

GAMES AND TRADITIONAL SPORTS IN PORTUGAL

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Abstract :

The hindrance that Portugal faced during plenty of years allowed small ways of living and of being of many communities remained almost untouched, where we find persons that, nowadays still, specially on rural zones, tell us about their “*Brincadeiras*” of childhood, namely, dances, songs, stories, games, among others. The citizens born in the first four decades of the 20th century had as main entertainment several handmade toys and made from natural materials, from which stand out, specially, the *bolas de trapos*, *bolas de pêlo de carneiro*, *piões*, *pedras*, *canas*, *paus de loureiro*, *paus afiados*, *pregos*, *bugalhas dos carvalhos*, *berlindes de pedra*, *rodas de cortiça*, *carrinhos de carcódoa de pinheiro*, *moedas de vintém*, *botões*, *bolas de madeira*, *paulitos de madeira*, *ferraduras*, *arcos de ferro ou de borracha*, plenty artifacts that the kids themselves built and had fun with, playing and discovering in themselves mentalities that, adapting to the environment surrounding them, were able to create their game’s materials from what nature’s gave them.

Key words : Portugal games, Middle age, Physical activity

Game had, throughout the centuries, several meanings and purposes for the human being. Even nowadays we want to justify, in league with recent discoveries, a new conducting line to explain how Man lived, where he came from, how did he survive and how he interacted with everything surrounding him.

Game allowed Man, throughout the centuries, to develop his physical, mental, and social attributes, being, in fact, considered the essential factor to justify the birth of culture. The entertainment element was always present in society revealing itself as a social impulse and being prior to culture, so, the game, the entertainment and the entertainment competition are at the very origin of human life, on culture and society. We stand by something that gave origin and heated much controversy.

Man’s history is directly related with physical activity since distant times, where vestiges that prove it were found. As an example, there are the primitive paintings in caves where he inhabited, essentially about hunting, which are no more than a proof of the need to show his feats and to preserve his acts. It is then here that we can consider the beginning of all this process. Physical activity of the primitive people corresponds essentially to a practical end. His exercises are imitations of his daily occupations, based on training and perfecting of those techniques. We know about trekking, swimming, running, jumping and throwing, activities that became more precise and refined enabling Man to win and affirm himself in his environment, through the perfecting of

his dexterity, resistance, speed and strength, implementing still a whole bunch of mental processes that made him stand above other animals as a superior being. However, the meaning of primitive paintings reveals not only the above stated but also the need to tell others about his feats and, perhaps, it's on the origin of his entertainment instinct. So, Man and game are, since old times, intrinsically together.

In Portugal, the traditional game has manifestations since the pre-historic eras, as shown by the existence of paintings throughout the territory in caves of the Megalithic and Roman (Cf. José Hermano Saraiva, s/d.), appearing carved in the stone inscriptions related to the games of *galo*, *of macaca*, *of avião*, *of glória and damas*. The Lusitans, (people of Lusitania), according to Estrabão (greek geographer), (...) “entertained themselves with dances, music and gymnast games, where they simulated combat and so trained to war; organized boxing combats as well as running and jumping competitions.” (Gabriel Pereira, 1890)

Going from primitive times to those of the development of organized societies, the class hierarchy of society was, since the oldest times, a demonstration of the acknowledgment of power. Free time was a privilege of noble classes, since Antiquity to Middle Ages. As such, the practice of entertainment activities not only served as a way of occupying the free time of the sires in times of peace as well as a preparing mean for war, but also as a way of growing and preparation to adult life by youngsters.

Through the middle Ages it starts to grow the difference between the noble games and the commoners'. Anyway, all social classes of Middle Ages were guided by the Catholic Church, which fought against the paganism of festivals, replacing the Greco-Roman holy days by ceremonies dedicated to the Saints, and the sins of the flesh, being games, particularly fortune or hazard games, considered useless and dangerous because they diverted men from their religious duties and from the respect of spiritual values. This way, the common people had their entertainment time during religious festivals, but violence was a constant in those where games such as “*cartas; aos dados; à vaca; ao jaldete; ao butir; à porca; às torrelhas; à conca; à badalassa; ao pião; ao áleo; aos dinheiros secos e molhados.*” (Oliveira Marques, 1989) were played.

Nobility, which had plenty of free time, played other games such as: riding, combat games (jousts and tourneys) where the main objectives were learning of discipline, growing the competition spirit, revelation of abilities and individual strength, as well as many other games such as chess. Others involved other social classes, such as bullfighting, “*momos*”, “*canas*” and jousts. (Cf. José Hermano Saraiva, s/d).

This phenomenon was not exclusive to those upper classes that had more free time. In fact, poorer classes also partook in it. Therefore, we must recognize that they must have acknowledged how and when they could partake in those activities. Hence, if leisure time was for some a daily occupation, for others, on the other hand, it was confined to work hours or associated with actions at the end of the workday, as corn's shucking, or with parties, festivals and pilgrimages, as proved by information available from the chroniclers of those times. They show how the commoners leisured, from where we take references and evidences of “*jogo do pau*”, wrestling, tilts and others, many of which used materials of day-to-day tasks.

Garcia de Resende, King João III's secretary, chronicler, poet and man of art, who is said to have been quite joyous and lover of singing, organized the Cancioneiro Geral, printed in 1516 and also the chronicle of King João III, focusing on many daily situations where the entertainment expressions of all classes of the Portuguese medieval society.

King João I, with his *Montaria* and later D. Duarte, with his *Ensinança da Arte de Bem Cavalgar Toda Sela* both recognize that games and physical activities have a primordial importance in nobility's leisure times. These books can be considered as true teaching books, as they suggested not only activities to entertain the noble class in their free time as well as games and activities that were more suited to adults or youngsters. That pedagogic perspective not only targeted a better weapon mastery and physical fitness, thus allowing nobles to be ready for war, but it also showed which games should be banned due to their inability to fight idleness and also because they fomented "manhas". From those two books we can perceive a perspective of the use of such games as a mean to shape a certain kind of society.

Since the beginning, game had a connotation with pagan practices, which led the Church to push aside its possible origins and symbolisms, condemning it in all places where the masses gathered, that is, in festivals and parties. Still about game forbiddance, besides what was mentioned earlier, D. Dinis first sentenced to death those who cheated, while later, D. Afonso IV prohibited games at the taverns, but not only card games, also, as Oliveira Marques reported "D. João I punished dice games, as well as *torelha*, *butir*, *cure-cure*, and *porca*". Game prohibition is a characteristic of the middle ages, specially because many of those games were associated with such practices, as well as being considered extremely violent.

The education system of the middle ages, as all organized systems, perpetuated and this stability gave origin to flaws that were easily exploited by those who defended new ways to raise noble youngsters, as the old ones didn't follow the evolution of human thought. Thus, on the 16th century, a transforming process starts that follows new rules, contradicting much of what was then perspective for the youngsters' education.

Subsequently, on what was named Renaissance, a whole different way of thinking appears that again joins intellectual education with moral and physical. This new way, named Humanistic, based on prior documents, as it joins both Greek education and Christianity, is characterized by the reconciliation of both moral and physical education and advised physical activity towards hygienic and toughening purposes, and its greatest supporters were Jerónimo Osório, Francis Bacon (1561-1626) and Jerónimo Mercurial (1530 -1606), who, preceded by Rabelais (1483 -1553) and Montaigne (1533 -1592), tried to demonstrate the differences between the advantages of the education of the scholar formalism and the modern version, based on nature, where games will reveal as an essential mean for construction and maturation of the child's personality.

By Pedregal Prida, on the 18th century, J.J. Rousseau, Tissot and Pestalozzi contributed a lot with their work that promoted these activities. On that century and the following, plenty of theories were created, since game practicing to create a team spirit based on obedience to rigid conduct rules, to the practice of gymnastics, that tried to promote the correct raising of man.

In man's and society's course through time, physical activity as training for survival transformed into game and then sport, into a more organized activity and less spontaneous that took such importance in society that, in the end of the 19th century, the first Olympic games of the modern era took place.

The 19th century in Portugal brings important political happenings, such as successive revolutionary movements by nationalists, and deep changes in both economy and work. In this context, several theories on Physical Education appear, various collective games, gymnastic exercises on apparatus, walking and pedestrian races (Cf. Sousa Viterbo, 1900), and, at the same time, team spirit, strict obedience to a code of conduct and moral formation also develop, as well as parades, festivals and national parties that celebrated anniversaries of historic happenings.

ACTUAL STUDIES

Based on studies published by all great scholars of the Portuguese ethnography and by other Portuguese culture academics, we could document a few games that were part of the quotidian of men, women and children that practiced them throughout time, which reached nowadays by several sources, allowing us to know their main characteristics and possible variations, specially influenced by population groupings from where they were taken.

From the whole lot of identified games in the consulted literature, we conclude that many of them were part of the daily life of communities from several Portuguese regions, except some peculiarities that come from influences from other communities that inhabited Lusitania. These games are still part of the quotidian of the Portuguese citizens, independently of gender and age and others, due to their non-practice were left out from studies of the 20th and 21st centuries, or just referred to as expressions that were important in older times.

Even recognizing the importance of the studies made in other centuries, we still believe that those probably left out some games in Portugal, if we consider the means and conditions in which they were carried out, besides the methodological procedures used.

Nowadays, we see that less and less studies are being carried out on this theme, thus not allowing us to conclude about the current practice of such games, about the changes they suffered and about their survival, whether on the islands or on the mainland. Subsequently, the Department of Sport's Sciences and Physical Education of the University of Coimbra, through the research of academics of the anthropological branch, named "*Jogos, Brinquedos e Brincadeiras de nossos avós*" and "*Estudos etnográficos e etnológicos dos jogos tradicionais portugueses*", we look forward to diagnose, through the record of social representations, the whole of the entertaining activities practiced in the first four decades of the last century and the processes which led to their disappearance or to changes in the society they were inserted.

Until now, those researches were carried out in Pernes, Anadia, Aveiro, Cantanhede, Vieira de Leiria, Condeixa-a-Nova, Lousã and Mação, on the first line of research and second on Coimbra's, Guarda's, Évora's and on Ilha Terceira's region in Azores, more

specifically in S. Facundo, Zambujal, Bairro das Lameirinhas, Sortelha, Serpins, São Miguel do Machede and on the district of de Santa Bárbara. From the results of the studies carried out on “*Jogos, Brinquedos e Brincadeiras de nossos avós*”, we elaborated the following chart where we present the games referred by the interviewed, and the number of mentions detected in distinct Portuguese regions.

During the first line researches, 43 interviews were made to males with ages between 70 and 90 while 36 were to females between 65 and 93 years old. The first researches were carried out in Pernes, Anadia, Aveiro and Mação. On Mação’s district, they were made. more specifically on the places of Cardigos, Carvoeiro, Envendos, Mação and Ortiga.

The second row of researches were carried out in Anadia, Cantanhede, Vieira de Leiria and Condeixa-a-Nova. From these researches on the theme “jogos, brinquedos e brincadeiras de nossos avós”, from their analysis, we elaborated the following chart, where there are only the games referred to by the interviewed and the number of times each entertainment activity was mentioned, in several districts of different Portuguese regions.

From the referred research, we also inventoried the expressions considered by us as “brincadeiras” (tricks), because we saw them as distinct from the practices named “jogos” (games) as we analysed their characteristics, functions and different applications, having in mind the indications of the interviewed, data processed more carefully. Another element we inventoried were the traditional “brinquedos” (toys) used by the interviewed in their childhood, identifying their main characteristics, functions and materials, despite not having charted them here nor their interpretations. The following chart contains the references of the inventoried games from the interviews gathered in the research.

Same reference about old games in Portugal

From the 36 games we inventoried and charted in “jogos de outros tempos” in Portugal, we easily identify that some of these games can be considered similar about their objectives and functions. They only differ on the field where they were played, on some rules and, more specifically, on their names, what allows us to infer that they are

NOME DO JOGO	N	GÉNERO
Macaca	21	Feminino / misto
Jogo do caracol	2	Feminino / misto
Jogo da semana	1	Feminino / misto
Giroplano	1	Feminino / misto
Esconde-esconde /escondidas /cativo	29	Masculino / Misto
Apanhada	8	Masculino
Trinta e Um	1	Masculino/ misto
Rede e os peixes	1	Masculino/ misto
Barra	2	Masculino
Gri-gri	2	Meninas
Jogo do valadinho	2	Feminino / Misto
Jogo do capado	3	Feminino / Misto
Malhão	1	Feminino
Seixinho / pedrinhas	3	Feminino
Bom barqueiro	2	Feminino / Misto
Ferrada	1	Masculino
Anel/ Anelinho	20	Feminino / Misto
Jogo do pico-pico	1	Feminino
Cantarinhas / Panelinha	5	Misto
Cabra cega	15	Feminino / Misto
Raminho/Ramalhete/Raiminho de talocha	2	Feminino / Misto
Saltar à corda	8	Feminino
Pela	4	Misto
Corrida de sacos	1	Misto
Berlinde	12	Masculino
Burro	1	Misto
Jogo do botão	15	Masculino
Pau bilhau pata/bilharda	15	Masculino
Pica pau/Finca pau / Espeta pau	4	Masculino
Marrã/Porca russa / Choca	6	Masculino
Fito/Meco/Petisca	3	Masculino
Xinquilho	6	Masculino
Malha	6	Masculino
Piã	29	Masculino
O jogo da pedra	1	Masculino
Molhinho	1	Feminino

probably result of the terminology used in the different Portuguese districts. We realized that many of the interviewed had lived in different towns, while still in the same district or region, what justifies the different names of the entertainment expressions we before

mentioned. Examples of this phenomenon are the different names for the “malha” (xinquilha, fito, meco, petisca), or the “macaca”, “giroplano”/“avião”, “caracol”/“semana”, besides others as noted in the previous chart.

The second research row, anthropological in character and named “Estudos etnográficos e etnológicos dos jogos tradicionais portugueses” (Ethnographic and ethnological studies of portuguese traditional games), was, until now, developed on seven portuguese towns, more specifically, the “jogo da bola de aro” in São Miguel de Machede on the district of Évora, the “Malha” in Beira Alta and Beira Litoral, the “jogo do beto” in Serpins in Lousã’s District, the “jogo do beto” in Maçainhas in Guarda’s District, the “Jogo da Emboca” in Biscoito in Terceira’s Island in Azores. Currently we are still studying the “jogo da Bilharda” in Evora’s District and the wrestling “Galhofa” in Parada de Infanções in Bragança’s District.

From the results of the research made until now we can conclude that, the most of these entertainment activities are almost or really are extinct, like the “jogo do beto” in Vila de Serpins. This game is extinct, counting only with the support of the FCDEF-UC and the School of Lousã that by formative initiatives included in the school program or by communitarian events organized by the FCDEF-UC or in their classes of Physical Education, is being slowly revived, first in its natural habitat, the district of Lousã. On the “jogo do beto” in Maçainhas in Guarda’s District, from the data recovered, we can conclude that the ways of playing the same game can vary greatly between towns of the same district. About their vitality we can state that nowadays it is not practiced regularly in the daily life but that it is still played on holidays and at youth meetings.



Beto's Game in Serpins – house knockdown

Other games that are still alive, despite being considered almost extinct by its players and so walking towards complete extinction in a near future, are the “Jogo da bola de aro” and the “jogo da emboca”. These games are similar on their elements, maintaining still plenty of similarities on their objectives and functions, differing only in some basic elements of the game and some materials and rules.



A hand of “Jogo da Emboca” on Terceira Island

The “Galhofa” is currently in the path of extinction as it only occurs once per year in the town of Parada de Infanções, with less and less participants each year at the boys’ festival commemorating the day of Saint Estevão.



“Jogo da Galhofa”

As for the diversity of the games developed in the Festa dos Tabuleiros (Tabuleiros’ Festival), in Tomar’s District, we noticed that these are linked with the local traditions, later adapted to other popular expressions inspired on the rural people of that region, from where a group of expressions sprouted. Examples are: *Basket Carrying; Chinquillo; Corrida de cântaros; Bag race; Barrel Race; Cup race; Tree cutting with axes; Tree sawing; Traction Fight; Subida ao mastro/pau ensebado;*

Donkey race; Wagon race, and others that can be introduced or removed by the festival master, during the four years of preparation.



Popular Games at “Tabuleiros” Festival in 1999
Picture given by Mr. Artur Matos



Popular Games at “Tabuleiros” Festival in 1996
Picture given by Mestre João Marreiros

On a generic analysis, amongst all the traditional games we inventoried to date, only two of them seem to keep some vitality in both the urban and rural environment: “Jogo da Malha” and “Jogo do Pau”. The first is on the chart with a variety of names despite each of them maintaining extremely similar objectives and materials. As for the second, the “jogo do pau”, Portuguese sport, we conclude it is not known widely by the Portuguese youth, keeping however some vitality in some cities and villages across the country, being even possible to watch it in some traditional festivals in rural zones. We

cannot forget that this game/sport has also had significant performances in “paus” (stick) competitions worldwide.



Jogo do Pau - Foto AJTG

O Jogo do Pau Português

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The hindrance that Portugal faced during plenty of years allowed small ways of living and of being of many communities remained almost untouched, where we find persons that, nowadays still, specially on rural zones, tell us about their “*Brincadeiras*” of childhood, namely, dances, songs, stories, games, among others. The citizens born in the first four decades of the 20th century had as main entertainment several handmade toys and made from natural materials, from which stand out, specially, the *bolas de trapos*, *bolas de pêlo de carneiro*, *piões*, *pedras*, *canas*, *paus de loureiro*, *paus afiados*, *pregos*, *bugalhas dos carvalhos*, *berlindes de pedra*, *rodas de cortiça*, *carrinhos de carcódoa de pinheiro*, *moedas de vintém*, *botões*, *bolas de madeira*, *paulitos de madeira*, *ferraduras*, *arcos de ferro ou de borracha*, plenty artifacts that the kids themselves built and had fun with, playing and discovering in themselves mentalities that, adapting to the environment surrounding them, were able to create their game’s materials from what nature’s gave them. Many of these entertainment expressions represented the quotidian of adults and were a way of preparing children to adult life. In those time, as life was though, children often started to work since six years old at their parent’s and later, around nine or ten, their integrated another workforce that was seen as able to gather self means of subsistence and thus contributing to help their family. Confirmation of such data is constant during talks with adults nowadays, men and women born on the period time above mentioned. Consequently, when we talk with a man or woman about what games they played it’s quite common in Portugal to be answered that they didn’t

play, being this associated with a disvalue of their ways of playing compared with what, on that time were already considered, “good sport practices”.

Their toys and their games, stayed in their memories and few changes suffered with the coming of new way of playing. Progress didn't influenced them much but nurtured a wish of changing those entertaining means, and, throughout time it managed to do it, in such way that nowadays we discuss how to promote and preserve traditional games in the Portuguese society. Society and their representatives, with the idea that all the traditional and/or popular games were violent, gradually substituted them, thus going from the entertaining game to the sportive one. As examples: *a choca, porca e bola* to field hockey or hockey; *from pela*, to tennis; from *jogo da bola, paos ou mancais* to bowling; from *la soule, cálcio, zigunate* and others to football.

Invasion of what that was modern about new sports and the creation of sporting associations, through what was published in magazines of those times (“*Ilustração Portuguesa*”, newspapers, etc), gave a strong contribute to establish these as peace and health keepers of communities. However, in rural regions and in low class metropolitan communities, games as *esconde-esconde, apanhada, gavião, berlinde or bugalhinha, pela, laranjinha, arranca-te nabo, cabra-cega, macaca, avião or aeroplano, semana or sumana, homem, raminho entrançado ou raminho traixais, bom barqueiro or barquinha, cantinho or cantos or ò vizinha dá-me lume, pedrinhas, caracol, malha, burro, botão, ricochete*, allowed as well, times of pleasure, joy, satisfaction, dispute and respect between partners, but these also disappeared being replaced by other with modern names, as for example, *pétanque (laranjinha)*, “*futebol sem bola*” (*ralha, barra*), “*bola ao fundo*”, etc.

Nowadays, as like a century ago, Ladislau Piçarra, José Leite Vasconcelos, Adolfo Coelho, Teófilo Braga, Augusto César Pires de Lima, among other authors that wrote about entertainment activities in Portugal, we consider that we are almost zero-mark in preservation of our entertainment traditions and we say this because, despite having plenty of studies and reports on traditional games, we feel that there are still to make relevant studies about these Portuguese studies and that our society doesn't recognize their merit, giving a lot more of it to those with a sportive character.

Despite traditional and popular games being considered by different countries as a valued cultural patrimony, from the 25th Session of the General Conference of the United Nations for Education, Science and Culture, they were finally recognized as universal patrimony of all mankind, in Paris on the 15th of November 1989, when the member states approved, by unanimity, the recommendation on safeguarding traditional and popular culture where, without doubt, we find several entertainment activities.

We feel the urge to alert to the fact that it needs to be a more effective and stronger involvement of the national entities, namely local, regional and central power, to the preservation of this kind of entertaining manifestations, not being enough just the recovery of such data but also its publishing and wide spreading so that they are known in the Portuguese society. Despite in the last thirty years we assisted to several associations in Portugal developing researches focusing on the recovery and preservation of these games, it wasn't given to it much visibility and there are still few districts and entities that, regularly, promote events that focus on the acknowledgment of these activities, and consequently, their valuing.

Recognizing the value of these entertainment manifestations implies that “traditional and popular games” are not only a part of citizen’s leisure but also of the curriculum of schools and faculties as a compulsory subject and equally important as others in the formation of teachers of the varied grades. On a broadened vision about the formation centers of physical education teachers, we conclude that, in Portugal, there are not almost any subjects that develop and stimulate the learning of these traditional entertaining activities, easily making us perceive that there is a lack of acknowledgment towards the problematic of preservation, diffusion and dynamics of traditional games that, unquestionably, will deprive them of another essential tool to the education of their students.

The intern logic of the different traditional games allows to develop bonds of solidarity, respect, tolerance, cooperation and winning spirit, varying spaces, environments and allowing different ways of winning, thus contributing to the correct organization and structuring of their corporal scheme, promotion of self-esteem, their communication and, essentially, favouring the integration of citizens, whether in their social space and in their future relationships.

Despite the appeal of the U.N, evoked in the Paris meeting (1989), included this theme “games” on one of their preservation worries, we still verify the weak dynamics of many teaching institutions, or even those oriented towards social-anthropological studies, regarding the recovery of this kind of world patrimony, what’s quickly leading to the loss of plenty of entertaining expressions that developed in Portugal in other times.

It is then important, to promote, quickly, initiatives of varied kinds that have as objective of study or discussion Traditional Games, so that we can know the status of these expression in national territory. This way, we next present a few proposals that could contribute a lot to reach the objective mentioned earlier:

- a) Organization of a national congress in Portugal about traditional games where studies that are being carried over and not known to the public are presented
- b) Debates about the problematic of traditional games in Portugal, so that we can know the actual status of the difficulties found that oppose their recovery and dynamics.
- c) Divulcation of studies and projects that are being developed and are being started.
- d) Developing formations on scholar environments of the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd grade.
- e) Publishing of studies and monographies
- f) Organization of entertainment workshops
- g) Joining the developing of these activities with tourism

Plenty of other proposals that could be presented, however, we believe that the earlier mentioned could well be the start of a changing of attitude towards traditional games and, consequently, a significant contribute to their preservation and dynamics in Portuguese territory.

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