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The Imperial Game

Cricket and colonization

Concurrent with the various changes to the game in nineteenth-century England was a broader social process of international diffusion which was to have a fundamental effect on the way cricket came to be played, and the meaning that it holds today. The codification which began in the mid-eighteenth century was a notable and necessary pre-condition of the game's subsequent popularity. Its nineteenth century 're-invention' as the national game, as both the epitome and a generator of English national character, was similarly important in giving the game an ideological meaning which mediated the way it was received. It is, however, England's colonial history which is the key to explaining the globalizing of cricket, and thus the relationship between cricket and contemporary identities, for 'Empire continues to play a key part in British consciousness' (Reviron-Piégay 2009: 6).

The description of cricket as *The Imperial Game* (Stoddart and Sandiford 1998) is almost as commonplace as describing cricket as the quintessential English game. For Mangan (1986: 153), cricket was the 'umbilical cord of Empire linking the mother country with her children'. All the leading international sides are former territories of the British Empire. As noted in the Introduction, the first international governing body for the sport was titled the *Imperial* Cricket Council. British sport administrators' contrasting attitudes to the emergence of international governing bodies of sport underscores this point, for whilst the English were reluctant participants in the early bureaucratization of international football and rugby union, they were firmly at the helm of the internationalization of cricket. The (English) Football Association (FA) declined a number of requests to assume leadership of the fledgling international governing body in the 1890s, eventually joining in 1905, a year after FIFA was established. The relationship continued to be acrimonious with the FA resigning its membership twice during the inter-war years. Similarly the RFU was not an original member of the International Rugby Football Board (which initially consisted of Scotland, Ireland and Wales) but joined in 1890, four years after its formation. In contrast to this, in 1907 when Abe Bailey, President of the South African Cricket Association (SACA), suggested that an Imperial Cricket Board be established, Lord Harris and the President of the MCC, Lord Chesterfield, were instrumental in

placating initial objections from Australia and hosted the meetings which led to its 1909 formation.

Cricket's literature is replete with quotes linking cricket and Empire. For instance, in 1880 Lord Harris claimed that 'the game of cricket has done more to draw the Mother Country and the Colonies together than years of beneficial legislation could have done' (cited in Holt 1989: 227). He subsequently described the MCC as 'perhaps the most venerated institution in the British Empire' (cited in Bradley 1990: 3). In 1912 Lord Hawke wrote, 'On the cricket grounds of the Empire is fostered the spirit of never knowing when you are beaten, of playing for your side and not for yourself, and of never giving up a game as lost. This is as invaluable in Imperial matters as in cricket' (cited in Bateman 2009: 130). MCC President Pelham Warner would subsequently argue,

Cricket has become more than a game. It is an institution, a passion, one might say a religion. It has got into the blood of the nation, and wherever British men and women are gathered together there will the stumps be pitched. North, South, East and West, throughout the Empire, from Lord's to Sydney, from Hong Kong to the Spanish Main, cricket flourishes. (Cited in Bradley 1990: 15)

Not only was cricket 'an integral part of Empire' (Birley 2000: 95), it was claimed to be responsible for the development of English national characteristics amongst populations across the globe.

The Imperial game: Some conceptual issues

The ubiquity of the idea that cricket is the game *par excellence* uniting the British Empire serves to obscure a deeper complexity. There are five conceptual points which can fruitfully be addressed. First, the idea of cricket as the imperial game projects a false homogeneity upon the Empire. Perkin identifies the tendency to conceive of the British Empire in terms both too *narrow* in the sense that the British exercised a wider influence, and too *broad* in the sense that the Empire appears as 'an undifferentiated series of British "possessions"' (1989: 148). Rather, Perkin prefers to see the Empire 'not as a monolith but as part of a continuum in the exercise of British power and influence' (1989: 148). British 'possessions' were ruled in a variety of ways ranging from Crown colonies, through forms of self-government and dominion status. Beyond this, subtle forms of economic and cultural power reached almost all points of the globe. Perkin thus proposes that we consider concentric circles of influence consisting of: 1) an 'informal Empire' of free, self-governing nations which were relatively lawful and offered Britain stable trading relations; 2) a 'formal Empire' of self-governing dominions and dependent states; and 3) an inner circle of British-ruled colonies. 'Looked at from this point of view, the British were everywhere' (Perkin 1989: 149).

Second, although participation is largely mediated through the process of British colonization, labelling cricket the imperial game obscures the unevenness and the heterogeneity of the diffusion process. While accounts of the tremendous popularity of cricket in the West Indies, the subcontinent and Australia are relatively unproblematic, 'the game's unexpected demise [in Canada] is puzzling' (Kaufman and Patterson 2005: 83). Furthermore, the relative strength of the game in Holland and Denmark illustrates how the game took hold outside the formal Empire. The different histories of cricket in these two countries suggest that these exceptions to the rule do not have a singular or simple explanation. The first description of Danish cricket is thought to have appeared in 1802. The game was played in colleges from 1840 and in 1865 English railway engineers formed the Randers club. Dutch cricket is dated to 1856 and the existence of a Utrecht club involving students from the Netherlands and the Cape Colony.¹

A comparison of cricket in two Greek islands – Corfu and Cyprus – is similarly revealing. Since the eighteenth century Corfu has passed from Venetian, to British, to Greek governance. A British protectorate between 1815 and 1864, the first cricket match in Corfu is thought to have been played on St George's Day in 1823. A cricket pitch remains in the centre of Corfu Town and is claimed to be the only sports field within a UNESCO World heritage site.² Cyprus, however, was part of the British Empire for longer than Corfu (from 1878 to 1960) and remains a member of the Commonwealth Games Federation. Cypriots did not take to the game until after the Second World War and its current popularity in Cyprus only dates back to around 2000 and is largely attributed to the remaining British military presence and the Asian diaspora.³ Thus it would be difficult to produce a model which accounts for all the specificities of cricket's diffusion. While some of those only briefly introduced to cricket in the colonization process continue to exhibit the after-effects, some nations that existed closer to the heart of British imperialism and remain active in the Commonwealth show relatively few signs.

A third issue relates to the commonplace elision between England and Britain noted in Chapter 2. The Empire was, fundamentally, a British venture but cricket was codified by the English and came to be seen as synonymous with Englishness. Williams (1999: 12) provides an example of how easily this slip can be made:

The nature of cricket as an imperial sport was vital to the assumptions that cricket was a distillation of English moral worth. Cricket was very much a sport of the British Empire ... Cricket played between teams from Britain and other parts of the Empire was seen as a highly effective means of strengthening imperial loyalties.

Sen provides another (2001: 240): 'cricket was central to the culture of British Imperialism; playing sport trained middle-class and upper-class Englishmen to play overtly political roles'.

While as Kumar notes (2006b: 5), it was the 'English who were in command of Empire', to fully account for the relationship between cricket and colonization we must therefore also consider the process of 'internal colonialism' (Hechter 1975). Culminating in the 1707 Act of Union which established Great Britain, and was extended to incorporate Ireland in 1801, each Celtic nation experienced a different relationship with England, yet all are widely thought to be areas in which cricket has failed to have gripped the social imagination to any great extent. Thus in addition to the concentric circles of imperial influence identified by Perkin, in discussing cricket and colonization we could add a fourth concentric circle consisting of what Kumar calls 'the first English Empire' (2003a: 60). Complicating the claim for cricket as the game of the British Empire is the inconvenient fact that cricket is seen as the quintessential English rather than British game.

These remarks point to a fourth conceptual point. The distinctions between the imperialists and the colonized, and the colonial and post-colonial eras, are far from straightforward. The first colonial/post-colonial ambiguity relates to the Welsh, Scots and Irish who, once subsumed (to varying degrees as partners) within Great Britain, became a fundamental part of the broader British imperial project. Similarly, while Australia was formed through European expansion, it also had its own colonies such as Papua New Guinea (Hay 2003). Furthermore, at a time when British colonialists were most explicitly promoting cricket as *the* imperial game, inhabitants of Britain's most significant former colony (America) were attempting to diffuse baseball (Roden 1980). We are not, therefore, dealing with a simple process whereby people were exposed to a particular game form and subsequently decided whether or not to adopt it. Rather colonized became colonists and pre-existing cultural forms were abandoned, adapted or advanced by different ethnic groups in different ways in different contexts. Sport and colonization therefore entails a commingling of class, ethnic and national identities rather than a simple binary relationship. Sport and colonization is not a linear process in which the phases of colonialism and post-colonialism form mutually exclusive aspects of a single sequence, but a process with 'no unambiguous division[s]' (Bale and Cronin 2003: 3).

The fifth and final point relates to the sheer diversity of people involved in the imperial process. At its height the (formal) British Empire included at least 660 million people and encompassed more than 12 million square miles (Sandiford 1994), or a quarter of the world's habitable land (Perkin 1989). Emigration from Britain averaged about 250,000 people per year by the 1850s (Gemmell 2011) and by the time of Queen Victoria's death 'there were about 100 million people of British stock occupying territories beyond the United Kingdom' (Sandiford 1994: 144). A significant group amongst these emigrants were the public-school educated gentlemen who had been explicitly trained for imperial service. Sandiford (1994) states that this group accounted for as many as 45,000 who left Britain for the dominions between 1875 and 1900 and Perkin

(1989: 150) largely 'accredits' this group with the diffusion of cricket, arguing that while 'it would be too simple to claim that cricket and rugby were confined to the empire and soccer to the world', it was the case that cricket and rugby were diffused by former public-school boys, and football by those who travelled for more directly commercial reasons. But while it is true that former public-school boys dominated the major institutions of Empire (education, religion and military), and were significant in cricket's spread, the analysis of cricket and Empire requires a broader sweep. There were, for instance, those who provided the manpower for the military or who were active in developing trade links. There were huge numbers drawn from various social classes who, like the Mayflower pilgrims, voluntarily left Britain in search of a more prosperous future. Others were encouraged overseas by the 'systematic colonization' schemes of Edward Gibbon Wakefield who considered the de-population of Britain as a cure for the ills he believed had been created by urbanization and industrialization (Ryan 2004: 12). Finally there were those who were forcibly deported as part of Britain's penal system. Thus in the same way that we must recognize the geo-political heterogeneity of Empire, so we must also address the demographic diversity of the colonizers. Commingling with social class divisions was ethnic diversity. Stimulated by the Scottish Highland clearances and the Irish famine in the mid-nineteenth century, significant numbers came from beyond England. Almost half of the population in New Zealand in 1881 were born overseas and of these, 44.7 per cent originated in England, 19.8 per cent Scotland, 18.5 per cent Ireland and 6.5 per cent Australia. The Irish immigrant population constituted approximately one quarter of the total Australian population at this time (Ryan 2004).

Consequently, detailing the diffusion of cricket could be a book-length task in itself. In defining cricket as the imperial game we must embrace diverse lands, colonized by diverse people, with diverse motives for emigration and performing diverse roles. Thus it is hardly surprising that one of the main outcomes of Stoddart and Sandiford's text comparing the development of the game in each of the major cricket playing nations is to illustrate 'the complexity of cultural imperialism' (Sandiford 1998a: 1). It is not my intention, therefore, simply to recount a series of geographically de-limited histories of cricket in this part of the book. All of cricket's most successful playing countries, and some notably unsuccessful cricket playing nations, have been the focus of texts which provide far greater detail than can be attempted in this chapter. Rather, the aim here is to highlight what have been identified as some of the more common characteristics and some of the ideological underpinnings of this process. Doing so will enable us to understand the historically generated relations of Empire so that we can subsequently gain a deeper appreciation of the role of cricket in constructing contemporary identities. This chapter continues to focus on two core themes discussed so far, social identities and the structure and behavioural norms which govern this particular sport. Through an analysis of cricket and colonization we

can highlight the relationships which people consider important at particular times and the way people subsequently orientate their behaviour to develop those relationships.

Cricket and colonization: Dominant trends

A logical conclusion from the previous section is that the relationship between colonialism and cricket belies capture in a single succinct phrase. For instance, Birley's (1999: 81) summary that 'cricket, like the Empire itself, spread somewhat haphazardly and not always for the noblest of motives' is perhaps true as far as it goes, but is of limited analytic use. Sandiford's argument that 'the story of imperial cricket is really about the colonial quest for identity in the face of the colonisers' search for authority' (1998a: 2) also misses the mark, for while *some* consciously and conspicuously sought to implant the game within new cultures, others carried cricket abroad simply because it was part of their 'cultural baggage of emigration' (Bateman 2009: 121). This section seeks to combine the literature on cricket and imperialism with histories of the game in various cricket playing nations in order to identify some of the overarching features of the relationship between cricket and colonization.

One way to make sense of the cricket and colonization process is to focus on the various degrees of adoption, adaptation and resistance which the game inevitably manifested. At its simplest, colonized people either started to play, decided not to play, or played cricket in some modified form. The limitation of this approach can be seen via a comparison of Trobriand Cricket and American baseball. Introduced to the South Sea Islanders in the 1920s and 1930s,⁴ Trobrianders played cricket according to a number of rules which departed from the MCC-defined game. These included no restriction on the number of players per team (as long as the sides were even), throwing rather than bowling, a smaller-sized wicket, the incorporation of elaborate dances at the fall of each wicket and feasting at the end of the game (though of course all international cricketers now seem to have their own versions of each of these), and a convention whereby the home side always won. The elements of adoption, adaptation and resistance are clearly evident in this description and have been documented by cricket researchers as evidence of cultural resistance (for example Stoddart 1998a). Yet similar processes were evident in the development of baseball. Like Trobriand Cricket, baseball varied from 'MCC cricket' in terms of, for instance, the number of players on each team, the style of bowling/pitching to the batsman, and the style/shape of bases/wickets. However, scholars rarely depict the development of baseball in such derivative terms but, rather, as something with its own distinct origins. The reason for this disparity, and I expand on this in the next chapter, relates to the relative power of those invoking the adaptations. We therefore need to ask, 'where does the

promoting hand of the colonial master stop and where does the adapting and assimilating indigenous tradition start?' (Cashman 1988: 261). When should our accounts give primacy to discontinuity over continuity and vice versa?

A second general tendency is to dichotomize those involved in this process into two competing and mutually exclusive groups: the transmitters or change agents and the adopters of this cultural form (see for example Kaufman and Patterson 2005). Again there are problems with this mode of analysis. First, our knowledge of the respective groups is uneven. The relatively powerful not only had greater resources with which to record their activities, but there was little to stop them (mis)interpreting or exaggerating their results to bolster their self-identity. Similarly some of these accounts may contain post-hoc rationalizations which lead the colonizers' actions to take on an unrealistic aura of coherence and intentionality. For instance, emigrants may have played cricket amongst themselves, the colonized may have played the game (or a variant of it), and the colonizers might have subsequently interpreted this as the intended consequence of their goal to assimilate the 'natives' when in fact the causal connection is far more complex. Furthermore, Cashman argues that accounts which concentrate exclusively on the actions of the proselytizers tend to view 'colonial salesmanship as a monolithic activity' (1988: 261). Given the class and ethnic differences between British emigrants it is reasonable to assume that their respective relationships with cricket, and their desire to share the game with others, were not uniform. Indeed, as we will see, the process of the rationalization and standardization of cricket is such that we cannot always assume that there was only one version of the game being diffused to any particular territory. A third problem relates to the portrayal of the adopters of this cultural product as nationally uniform in accepting (or rejecting) its diffusion. Rather, reception should be viewed as contoured by local differences and conflicts as much as by external influences. The history of cricket shows that the diffusion of a sport may benefit some but not all of the colonists, and its adoption might benefit some but not all of the colonized.

With this in mind it can be argued that, in the beginning of the colonization process, cricket was diffused largely because it was a form of recreation and entertainment with which British emigrants were familiar. Cricket and a range of other leisure pursuits were used in much the same way as they had been at 'home'. However within the relatively fluid communities of Empire, sport also helped to integrate new arrivals and act as 'a means of maintaining morale and a sense of shared roots' (Holt 1989: 208). Cashman argues that playing cricket enabled migrants to establish a perception of normalcy within an otherwise alien and hostile environment. Consequently we can see that some of the first Australian cricket grounds 'attempted to replicate the English rural environment' (Cashman 1998: 35). The parallel between the initials of the Melbourne Cricket Club's and those of its Marylebone counterpart added an air of legitimacy to the former's ascendancy in Australian cricket

administration. Ryan states that a desire to replicate such essential English institutions as cricket clubs was even stronger amongst those who migrated from Britain after 1840 and suggests that anglophilia continued to strongly influence the structure and administration of New Zealand cricket throughout the twentieth century. Cricket literature ascribed to the game the 'ability to transform aesthetically the colonial landscape, subsuming geographical particularity into a single, generic space of Englishness' (Bateman 2009: 128). A significant aspect of the global diffusion of cricket entailed little conscious or explicit attempt to alter the behaviour of indigenous or colonized populations but simply the continuation of existing cultural practices and traditions.

Subsequently people saw an educative role for cricket within the Empire. It is important to note that the social meaning of the game was not uniform across the process of colonial diffusion. For instance, while the Calcutta Cricket Club was founded in 1792 (Cashman 1998: 116) and cricket was first introduced to South Africa between 1795 and 1802 (Allen 2010: 40), in England in 1796 the Eton headmaster banned the school's pupils from playing against Westminster school (Brookes 1978: 72). At this point in the imperial process cricket had not yet been 're-invented' as a pastoral, peaceful and patriotic game form. Of course, by the end of the nineteenth century there were many, both at home and abroad, who were willing to attribute Britain's success in establishing an Empire to its sporting tradition. Playing sport was seen to build character and the characteristics nurtured were remarkably similar to those previously identified in relation to the ideas of cricket and Englishness which emerged at the beginning of the nineteenth century. As Holt's discussion of the role of sport in the Empire notes, 'The British were perceived as active and resourceful, if academically limited. Foreigners often envied their sheer ability to get things done, especially in relation to the running of an empire, which was ascribed in part to energy and common sense derived from games' (1989: 204). Through Empire, the British came to share the group charisma which the English had devised for themselves, but neither this conflation nor cricket's moral worth were evident at the Empire's outset.

The educational role of cricket fused with a discourse of civilizing mission. The establishment of such an extensive Empire was demonstrably a remarkable achievement and the positive self-image which the British took from this was 'intimately bound up with notions of white supremacy' (Williams 2001: 18). They were the colonizers because they possessed characteristics lacked by the 'inferior races' being colonized. Social Darwinism – an ideology which suggested that the survival of the fittest cultures was a natural and universal process – gave imperialism an aura of inevitable evolutionary development. Apologists for Empire, and especially those whose *apologia* was fuelled by Christian beliefs, framed colonization as a moral obligation to bring their particular form of civilization to those they were conquering; that they would both literally and metaphorically learn how to 'play the game'. As Mangan's (1984) description

of Tyndale-Biscoe's activities in Kashmir clearly illustrates, the belief persisted that through sports such as cricket the colonized could come to acquire the characteristics of the English gentleman. What resistance the colonized offered was because they knew no better. They would come to realise the benefits in time. Cricket playing, extensively described in the colonizers' burgeoning literature, became 'living proof of the success of Britain's civilizing mission and of the victorious transference of Anglo-Saxon values on its subjects' (Bateman 2009: 129).

In situations where cultural assimilation could not easily be imposed, cricket offered a vehicle for the colonized to integrate into British cultural norms. In India the Parsees (a group of merchants and liberal professionals of Persian origin based around Bombay) were amongst the first to take up the game. Playing cricket enabled the Parsees to illustrate to the British that they were suitable and reliable collaborators. This facilitated their go-between role for the British and Indian populations. *Pace Perkin* (1989) it also demonstrates the importance of trade links in the development of cricket. Furthermore, the game acted as a 'means of anglicizing the indigenous rulers' of India (Holt 1989: 215) as so vividly demonstrated in the career of Ranjitsinhji. 'Ranji' transferred from Rajkumar College, Rajkot to Cambridge University before going on to captain Sussex County Cricket Club and represent England (Sandiford 1994). Enabled by his unquestioning commitment to both the Empire and the English institutions at its hub, he clearly 'learned the language of muscular Christianity' (Sen 2001: 241). Moreover, he brought 'a peculiarly English genius to batting ... the glamorous obverse of the effeminacy, laziness, and lack of stamina that many colonial theorists thought Indians represented' (Appadurai 1995: 30). Playing cricket could be particularly advantageous to some individuals, even if a broader framework of economically and racially exploitative relations remained intact.

We can therefore see that to fully account for the diffusion of cricket we need to consider elements of accident, education, indoctrination and acculturation. In the final section of this chapter, however, I want to place greater emphasis on the ideologies which underpinned the process of cricket and colonization for within these we can see a number of logical inconsistencies. Addressing these ideological paradoxes allows us to explain cricket's relationship to the demise of the British Empire and indeed the social conditions under which the notion of cricket as the imperial game was generated. Through the commingling of intended and unintended consequences we can see how British dominance in colonial relations did not in any simplistic sense equate to absolute control.

Cricket and colonization: Ideological problems

The first of these ideological problems relates to the character building properties claimed for cricket. Similar to the invention of cricket and

Englishness discussed in Chapter 2, proponents of the game assumed seemingly contradictory positions regarding the violence/passivity of the game. While Tyndale-Biscoe used sport to grind 'grit into Kashmir' (Mangan 1984: 193), he and others also saw cricket as able to transform the 'baser instincts' of the colonized and inculcate the degrees of self-reliance, calmness and courage exhibited by English gentlemen (Bateman 2009: 126). Cricket could therefore make one both more manly *and* more genteel. While not strictly speaking oxymoronic, such an ideology barely stood scrutiny, particularly when placed in the broader context of more-or-less violent subjugation through colonization. It is perhaps no coincidence that the ICC should be proposed by a South African in the immediate aftermath of the Boer War. Similarly, the relatively unruly behaviour of cricket crowds in Australia in the 1880s seemed, on the face of it, to contradict the claims for the civilizing virtues of the game, but did little to shake commitment to cricket's character building properties. And if Britain's imperial strength stemmed from a culture of game playing there was something rather paradoxical about introducing such games to those whom they had colonized. As Majumdar (2008; Majumdar and Brown 2007) has argued, part of the appeal of cricket to Bengalis was the game's masculinity validating properties. However, was this not simply training the subaltern for effective resistance? Thus one of the central characteristics of the relationship between cricket and colonialization was that supporting and counter evidence, intended and unintended consequences, were evident in equal measure.

Perhaps the most marked and significant challenge to the character building ideology came during the 1932–33 tour of England to Australia. During this series the England captain, Douglas Jardine, instructed his bowlers to bowl 'fast leg theory' or 'Bodyline' to counter the proficiency of the Australian batsmen, and Donald Bradman in particular. With England set to take a two to one lead in the best of five test match series, and the Australian public becoming particularly enraged when wicketkeeper Bertie Oldfield was hit by a Harold Larwood bouncer,⁵ the Australian Board of Control sent a telegram to the MCC. Bodyline, they claimed, '(made) protection of the body by the batsman the main consideration. This is causing intensely bitter feeling between the players as well as injury. In our opinion it is unsportsmanlike' (Wisden 1934: 328). The MCC defended their team but offered the Australians the option of cancelling the tour. Jardine insisted that the accusation 'unsportsmanlike' be retracted, which it was (reluctantly) on the first morning of the next match. While the series continued acrimoniously, perhaps most importantly, the idea that English cricketers possessed some kind of special virtue was undermined forever.

A second ideology underpinning Empire and influencing the imperial role of cricket was the concept of environmental determinism. Environmental determinism is a geographical version of Social Darwinism (Bale 2002) and, according to this highly teleological set of ideas, imperial dominance was partly based on physical and psychological characteristics generated by the

environmental conditions particular to Britain. (Indeed this ideology could be further refined to explain differences between the (southern) English and the Scots, Irish and Welsh.) Environmental determinism could be used to explain the perceptions of both British virtues and the weaknesses and failings of the colonized. The converse of the belief that the human body was invigorated by the cold of Northern Europe was that it was equally weakened by the heat of the tropics. However, according to this logic the act of British colonials re-locating to the hot climes of the Empire entailed the risk of physical degeneration. This became a central reason why colonists wanted to play sports such as cricket. Competing (successfully) against teams from the 'Mother Country' was a way of demonstrating that British stock had not declined. This was as true for those who migrated to Australia as it was for those in the Caribbean. Consequently English commentators could congratulate the English 'race' for the victories of Australian cricketers over the English, a rationalization which Bradley (1995: 40) describes as 'an intellectual sleight of hand'. In a similarly ironic twisting of this logic, an ever-increasing number of black players were integrated into the West Indian team to ward off continued defeat at the hands of the 'Mother Country' and thus demonstrate the colonists' continued vigour. This may have been an extension of the English national character of 'getting things done', but what such empirical evidence did *not* seem to do was lead to a revision of the belief system which naturalized and therefore ultimately justified the process of colonization.

A third and perhaps the most enduring paradoxical ideology of imperial cricket related to the game's role in fostering unity. Playing cricket came to be seen as one of the clearest expressions of loyalty to the Crown and commitment to the Empire. At first cricket was used by white emigrants, 'as a celebration of the tight, unbroken bond between themselves and their metropolitan "cousins"' (Beckles 1998a: 2). The white plantocracy in the Caribbean strived to be seen as the most loyal group of colonial subjects and the veneration of cricket was an essential part of, and an ideal vehicle for, this claim. Initially at least, Australian cricket represented 'a highly deferential and pro-imperial nationalism' (Bateman 2009: 125). Ranji, through his playing career and cultural outlook, came to be seen as the embodiment of the legitimacy of the entire imperial process and civilizing mission. But not all parts of the Empire took to the game with equal zeal. While playing cricket was celebrated, those countries which exhibited a relative disinterest in the game were not punished or shunned in any way. Rather such non-conformity was simply overlooked. Moreover, the cricketing histories of populations that did not remain loyal to the crown – America, Ireland – were simply re-written. While these nations sought separation from the Empire, the people continued to play cricket. The English, as we will see in subsequent chapters, were disinclined to give much recognition to this anomaly.

Imperial cricket was also deeply infused with social divisions. Cricket in India was a vehicle for the re-creation of ethnic identities such as Hindu,

Muslim, Sikh and the aforementioned Parsees. A 'separate and culturally pro-British stratum' (Holt 1989: 219), fostered through the racial and social class segregation was reproduced in a variety of Caribbean societies. Here the population was also geographically divided with competition between the different island cultures particularly significant. New Zealand cricket, especially in Canterbury, broadly followed the class infrastructure of English cricket (Ryan 1998; 2004). What seems most remarkable about these cultural formations is that social divisions were identified as the cause of cricket's unpopularity in certain contexts (notably North America), while in others such divisions seemed to actively contribute to the uptake and popularity of the game. For instance the social class differences which characterized English cricket at this time were said to appeal to the Indian princes who adopted the game. Cricket was 'a useful extension of other royal public spectacles that had been an important part of the obligations and mystique of royalty in India', and the employment of white cricketing professionals from England contributed to a 'complex, hierarchical, cross-hatching' of social relations (Appadurai 1995: 29). Perhaps most famously, CLR James (1963) has described the relative acceptance within the Caribbean of cricket clubs stratified according to both race and class.

The credibility of this ideology was further stretched as cricket subsequently came to play a more central role in the generation and expression of national differences and identities. First was Australia, where test matches against England quickly came to be a gauge of the country's readiness for independence (Sandiford 1998a). Next came South Africa, then the West Indies, New Zealand, India and so on (see Table 4.1). Each test playing nation has its own benchmark of progress *vis a vis* the 'Mother Country', but invariably major milestones on this journey include the 'granting' of test match status, and the

Table 4.1 The development of international 'Test Match' cricket

Test Playing Nation	Test Debut	First Victory over England	First Victory at Lords
England	1877		
Australia	1877	1877	1888
South Africa	1889	1905	1935
West Indies	1928	1929–30	1950
New Zealand	1929–30	1977–78	1999
India	1932	1951–52	1986
Pakistan	1954	1954	1982
Sri Lanka	1982	1993	
Zimbabwe	1992		
Bangladesh	2000		

initial victory over England (often first in home conditions and ultimately, if possible, at Lord's). Whether victory over England will in future have the same significance remains to be seen. For Zimbabwe, and Bangladesh in particular, other playing successes may come to be seen as more significant in defining national status.

The key point here is that cricket 'threatened the hierarchical principles of Empire because of its new inclusiveness' (Bateman 2009: 122). The 'level playing field' and the fair play espoused in cricket ideology and nomenclature would eventually struggle to co-exist with the more pronounced structural inequalities of Empire. One response was to produce 'a dichotomous image which emphasized the similarities and differences between the old Country and its colonial offshoots' (Bradley 1995: 38) but the tenuous nature of these images was such that cricket administrators and advocates in the 'Mother Country' increasingly seemed to feel the need to produce statements which bolstered and justified their international influence. Reminiscent of Levi-Strauss's (1967) argument that social phenomena 'become the object of acute analysis precisely when they are ending' (Cole 2000: 440), the most developed narratives of cricket and imperialism were produced at the time when the Empire was beginning to be dismantled. Thus the ubiquity of the notion of cricket as the imperial game depends to a significant degree upon people's increasing awareness of its contradictions and paradoxes. Conversely where cricket was popular in the 1860s and 1870s (as we will see, in American and the Celtic nations) it did not acquire longer term popularity because English cricket administrators at that time were neither in a position (due to domestic weakness) nor particularly interested in the international development of the game. Gemmell (2011) makes the very interesting observation that at the point at which the ICC was formed, it could easily have been claimed that America rather than South Africa was amongst the world's three strongest cricket playing nations. The decision not to include the USA at this time may well have subsequently led to some very significant consequences for the game. But while cricket was England's national game, imperialism meant that it was not explicitly a *nationalistic* game, at least not in the sense that it would become, in England, in the 1990s.

Conclusion

This chapter has sought to examine the widely held notion that cricket and the British Empire are fundamentally linked. On one level this is a truism but like all common sense ideas there is a tendency towards over-simplification. The obvious contemporary manifestations of imperial cricket hide a deep, rich and varied pattern of social relations. This is not, of course, to say that particular trends or themes cannot be identified, merely to suggest that the relationship

between cricket and colonization is sufficiently complex to belie summary in a simple umbrella statement.

It is partly for this reason that I will *not* conclude this chapter by developing a model of sports diffusion. Kaufman and Patterson provide what is probably the best of these, but as I have written elsewhere (Malcolm 2006), their model remains far from perfect. Rather, in the following chapters I examine three particular cases which help develop an understanding of the relationship between cricket and colonization. I look first at cricket in America. This study represents one of the most striking cases of rejection and serves as a vehicle for illustrating some of the limitations in existing explanations of cultural diffusion. Within the American case we can see the continuation of the fundamental importance of social class in the development of the game; something which, cf. Haseler (1996), has distinctly English characteristics. Moreover due to the antipathetic relationship that is commonly perceived to exist between cricket and American culture, particularly the highly commercialized sports forms of North America, the fact that Americans do not play cricket in large numbers is fundamental to the continued perception of it as the quintessential English game. The second study relates to cricket in the Caribbean. In many ways this is one of the most remarkable cases of the adoption of cricket and the subsequent use of the game in the process of 'national' self assertion. Within the West Indian case we can see the continuation of the fundamental importance of violence (through fast bowling) in the development of the game. In this regard it reveals a great deal about the concomitant aspects of conflict and cooperation within colonial and post-colonial relations. Finally attention is turned towards the relatively uncharted waters of cricket in the Celtic nations of the British Isles. This chapter is essential for helping us to fit the square peg of cricket's Englishness into the round hole of its status as the British Empire's pre-eminent sport.

Together the three studies develop our understanding of the cricket and colonization process more generally, but they also help form the foundations of the contemporary aspects of identity examined in the book's final chapters. Stoddart (1998b: 163) concludes his overview of the relationship between cricket and Empire by noting that 'while ... the sun *has* finally set on the British Empire in the political sense, the persistence and even flourishing of cricket shows that "the imperial game" might well be one of the empire's major lasting influences'. Holt (1989: 222–23) similarly notes that 'cricket has helped both to sharpen a sense of nationalism and to soften its impact on Britain through the maintenance of close sporting contacts between former colonies and the "mother country"'. Dirlik (2002: 444) cites cricket as a particularly apposite example of the durability of colonial relations in contemporary cultural identities. Thus the relationship between cricket and colonization is essential to furthering our understanding of both the globalizing of cricket, and of the role of cricket in structuring and mediating the way in which the English view themselves and others in the twenty-first century.

One final point needs to be made. While this will be illustrated in subsequent chapters, it is important to note at this point that the role of cricket in identity construction was not a process confined to those in the colonies. Rather, cricket also performed a key role in educating the British about what their Empire was and who they, as a colonizing people, were. For instance, the first tour of England by a 'white' Australian team in 1878 (an Aboriginal team had toured England ten years earlier) was marked by the English public's realization that Australians were visually similar to themselves. Moreover, in the same way that the veneration of the English countryside is related to the early and extensive urbanization of Britain (Haseler 1996), the English sense of self was generated via contradistinction with the colonial other. Descriptions of the Australians focussed on their social class; 'good straightforward fellows of the rough and ready sort' (cited in Bradley 1995: 46). Complaints about the money-making activities of Australian cricketers, and the dour as opposed to dashing style of play they favoured reinforced the primacy of the amateur in English cricket. 'By describing what English people were not (Australians), they were attempting to say what English people were' (Bradley 1995: 37). As Loomba (1998: 19) notes, 'postcolonial studies have shown that both the "metropolis" and the "colony" were deeply altered by the colonial process'.