 'diffusion of innovations' in suggesting a

three stage process in the spread of games. They were first taken up by the cosmopolitan sons of the local elites, then next by the bourgeoisie before being appropriated by the broader society. Guttmann suggests various reasons why some sports, such as soccer, diffused downwards whereas cricket (at least in North America) did not become truly popular largely for reasons of ethnicity.

*Games & Empires* is a creative agenda book which posits a range of explanation for particular forms of expansion and acceptance of specific sports. While the spread of baseball is a product of American political, cultural and economic power, there seem to be different reasons why it was embraced by the Japanese, it was taken up in Latin America and why it has recently experienced growth in Australia.

There is also a wealth of interesting material in the chapters on resistance which range from sports, such as *Turnen*, which turned its back on 'modern sports' to others, such as sumo wrestling and bullfighting, which were more than 'residual' sports in that they were caught up in the 'cross-currents of modernisation' which led to their 'traditionalisation' (p. 163).

In this vast panorama of the diffusion of sport from Europe and North America to many other societies, it is hardly surprising that the author is more deft at handling some societies and sports than others. The chapter on the Olympic Games is -not surprisingly given Guttmann's extensive research on this topic - a fine synthesis of how Olympism spread by becoming progressively 'less eurocentric'. By contrast, Guttmann is understandably less familiar with some of the nuances of the complex game of cricket. One example will suffice. The statement on Bodyline tactics (p. 27) could have been expressed more succinctly. Guttmann writes that: 'The problem was that Jardine seemed to bowl *at* the opposing batsmen rather than to them in the approved manner'. This would be better expressed as: 'The problem was that Jardine seemed to direct Larwood to bowl *at* the opposing batsmen, in an intimidatory fashion, which many regarded as unfair'. Bowling *at* the batsman in

cricket (unlike baseball) is not regarded as unfair, Bodyline was controversial because it was a particular form of bowling *at* the batsman. There are one or two minor errors of fact. Recent research has indicated that the existence of Military Cricket Club in Australia in 1826 (p. 24) was a myth.

Undoubtedly the most outstanding chapter is the last, which is an assessment of the various theories of cultural imperialism. *Games & Empires* ends with a masterly analysis of various interpretations of ludic expansion in which Guttman evaluates a whole range of approaches including cultural explanation, social control, economic and idealistic interpretation, cultural imperialism and cultural hegemony. Guttman argues cogently in favour of the concept of cultural hegemony in that it suggests that while sport occupied contested terrain, there was also scope for subversion and even resistance. Guttman provides examples of how sports provided a focus for anti-colonial sentiments and for movements directed at emancipation. For any student who may wish to undertake further research on 'games and empires', this admirable and lucid chapter is an ideal starting point.

While some historians may quibble about Guttman's treatment of the minutiae of their particular patch, or might complain about what has been left out - Australian sports historians would have liked him to include a section on the spread of basketball to Australia - it would be a pity if they failed to recognise that this is landmark work which will inform and inspire many future research agendas.

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