The diffusion of soccer football is an excellent case for careful study because the game is complex enough not to have been invented independently by a number of premodern cultures and yet simple enough to have become unquestionably the world's most popular team sport. "What diffusion," asks a French geographer, "is more universal than football's, whose grounds can be seen in every latitude—in the center of huge industrial cities and in the most isolated villages of Third World countries?\textsuperscript{1}

While something akin to modern soccer was played in ancient China,\textsuperscript{2} the game's direct antecedents can be traced back to medieval Europe, where folk football, a rough sport that maimed
many of its participants, was played in one form or another in the peasant villages of England and France. Royal edicts banned football in 1314, 1349, 1389, 1401, and many subsequent years. The necessity for repeated prohibitions suggests that the game was too deeply rooted in the soil of customary behavior to be eradicated by royal decree. Like other traditional games, the rules for folk football, which were never codified, varied from place to place and from time to time. Common to all versions was a level of physical violence responsible for the vain efforts at prohibition.

It was by no means merely the peasantry that was addicted to football. In 1615, Sir Thomas Overbury complained of the game's unhealthy popularity at Oxford and Cambridge. According to Overbury, the typical student was contemptuous of "the meere scholar. . . . The antiquity of his University is his creed, and the excellency of his Colledge (though but for a match of foot-ball) an article of his faith."3

The modern form of the game is a nineteenth-century adaptation of folk football (which persisted, in some parts of England and Scotland, into the twentieth century). In 1848, fourteen collegians who had played a number of different ball games at Eton, Harrow, Rugby, Winchester, and several other schools met in Cambridge and agreed upon a common set of rules that enabled them to play together.4 The role of the universities was crucial for the diffusion of soccer. "Without the unifying influence of the universities, which acted as a 'relay station,' organized games could not have emerged in the schools with the same speed or to the same degree that they did in the years 1830–80."5 The name of the game—Association ("soccer") Football—derives from the fact that the sport was organized and promoted by the Football Association, founded in London on October 26, 1863, a day that scholars agree was "the most important date in the modern history of football."6

In its modern form, the game began as a middle-class pastime. Of the first club, founded in 1855, Eric Dunning and Kenneth Sheard have commented, "Most members were old boys of Sheffield Collegiate School." The Old Harrovians, who established their club in 1860, were obviously another group with "public school" origins.7

The "old boys" wanted to keep the game for themselves, but soccer was quickly diffused downward through the social strata. Aston Villa FC and the Bolton Wanderers, both founded in 1874, were typical of the many clubs that recruited their first members from the congregations of churches and chapels. Within a few years, other clubs destined to figure grandly in the annals of English sports were organized by the employees of industrial enterprises. Manchester United began as Newton Heath FC, founded in 1880 by railroad workers, and Coventry City FC had its start as a club organized by the workers at Singer's bicycle factory. In 1895, laborers at the Thames Iron Works founded a team that became West Ham United FC. The Football Association's Cup Final, which represented the national championship, was won in 1883 by Blackburn Olympic FC, whose somewhat pretentiously named team included three weavers, a spinner, a cotton operator, an iron worker, a plumber, and a dental assistant.8

By 1888, the solidly middle-class directors of the Football Association's member clubs implicitly acknowledged that soccer had become "the people's game" when they reluctantly accepted the openly professional clubs of Football League. By the early twentieth century, the connection between soccer and the working class was so strong, and the feelings for the game were so intense, that "it was no exaggeration for some to describe football . . . as a 'religion.' The football grounds of England were the Labour Party at prayer."9

TO THE CONTINENT

"In the years after 1880," writes Ruud Stokvis, a Dutch sociologist who has closely studied ludic diffusion, "English sports were adopted on the European continent by young members of
the elite and the upper middle class.” Others followed. Geographers describing the process refer to a well-known S-curve pattern: innovations of all kinds are initially slow to spread among a population; then there is a phase of rapid adoption followed by a long period in which the laggards are gradually won over to the new technique or mode of behavior. On the continent, it was the anglophile segments of the upper class that responded initially to the new game, the middle classes that quickly spread the word, and the workers and peasants whose tardy arrival at the soccer pitch completed the process of diffusion. Once they began to kick the ball about, players from the upper and middle classes dropped their gear and moved on to greener and more exclusive ludic pastures. For many of them, rugby was an acceptable substitute for soccer.

There has been some confusion about exactly who introduced soccer football to the European continent. In a classic essay entitled “Gymnastics and Sports in Fin-de-Siècle France,” Eugen Weber wrote that

English boys attending private schools in Geneva, Lausanne, and St. Gallen, as well as Swiss graduates of Oxford and Cambridge, established [soccer] in Switzerland before it appeared elsewhere on the Continent: La Chatelaine of Geneva was founded in 1869; the St. Gallen Football Club in 1879; and the Grasshoppers of Zurich in 1886.12

The palm for priority seems to have been awarded wrongly. Soccer was played in Belgium as early as 1863, the year of the foundation of England’s Football Association.

Although adult Englishmen resident in Belgium organized a number of sports clubs, including the Antwerp Football and Cricket Club (1880), the principal mechanism for the diffusion of soccer throughout the kingdom was the network of Roman Catholic schools established for the sons of the nation’s elite. English students are sometimes said to have played Belgium’s first game of soccer on the Ten Boschplein in Brussels in 1865, but they seem to have been anticipated by the boys of a Jesuit school in the town of Melle (in the vicinity of Ghent). At the Maison de Melle, which catered to the sons of the nobility and the upper middle class, the game was introduced in 1863 by Cyril Bernard Morrogh, an Irish pupil from Killarney. According to a memoir published by Jules Dubois in 1923 in the Blad van de Vereniging der Oud Mellisten (an alumni magazine), enthusiasm for the new game was so great and play was so wild that the ball soon “exhaled a resounding ‘pouf,’ its last sigh.”13 Thomas Savage brought a new one from London, play resumed, and Savage’s Belgian classmates quickly learned a version of English “more useful than the beautiful poetry of Shakespeare that they pounded into us in the classroom.”14

For more than a decade, the taste for soccer seems to have been limited. Then, in 1880, Pater Germain Hermans returned to Belgium after a year in Croyden, where he had played goalie on a team at St. George’s College (a Jesuit school). Employed by the Collège de Saint-Stanislaus in Tirlemont, he explained the rules of football to his pupils and organized the first game. The police stepped in to quell what they perceived as youthful disorder, but the mayor seems to have heard enough about the ways of mad dogs and Englishmen to let the boys have their fun. In 1884, Hermans carried the game to his new post at the Collège Saint-Matherne at Tongres and from there he moved on, in 1886, to the Maison de Melle. Since the original Melliennes continued playing games of 1863, developing in relative isolation, had become rather eccentric, Hermans imposed the official rules of the Football Association. Meanwhile, in 1885, students at the Sint-Francis-Xavier Instituet, who had begun to play soccer in 1868, joined with students from the Koninklijk Atheneum to form a combined team and boldly challenge the Red Caps of the English College of Brussels. Six years later, students at the Collège Saint-Bernard, with the help of some local Britons, founded an organization to which they gave an English name: the Brussels Football Club.
By the time the *Union Belge des Sociétés de Sports Athlétiques* was founded in 1895, the sport was popular in many if not most of the nation's elite schools.

The Dutch pattern was an interesting variant of the Belgian. "The introduction of sports such as cricket, football, and tennis and the establishment of clubs to practice them . . . was the work of Englishmen resident in the Netherlands and of the Dutch who had been to England."15 C. H. Bingham, a cycling enthusiast who became the first director of the *Nederlandsche Velocipèdisten Bond* (1883), was British while J. R. Dickson Romijn, founder of Deventer's Utile Dulce Cricket Club (1875), was educated in England. His father, who had been a Dutch consul there, took the lead in forming the *Haagsche Cricket Club* (1878). Pim Mulier, who had studied at an English boarding school, founded the *Haarlemsche Football Club*, Holland's first, in 1879. At the time, he was only fourteen years old. By the time Mulier was twenty-two, he was a veteran leader in the *Nederlandsche Voetbalboond*, which he helped to organize.16

In the port city of Rotterdam, soccer was played by dock workers who had been inspired by the example of British seamen, but historians eager to learn more about their games have been frustrated by the paucity of documentary evidence. Longshoremen and other workers who took up the game "formed fluid soccer teams and played irregularly under changing names and without having club houses, standardized uniforms or fixed playing fields."17

Because Dutch educators at the secondary and the collegiate level were generally opposed to sports and strongly committed to noncompetitive gymnastic exercises, these mainstays of middle-class culture were far less disposed than their Belgian counterparts to encourage the mania for English sports. During the eighties and nineties, gymnastics teachers, who had formed a national organization in 1862 in order to propagandize for their version of physical education, condemned Holland's emergent sports clubs as "a cancer" afflicting the nation's youth.18 Their antipathy was based on more than divergent ideas about the importance of competition. The physical educators came mostly from the working class while the first enthusiasts for modern sports, including soccer, came predominantly from the upper middle class or from the titled aristocracy. For models of physical activity, the educators looked to Germany, where the tradition of noncompetitive gymnastics (Türen) had originated; their affluent pupils, unimpressed by regimented exercise, took their cues from England.

German physical educators were no more able than their loyal Dutch admirers to dampen the fire of the *Fussballmanie* that raged in their schools. Boys who were bored by the deadly routines of *Schultüren* (educational calisthenics) responded eagerly to the excitement of soccer. Konrad Koch, an eighteen-year-old student at Braunschweig's *Gymnasium Martino-Katharineum*, introduced the game in 1874. Although Koch was influenced by Thomas Arnold of Rugby, whom he wrongly imagined to have been a believer in sports as an inculcator of manly self-discipline, he was realistic enough to understand that the game's English origins were a drawback in that period of intense German nationalism. Koch attempted to translate the lingo of soccer into German and to trace the game back to some acceptably Teutonic sources. His stratagem was apparently successful. The middle classes of the school formed a team in 1875. Some of the students were worried about a loss of dignity and resisted the lure of the rough-and-tumble game until 1879, when their teachers, realizing that boisterous play on the pitch was preferable to unruly outbursts in the classroom, sternly ordered the recalcitrant youths to go out and have a good time.19

A passion for the sport slowly began to spread from school to school. Wherever the educational authorities were hostile, boys formed teams for out-of-school play, but their "wild" clubs had
a tendency to disappear after a single season. Soccer was not, at first, as popular or as firmly institutionalized as another sport derived from England. The aura of the Henley Regatta and the example of British business representatives in seaports like Bremen and Hamburg inspired thousands of middle-class and upper-class Germans to become oarsmen. When the rowers organized their Deutscher Ruderverband in 1883, they far outnumbered the soccer players.

By that time, however, soccer was more than a sport for schoolboys. In the commercial centers of northern Germany, Britons and Germans of the mercantile and professional classes founded the first soccer clubs for young adults. Bremen and Hamburg had theirs in 1880, Hannover followed a year later. Berlin's first club, the Berliner Fussball-Club Frankfurt 1885, received its unusual name because its founder, the artist Georg Leux, brought the game with him when he arrived from Frankfurt am Main. Leux was also a leader in the Bund Deutscher Fussballspieler, which united the city's British and German clubs in 1890. Other regional federations sprang up as if, in the German idiom, "stamped from the ground." Archibald S. White, a Scottish minister living in the elegantly international resort town of Baden-Baden, became the first president of the Südwestdeutsche Fussball-Union. In nearby Karlsruhe, Walter Bensemann founded the Kickers and inaugurated international play against teams from Belgium, Holland, France, Switzerland, Hungary, and—boldest move of all—England. After a number of failed attempts to found a national organization, eighty-six mostly middle-class delegates met in Leipzig on January 28, 1900, and formed the Deutscher Fussball-Bund.20

A tournament to determine the national champion took place three years later. It was marred by the first of many soccer scandals. A few days before Karlsruhe's team was to meet Prague's in Leipzig, the former received a telegram: "Game postponed. Information follows." The team from Prague waited vainly in Leipzig; the telegram was a fake. The sponsors of the tournament allowed Prague to advance to the final because Karlsruhe had not been clever enough to see through the hoax.21

It was not, however, until working-class adults took to the "completely unfamiliar" sport that soccer began really to flourish.22 This did not happen until a quarter century after Koch introduced the game at the Gymnasium Martino-Katharineum in Braunschweig. One reason for the relatively late acceptance of the game was initial resistance on the part of the Arbeiter-Turn-Bewegung, the socialist gymnastics federation organized in 1893 in opposition to the middle-class gymnasts of the Deutsche Turnerschaft.23 While the high-minded leaders of the socialist federation deplored football's competitiveness, which they likened to capitalism's, rank-and-file workers had little interest in ideological consistency. The history of one of Germany's most famous professional teams, Schalke 04, is instructive. The club, which lies in the heart of the heavily industrialized Ruhr Valley, traces its origins back to May 4, 1904, when fifteen-year-old Heinrich Kullmann and fourteen-year-old Gerhard Kloop organized a group of their friends into a "wild" club that they named Westfalia Schalke. (The Ruhr Valley is part of Westphalia.) It was not long before the boys' fathers—miners and steel workers—noticed what their sons had done. One can imagine Herr Kullmann and Herr Kloop pausing on their way home from work, wondering what their sons were up to, laying down their lunch pails, and joining the game.24

In the first ten years of its existence, Schalke had forty-four members whose occupational status is known to us. Half of them were miners and fifteen others were factory hands or artisans.25 In other clubs as well, the German evolution recapitulated the English, which had taken twenty-five years to shift its demographic center of gravity from the upper middle class to the working class (i.e., from the foundation of the proudly amateur Football Association in 1863 to the creation of the openly
professional Football League in 1888). Soccer became, in Germany as in England, a basic constituent of working-class culture, part of what it meant to be “ein guter Kumpel” (“a good fellow worker”).

L’invention britannique arrived in France no later than 1872, when the British residents of Normandy, led by F. F. Langstaff of the South West Railway, formed the Havre Athletic Club (HAC). Since most of the members were Oxford or Cambridge men, the club’s colors “combined the blues of the two universities.” A rival claim to priority has been made by the Breton town of St. Servan, which began to attract English tourists after the Southampton-St. Malo steamship line was inaugurated in 1864. Joseph Gemain, who was one of the early players, testified that soccer was introduced in the sixties by members of the town’s British colony. The first team was called “les Anglais de Saint Servan.”

Like many of the early enthusiasts, the members of the first clubs were often unsure about exactly which kind of football they wanted to play. On November 18, 1884, ten members of the Le Havre club voiced a preference for soccer, two for rugby, and twelve members—reluctantly undecided—voted for a combination of both games. Eventually, in 1891, the club divided into soccer and rugby sections.

Britons living in Paris formed a Paris Football Club in 1879, but it collapsed five years later “for lack of rivals.” The British in Paris tried again with the International Athletic Club (1887) and the Paris Football Association Club (1887). The White Rovers (1891), named after the Blackburn Rovers, winners of the Football Association’s Cup Final, were followed a few months later by the Standard Athletic Club (1892), which was probably the most successful; in 1894 it won a national tournament reluctantly sponsored by the Union des Sociétés Françaises de Sports Athlétiques after a number of soccer clubs threatened to secede from the organization to protest the USFSA’s discriminatory pol-icy. There was only one Frenchman on the Standard Athletic Club’s championship team. When the Racing-Club de Paris defended its goal against the attacks of the Richmond Town Wanderers in 1906, the “home” team had four Frenchmen. (The defense cannot have been very impressive; le Racing-Club lost by a score of 15–0.)

Inspired by the British clubs in Paris and by a visit to Eton by two of their number, pupils of the École Monge began to contemplate forming a team of their own, which they did on October 28, 1888. The first schoolboy game was played on the Pelouse de Madrid on December 10. In 1892, Georges Duhamel, later to become an important man of letters and the author of a history of French soccer, formed a team of pupils recruited from the Collège Chapital and the Lycée Jeanson-de-Sully. Several of the boys had had an “éducation sportive” in England or Scotland. Charles Bernat and Eugène Frayasse, for instance, had played for St. Joseph’s College in Dumfries. By the turn of the century, there were clubs in most French cities. Paris alone had twenty-five, most of them founded by teachers of English or—as was the case in southern cities like Marseille and Nîmes—by students returning from an English sojourn. During the fin de siècle, nearly all of the players came from the politically dominant urban bourgeoisie, which doubtless explains why the president of the republic appeared among the spectators at the first game played by the boys of the École Monge. In these early years, the game was so closely identified with the British that casual spectators listening to the players’ excited exclamations often assumed that the écoliers were British lads with an admirable command of colloquial French.

For the provincial bourgeoisie who had neither visited England nor come into contact with one of the British teams based in France, the press provided rudimentary instruction. On the other hand, the most powerful athletic organization of the day, the Union des Sociétés Françaises de Sports Athlétiques, did little to
promote the game. Paschel Grousset, Pierre de Coubertin’s great rival for leadership in French sports, overcame his dislike for English sports and organized a national tournament for schoolboys (won by the Lycée de Rouen), but it went against Grousset’s chauvinist grain. When forced by the sports engagement of its members to accommodate itself to imported British games, the USFSA indicated a preference for rugby, which became immensely popular in the southwest of France. In the Gironde and in Provence, peasants seem to have perceived the rough-and-tumble of rugby as a bracing contrast to the urban effeteenes of soccer.

The industrial workers of Lille and the dockers of Marseilles were much slower to develop a passion for soccer than their British or German counterparts. As an essentially middle-class sport, an “amusement for young men from good families,” soccer was able to attract only some two thousand spectators to a 1903 match that was to decide the national championship; two years earlier, 100,000 Britons had jammed London’s Crystal Palace for the Football Association’s Cup Final. Although the Germans’ Fussballverband was formed in 1900, it was not until 1919 that the Fédération Française de Football was constituted. Until that time, soccer, lacking its own national structure, was simply one of many sports sponsored—rather reluctantly—by the Union des Sociétés Françaises de Sports Athlétiques or—more enthusiastically—by regional leagues.

Although soccer has never been as popular in France as in Great Britain and Germany, the game has served the French well as a vehicle of acculturation and ethnic integration. The first and second divisions of the national soccer league have always fielded a higher percentage of foreign professionals than its European counterparts have. From the thirties to the eighties, about 20 percent of the players have been foreigners, recruited mostly from Eastern Europe and from Latin America. Unfortunately for gallic pride, foreign stars are ineligible for the national team, which has never done very well in international competition.

The Italian story differs from that of the northern Europeans in that students played less of a role in the diffusion of soccer than was the case in France, Germany, and the Low Countries. British sailors had introduced the game in the eighties when they docked and went ashore in Genoa, Leghorn, Naples, and other peninsular ports, but it was Britons “in trade” in Turin and Milan, the industrial and financial centers of northern Italy, who first organized viable teams. The role of British entrepreneurs was important enough to justify Antonio Papa’s neat formulation: “With remarkable precision, the map of soccer retraces the map of foreign capital in the peninsula.”

The industrial city of Turin was the home of the first Italian known to have been captivated by the charm of soccer. In March 1887, Edoardo Bosio returned from a business trip to England with a soccer ball and some lively memories. Recruiting the employees of his firm, he arranged for a game. In 1891, Bosio’s group fused with a team of equally anglophilic local patricians who had begun to play two years earlier. Since foreigners were welcomed to this as to the other teams founded by Italian enthusiasts, the result was an international club whose lengthy name was popularly shortened to Football Club Torinese. In Genoa, it was British businessmen and consular officials who took the initiative in the summer of 1896 and added soccer to the array of sports offered by their four-year-old Cricket and Athletic Club. Soccer quickly became as popular that the members renamed themselves the Genoa Football Club. Simultaneously with the change of name came a change in policy: upon the urging of Dr. James Spensley, the club’s goalie, Italian members were admitted. A year later, British expatriates founded the famed Juventus Football Club of Turin. Englishmen and Italians joined forces in 1899 to create another club destined for prominence in the history of the game: the Milan Cricket and Football...
Club. Still another collaboration occurred in 1900 when Ignazio Pagano, son of a prominent Sicilian lawyer, came home from a year of study in London. Determined to put into play the ball that he had brought with him, Pagano spurred Palermo’s foreign colony into forming the Anglo-Palermian Athletic and Football Club. Another famous team, Pro Vecilli, was organized in 1903 without the benefit of a stay in England or intercourse with the expatriate British, but Albion’s influence was nonetheless easy to trace. A member of the town’s fencing and gymnastics club, a student named Marcello Bertinetti, had visited nearby Turin, seen a soccer game, and returned to Vercelli with a soccer ball that he had somehow managed to buy, borrow, or steal.38

The names chosen for the first teams were but one indication of the game’s English origins. The measurements of the field (in yards rather than meters), the temporal divisions of the matches, and even the code for the deportment of the spectators were the results of English influence, an influence that later proved to be a source of embarrassment for Italian chauvinists. In the period of Fascist rule, efforts were made to rewrite the history of the game, but only the most gullible Italians were persuaded to deny soccer’s English origins and to derive calcio from the Renaissance pastimes of the Florentine aristocracy.39

On April 15, 1898, clubs from Genoa and Turin, rejecting any impulse to think in small terms, created the Federazione Italiana del Football. The president was an Italian, the secretary an Englishman. Two months later, the infant seven-club association sponsored its first “national championship.” Genoa, which fielded a rugged team bolstered by five foreigners, won this and five of the next six championships. In 1908, the federation decided to bar foreign players from its annual tournament, but a boycott by the powerful clubs from Genoa, Milan, and Turin led to a quick reversal of the rule. Nationalism did score a point in 1909, however, when the federation changed its name to the Federazione Italiana Gioco del Calcio.40

Nationalism was one brake on the game’s accelerated diffusion from the classes to the masses. Another was the widespread (and correct) perception that modern sports in general and soccer in particular had been imported from a predominantly Protestant culture. Giovanni Semeria cleared the way for hesitant Roman Catholics by obfuscating the issue. Belittling the English origins of soccer, he explained that the relationship of the captain to his obedient teammates is analogous to the position of the pope in relation to the great mass of faithful believers. Semeria’s publications seem to have cleansed soccer “from the taints of both Protestantism and ‘modernity.’”41

Whether reassured by sophistic argument or simply lured by the excitement of the game, industrial workers took to soccer and greatly increased the options available to the selectors of the national team. On May 15, 1910, the Italian team made its debut in Milan’s Arena Civica. The team was strong enough to defeat the French visitors by a score of 6–2. In a second match, which took place a mere eleven days later, the team encountered stiffer opponents. Charles Löwenrosen, a schoolboy whose parents had emigrated from Hungary to England, had brought a soccer ball with him when he visited Budapest in 1896. Löwenrosen’s hometown friends must have been impressed; three months later, they formed Hungary’s first football team. By 1910, when the Hungarians hosted the Italians in Budapest, their game was so far advanced that they trounced the visitors by a score of 6–1. Some Italian partisans claimed that their players had been unfairly distracted by the erotic presence of women in the crowd of 15,000 Hungarian spectators.42

By this time, there was an international federation to supervise the diffusion of the sport. It seems rather “a paradox, when one considers the weakness of the French game,” that the impetus for global organization came from France. In 1903, Robert Guérin, a leader in the Union des Sociétés Françaises de Sports Athlétiques suggested to Frederick Wall, secretary of England’s
powerful Football Association, that an international federation be formed to propagate their beloved recreation. To his chagrin, Guérin discovered that neither Wall nor any other Englishman was interested in the idea. Wall's response was pompous and condescending: "The Council of the Football Association cannot see the advantages of such a Federation, but on all such matters upon which joint action [is] desirable they would be prepared to confer." Guérin characterized his efforts to persuade A. F. Kinnaird, the FA president, as "like beating the air." Undeterred, Guérin went ahead in 1904 with the formation of the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA), which has grown into the largest and most important of all the transnational sports federations. Charter members in addition to France were Belgium, Denmark, Holland, Spain, Sweden, and Switzerland. The four British soccer federations, whose members far outnumbered those of any continental nation, refused to join the organization, a haughty attitude typical of those who felt that their invention of a game gave them patent rights to it. The British federations did join FIFA in 1906, but they twice departed in fits of principle, first in 1920, when the federation declined to expel its German and Austrian members for their role in World War I, and then in 1928, when FIFA allowed "broken-time payments" to remunerate amateur players who missed work in order to compete in matches. Insularity did not end until 1946, when the British rejoined FIFA.

LATIN AMERICA

Although we have grown accustomed to the idea of North American penetration of Latin American markets, British entrepreneurs dominated the economic scene for most of the nineteenth century. The pound sterling was then the world's medium of exchange. In "Argentina, Uruguay and Chile, the British presence was so thick on the ground as almost to make them part of the informal empire." Needless to say, wherever they went, the British took their games with them. By the end of the century, modern sports were an integral part of Latin American culture. Argentinians, who thought of themselves as rather more cosmopolitan than other Latinos, were especially eager to adopt cricket, soccer, rugby, polo, and a number of other British sports.

In 1806, during a forty-five-day military occupation of Buenos Aires, British soldiers reduced the boredom of their duty with cricket matches. The troops left, the merchants arrived. The wool trade brought Thomas Hogg, owner of a Yorkshire textile factory, to the city. No wool gatherer he. The energetic merchant helped to found a British commercial center, a British library, a British college—and, in 1819—a cricket club. The initial reaction of the local public was amused dismissal; the headquarters of the club was referred to as the "insane asylum." Within a few years, ridicule changed to emulation. As early as 1832, Argentine youths returning from study abroad founded a cricket club of their own.

Cricket continued to be fashionable, but the cosmopolite leisure class soon had a variety of other sports from which to choose. If Swiss marksmen failed to win adherents to El Tiro Suizo, if French gymnasts and fencers lured relatively few natives to the Club de Gimnasia y Esgrima, a great deal of the credit for the Argentine preference for modern British sports has to go to the aforementioned Thomas Hogg, who reared his sons to be as active as he was. Young Tómas Hogg was a founder of the Dreadnought Swimming Club, which had its first contests in 1863. In 1866, he took up squash. With his brother James, he organized the Buenos Aires Athletic Society, which had its first track-and-field meet on May 30, 1867. At some point in the next decade, Tómas seems to have been responsible for Latin America's first golf club. He also participated in an inaugural rugby game played at the Buenos Aires Cricket Club on May 14, 1874. Brother James was on hand in 1880 when the recently invented game of lawn tennis arrived.
in Argentina. It is impossible not to imagine that Tómas, rac-quet firmly in hand, was on the other side of the net.49

British sailors on shore leave had played some kind of football as early as 1840, at which time the local newspaper, La Razón, informed its readers that this odd pastime “consisted of running around after a ball.”50 The next reference to the game seems to have come a generation later. When the Buenos Aires Football Club first took to the field, on June 20, 1867, the athletically ubiquitous Hogg brothers were the mainstay of one of the eight-man teams while William Heald captained the other. According to The Standard for June 23, the Hogs, wearing colored caps, defeated Heald’s white-capped players four goals to none. H. J. Barge led the “white caps” in the second match, but the change in leadership was only marginally helpful. The Hogs won the second match by 3–0. The sport received a setback in 1874 when the members of the Buenos Aires Football Club voted, unanimously, to shift to rugby football. (One of the two rugby teams was, inevitably, captained by “Señor Hogg”).51

Among the boys at British schools in Argentina soccer made good this loss of favor, especially after 1881, when Alexander Watson Hutton arrived from Scotland to join the faculty of St. Andrew’s College. Hutton moved on to establish the Buenos Aires English High School, which opened its doors in 1884. Before long, the school had a physical-education teacher, a soccer pitch for the boys, and tennis courts for the girls. When a shipment of regulation soccer balls ordered by Hutton arrived in Buenos Aires, puzzled customs officials did not know how to classify them and were said to have fabricated a new customs category: the leather objects were listed as “items for the crazy English.” It was also said that neighborhood wits thought it appropriate that the school’s sports facilities were located in the vicinity of a madhouse. In light of the enthusiasm upper-class Argentines had already expressed for all sorts of British recreations, one suspects that Hutton—the source of a number of anecdotes—aggrandized his own role by exaggerating the puzzlement of the locals. At any rate, whatever hostility to the game existed diminished sufficiently by 1893 for Hutton, “the father of soccer in the Argentine,” to launch the Argentine Football Association.52 (This was, incidently, five years before Spanish students organized what became their country’s most successful team, Real Madrid).53

In nearly every case, the first clubs were formed at British schools. The year that Hutton introduced soccer in the Buenos Aires English High School, his colleagues did the same in Rosario and Santiago. By 1890, “one could say that football had conquered the student population.” At St. Andrew’s, where the school club was founded in 1890, the Scottish headmaster, the Reverend Mr. J. William Fleming, was notoriously strict; absence from church in the morning meant exclusion from soccer in the afternoon. Strictness must have paid; a year later, St. Andrew defeated the “Old Caledonians” to win the first national championship.54

Employees of British-owned railroads were also active in the diffusion of soccer in Argentina (and in much of the rest of Latin America). Famous clubs like Rosario Central and Excelsior were founded by British and, eventually, Argentine workers of the Ferrocarril Central Argentino, the Ferrocarril Sud, and other railroads. Between the railroad workers and the students at schools and colleges, challenges went back and forth. In Santiago in 1890, the representatives of Ferrocarril Nordeste Argentino lost a famous 1-0 match against the youths of the Colegio Nacional. In 1891, an Argentine Association Football League, presided over by F. L. Wooley, a member of the Buenos Aires and Rosario Railway Athletic Club, came into being.55

Long after the railroad workers followed the students to the pitch, the sport’s British imprint remained legible. For decades, soccer stories remained a monopoly of the English-language press. “The first soccer notices in the national idiom appeared
in El País] in January 1901.” During the first championships, organized by the Argentine Association Football League, “everyone spoke English.” It was not until 1905 that the association’s name was changed to Spanish. As late as 1914, British names far outnumbered Spanish ones on team rosters.56

Across the Rio de la Plata, in Uruguay, modern sports arrived in more or less the same way. In Montevideo as in Buenos Aires, cricket preceded soccer, introduced by British soldiers during their brief occupation of the city in 1807. Subsequently, businessmen and diplomatic personnel played informal games until the foreign population was large enough to support a club. On June 4, 1842, the Britannia and Montevideo Reporter announced that a group of British residents had met on May 31 to establish the Victoria Cricket Club, cleverly named for both the Roman goddess and the young queen who had ascended the throne five years earlier. The VCC was "the first sports club to make a real impression on the public."57 The Montevideo Cricket Club, composed mostly of native Uruguayans, was formed on July 18, 1861. Seven years later, the MCC began a famous series of annual matches with the Buenos Aires Cricket Club.58

From the very start, members of the MCC seem to have played soccer as well as cricket. Ship’s crews did their bit to popularize the game in the seventies, but the real “take-off” came after the creation of the Central Uruguay Railway Cricket Club on September 28, 1891. This club, like the MCC, was devoted to cricket in the summer and soccer in the winter. The players wore black and yellow—the colors of the railroad’s signal of distress—but there was little reason to fret about the future of soccer. Teams sprang up, it seemed, wherever rails were laid down. It was an annoyance, however, that so many of the railway workers were aliens. In order to “snatch sports from the hands of foreigners,” patriotic Uruguayans organized the rival Club Nacional on May 14, 1899. Ten months later, the Uruguay Football Association was founded. Montevideo hosted, and won, the South American championship in 1916, but Uruguay’s greatest sporting successes came in 1924, 1928, and 1930, when the national team, led by José Leandro Andrade, triumphed in the final matches of the Olympic Games (against Switzerland and then against Argentina) and in the first FIFA-organized World Cup (against Argentina).59

In Chile on the Pacific as in Argentina and Uruguay on the Atlantic, “English commercial houses and colleges were the great propagandists for the sport that, in time, became the passion of the multitude.”60 The first club seems to have been the Valparaíso FC, created in 1889 by David N. Scott. Teams then sprang into life at English schools like Mackay and Sutherland in nearby El Cerro Alegre and in firms like la Casa Rogers, importers of White Rose Tea. By 1893, a few ethnic Chileans were also to be seen in the distinctive shorts and shirts worn by all self-respecting (and self-advertising) soccer players. That year also saw the first games between Valparaíso and Santiago as well as the first encounter against a team from Argentina. The 1–1 tie between Chile and Argentina was less international than it seemed because all the players involved were either British born or of British descent. Needless to say, the Football Association of Chile, chartered in 1895, was another organization dominated by los ingleses. Within a year, however, Santiago had its first purely Chilean clubs. Students at the Instituto Nacional and the Escuela Normal de Preceptores led the way to the “nationalization” of the game. The foundation of the Asociación de Fútbol de Chile, in 1912, can be taken as a sign that the Chileans were finally on their own.

Brazil’s discovery of soccer was similar, but there were some unique aspects to the game’s early development. Charles Miller, born in São Paulo of English parents, was sent to study in England in 1884. After ten years abroad, he returned to Brazil, bringing a pair of footballs with him. “Soccer then—to his sur-
prise—was virtually unknown; even the resident British firms preferred to play cricket.” Miller, obviously not one to sit and brood about the lack of opportunity, promptly recruited some adventurous teammates from Sao Paulo Railways, the English Gas Company, and the London Bank. “Then he cajoled the Sao Paulo Athletic Club, a cricketing affair, to play soccer.” All the players of the first game, which took place on the grounds of the local cycling club, were English. By 1902, Sao Paulo had a football league whose players—mostly British—were expert enough to trounce a visiting team composed of Britons who had settled in South Africa.

Meanwhile, the British in Rio de Janeiro had created Fluminense, a socially exclusive club destined to become one of the most illustrious in Brazilian history. In 1910, Fluminense invited its British counterpart, the strictly amateur “old boy” Corinthians, to Rio. The visitors went on to Sao Paulo, where they inspired their hosts to create another of Brazil’s most famous teams: the Sao Paulo Corinthians. Although most of Brazil’s early players stemmed from the middle and upper classes, the new Corinthians did not; they were recruited mainly from the employees of the Sao Paulo Railway Company. By 1914, Brazilian soccer had developed so rapidly among all classes in the urban centers that the national team was able to defeat Argentina in the first of their many bitterly fought encounters. In 1919, Brazil won the South American championship.

Unlike the Argentines and the Uruguayans, most Brazilians can claim African origins. Not long after slavery was legally abolished, in 1888, black Brazilians began to appear on the rosters of the smaller soccer clubs. They were not always welcome. When the America Football Club of Rio accepted its first black player, “a number of players and supporters left for Fluminense.” Responding to such manifestations of elitist racism, the city’s poor created their own club, Flamengo, whose symbol is a black vulture. In time, of course, Brazilian soccer came to be dominated by black players, of whom Edson Arantes do Nascimento—better known simply as Pelé—is unquestionably the most famous. He, the idol of the Brazilian masses, presumably spoke for them when he informed the Jornal do Brasil that soccer is “the greatest joy of the people.”

A F R I C A

In the course of the nineteenth century, which can fairly be referred to as “an Age of Imperialism,” Africa became the most colonized of continents. In the race to carve out colonies, protectorates, and spheres of influence, the British were more successful than the other Europeans. And their sports, especially soccer, spread more swiftly than those of other imperial powers. One reason for the more rapid ludic diffusion was “the sharp contrast between the role of sport in the ethos and make-up of the British colonial administrator on the one hand and his colonial counterparts from other European countries.” French officials, for instance, while emphasizing physical education to improve the health of the native population, discouraged “the creation of teams and clubs and the organization of sports competitions.” When Frenchmen upset by the relatively poor performance of the national team at the 1928 Olympic Games looked to the African colonies for “a reservoir of athletes,” the army, which was in charge of physical education, sabotaged their efforts to recruit native athletes.

Behind the success of the British and the relative failure of the French in the diffusion of soccer and other modern sports to the African continent was—quite simply—the British mania for sports. In their passionate commitment, the British in Africa were motivated in part by the intrinsic pleasures of their pastimes and in part by the ideology of empire. When the Reverend J. E. C. Welldon announced his belief that “England has owed her sovereignty to her sports,” he was by no means an unusual or eccentric spokesman. It was widely assumed that sturdy
shoulders were needed to bear the “white man’s burden.” If Brit-
tannia were to rule the savannahs and the rain forests as well as
the waves, one had to be true to the games ethic, to the belief
that sports—especially team games—created the kind of char-
acter needed to meet extreme physical and psychological chal-
lenges and to impose European civilization upon what Kipling
referred to as “lesser breeds without the law.” If French and Ger-
man colonizers were far less obsessive in their approach to
sports, it was not from a lack of concern for ordre administratif
or Ordnung und Disziplin; it was rather that the French and the
Germans were less certain than their British rivals that modern
sports created moral fiber along with muscle mass.

From 1910 to 1948, men recruited for administrative work
by the Tropical African Service were selected with an eye to
“character” and character was equated with athletic ability
demonstrated by the candidate at a “public school.” Between
1899 and 1952, Eton, Harrow, Winchester and the other elitist
foundations supplied more than 90 percent of all the officers in
the Sudan Political Service. The administrative attention paid
to sports was extreme. R. D. Furse, a sports fanatic who had
studied at Balliol College, Oxford, handed out application forms
with a special section for sports. Furse was by no means unusu-
al. “In the Sudan the provincial governor of Kassala, R. E. H.
Baily, who had played cricket for Harrow and Cambridge, used
to circulate a leather-bound book among his staff every morn-
ing, in which they were expected to indicate against their names
the particular form of exercise they would be taking that after-
noon.” The men who had won their “colours” at Oxford and
Cambridge were so prominent in the Political Service that wits
referred to the Sudan as “the Land of Blacks ruled by Blues.”

We can be quite certain about the prevalence of the “games
ethic” in the British colonies. We have a reasonably clear view
of the pattern of its institutionalization in these colonies. The
historical details, however, are often obscure. Anthropologists
have provided us with numerous studies of traditional African
sports; historians have published relatively little on the transi-
tion from traditional to modern sports. Although the intro-
duction of soccer was “an epoch-making event in the same way as
the introduction of cocoa to the Gold Coast a century and more
ago,” no one has been able to identify “the originator of soccer
in colonial Africa.”

We are not wholly in the dark. We know that wherever the
British went, from Capetown to Cairo, they took their games
with them. Kenya seems to have been typical of the African
colonies. Britons

built up a sport culture in Kenya which was a copy of the one in
Britain. . . . Even the smallest European community had its own club
house, golf course, swimming pool, and tennis and squash courts.
Where there were sufficient numbers, team games like rugby, cricket
and field hockey were also played. The only drawback to all of this
was that these facilities and the sport and social intercourse which
they provided were open only to Europeans.

No matter what the sport, colonial officers, military as well
as civilian, preferred to compete among themselves and occa-
sionally to indulge their more athletic wives and daughters in a
game of field hockey or tennis. Although most natives were
excluded from these attempts to replicate British culture in the
tropics, there were exceptions—African soldiers and policemen
were introduced to modern sports as part of their fitness pro-
grams and children educated at missionary schools were taught
to play cricket, rugby, and soccer.

The latter exception was especially important because these
church-run schools trained the boys—and to a lesser extent the
girls—who became the native elite. Some colonial administra-
tors left the missionaries to their own devices. Others, like Sir
Frederick Lugard, the atheist governor-general of Nigeria, went
beyond a laissez-faire attitude and actively encouraged the
churches to include sports in the schools they established.
throughout the colony. In these clerical schools for native children, Lugard hoped that sports might serve as a means to produce what Mangan refers to as “atheistic athleticism.”

The athleticism cannot be doubted. The masters of institutions like the Alliance School in Nairobi, Kenya, and the Church Missionary Society Grammar School of Freetown, Sierra Leone, were physically active men who took their sports seriously. Headmaster Francis Carey of Alliance School recalled that “Christianity and games were only a part of the life of the school but were indeed its most important elements.” A former student of the Freetown School in Sierra Leone remembered, “Games were compulsory... We played cricket in the dry season, and football in the rainy season, under the supervision of the appropriate master.” According to the General Secretary of the Uganda Olympic Committee, soccer was brought to the natives of Kampala in 1910 “by missionaries from the United Kingdom, our former colonial masters.” These missionaries seem to have been anticipated by A. G. Fraser, who carried a soccer ball to Uganda in 1900 and laid out a soccer field, four years later, at King’s School in Budo, a school established for the sons of Ugandan chiefs. When Fraser moved on to Achimota College in the Gold Coast, he arranged for the students to have the civilizing benefits of two cricket ovals and four football fields. In Nigeria, too, British clerics and lay teachers emphasized soccer and other modern sports as an instrument of acculturation. It was not just schoolmasters who spread the gospel of modern sports. Marion Stevenson, a Scottish missionary at Tumutumu in Kenya, “played her small part in the diffusion of British games—in the interests of discipline and more importantly of purity.” Soccer, she alleged, distracted the boys from dances and fistfights.

It should, however, be emphasized that the main target for the games-mad British missionary was the son of the native chief. Throughout British-ruled Africa, ordinary people were not, as a rule, encouraged to abandon their traditional sports (unless they seemed too intimately a part of pagan ritual). Modern sports festivals, like Empire Day, first celebrated in Nigeria in 1893, did gradually supplant traditional games, but the organization of regular year-round play came slowly. For the white settlers of South Africa, a Football Association was established in 1892; it was not until 1922 that the Football Association of Kenya, which may have been the first African sports federation for black players, was founded. The Nigeria Football Association did not come into existence until 1945.

The British were, of course, not the only actors in the drama of sports diffusion throughout Africa. In the years just before World War I, missionaries introduced soccer into what was then the Belgian Congo and is now Zaire. In 1919, French colonists organized a team, for Europeans, in Brazzaville, the capital of the French Congo. In the twenties, the Belgians and the French played one another, and the natives were quick to form their own teams. On Bastille Day, 1930, the players of Kinsasha’s Mutuelle crossed the Congo River to challenge Brazzaville’s L’Étoile, thereby inaugurating the area’s first African-built soccer field. A year later, a sports federation was founded in the French colony to encourage native participation in modern sports. Since the authorities were leery about the formation of native teams and generally opposed to interracial contests, European volunteers acted as coaches, trainers, and officials. The organization foundered when the colonial administration allocated most of the available funds to the European members of the Club Athlétique Brazzavillois. An additional brake on the diffusion of soccer was the colonizers’ demand that the Africans play without shoes, allegedly to prevent savage injury to civilized shins. In response to this indignity, some disaffected natives left to join the Fédération Athlétique Congolaise, which the Church established in 1933. The clergy, it seems, had no objection to all God’s children wearing shoes.
The Congo was not the only French colony with a contingent of European and native soccer players. In the twenties, a handful of Senegalese seem to have been accepted as members of Le Racing-Club Dakarois, which included soccer among its sports. In the thirties, at a time when the colonial authorities were scouting unsuccessfully for African track-and-field talent, a number of Senegalese were forming soccer clubs in the cities of Dakar, Saint-Louis, and Bamako. There were also native teams in Cameroon as early as 1927. On the whole, however, the diffusion of modern sports through the French, Belgian, and Portuguese colonies of sub-Saharan Africa was far slower than in the contiguous British-ruled territories. In German-ruled Africa, which was a large part of the continent before 1914, gymnastics was the preferred form of physical recreation and modern sports were more likely to be discouraged than promoted by the white minority.

Everywhere in sub-Saharan Africa, Europeans who promoted modern sports among the indigenous peoples had to reconcile themselves to the persistence of what seemed to them incongruous beliefs and behaviors. Decades after the introduction of soccer, magic continued to play a role.

It is a fact accepted by one group living on the Zaire River upstream from Kinshasha that each team in a soccer match starts out with a preordained number of goals. In the days preceding the match, team magicians do battle with medicine and supernatural force to steal the opponent’s points and to defend their own. Actual play is the public enactment of what the magician’s combat has already determined. Cameroonian soccer players kick up the ground around their opponent’s goal in an effort to uncover the magic that keeps the ball from going in.

Modern sports radiated somewhat more quickly, and with less of a magical penumbra, throughout French-ruled North Africa, where the army’s role was less prominent than in the sub-Saharan colonies. Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia had relatively large European populations and Islamic culture seems to have been somewhat more receptive to modern sports (for men) than were the indigenous cultures south of the Sahara. An additional reason for the comparatively rapid diffusion of soccer in North Africa was the early realization on the part of Arab nationalists that sports clubs were an excellent nucleus for political organization. In Algeria, which had been seized by the French in 1830, the colonists formed clubs for marksmen, for gymnasts, and—eventually—for rugby and soccer players, but “the practice of sports and related physical activities was strictly reserved for Europeans.” With the rise of anticolonialist nationalism, sports became, in the words of an Arab scholar, “a phenomenon of appropriation. That which was not freely offered by the colonizer was seized from him.” In 1926, Arab nationalists in Algiers organized the Étoile Nord-Africaine as a center for sports and politics. By 1928, Algerian soccer had become a predominantly Arab sport with unmistakable anticolonial overtones. In the FLN’s struggle for Algerian independence, soccer became “an instrument of sedition.”

In Tunisia, which became a French protectorate in 1881, soldiers rather than settlers were initially responsible for “the eruption . . . of western sports,” but the colonists who crossed the Mediterranean from France and Italy soon established a civilian network of sports clubs. In 1921, the Ligue Tunisienne de Football brought together a medley of sports organizations whose names indicated their ethnic identity: Jeune France, Stella d’Italia, le Foot-ball Club Stomniste, La Musulmane. Beneath the cooperative multicultural surface lay the political differences destined to end European rule. They were differences of which everyone was keenly aware. “Every Tunisian sports victory against the European sports organizations,” wrote Ben Larbi Mohamed and Borhane Errais, “contributed to the destruction of the myth of colonial power.”
Soccer is such an important example of global diffusion that a brief summary is in order. Although Europeans of many nationalities participated in the process, the initial diffusion of soccer football was accomplished principally by British military men, diplomatic personnel, businessmen, missionaries, and secular educators. They packed the game with the rest of their cultural baggage and took it with them to the farthest posts of empire and to countless other “places never under the Union Jack.”

The pattern of ludic diffusion confirms the generalizations of Everett M. Rogers, the leading sociological authority on “the diffusion of innovations.” The sequence of events he posits is clearly observable in the process of ludic diffusion. In almost every instance, the first to adopt soccer and other modern sports were the cosmopolitan sons of the local elites, many of whom had been educated at English schools in their own country or abroad. Seeking status as well as diversion, the bourgeoisie, many of whom were employed by British-owned firms, followed. From the panoply of different games imported by the upper and middle classes, the industrial workers of Europe and Latin America, like the indigenous population of Africa, appropriated soccer football as their own. That soccer, like other modern sports, was “first the province of the elite and then taken over by other sectors of society only underscores the fact that culture is competed for.” Did soccer appeal to the working class because of the game’s aura of rough masculinity or did soccer acquire connotations of rugged virility because it was played, roughly, by sturdy villagers and a tough urban proletariat? The latter explanation seems more plausible. In any event, the scholastic amusement that began on the greens of nineteenth-century Oxford and Cambridge is now the passion of the stadia—and the back streets—of Genoa, Sao Paulo, Nairobi, and a thousand other cities.