

# Which Sporting Leisures for which Society of Tomorrow ?

Guy JAOUEN

European Traditional Sports and Games Association  
Researcher, attached to the Univ. of Brest (France)

## Abstract:

The vocabulary of modern life often uses in an inappropriate way the term "traditional" which comes from the Latin *Traditio* "to transmit". Traditional games that have been transmitted to us from generation to generation are the body expressions, which reflect the particular culture of the different existing communities all over the world. These games represent an element of cultural recognition through their internal logic, a way to express "we are".

In Great Britain, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, most games of the local communities had been standardised to become activities organised around the new rationalised model of British society, industrialised and with the creation of free time. This new concept imposed itself on the world to the detriment of the regional corporal practices diversity, at the same time as the western industrial society imposed itself.

Condemned for a long time by the churches and suspected by those in power, the academic research was not in rest and have, either abandoned it, either often dressed it of indignity. Today numerous traditional games are still active in spite of the institutionalised domination by the modern sports structure. Elements of recognition of regional communities, such as their dances, music, gastronomy, the traditional games are living laboratories of local democracy, of human and intercultural different relationships.

**Key words:** traditional, body culture, local democracy, interculturality, diversity.

---

In 2001, the European network of traditional games, gathering together dozens of organisations, decided to create an official body whose goal would be to promote traditional games in general. Nevertheless one of the objects was also to put forward some questions about the future of our societies, and the sports system is today a very important element of our life because behind sport are very important questions and the stakes are high. Some of our recent conferences had for their objective to treat the inheritances and transmissions that we have received through traditional games, and the development and promotion that we agreed to do. We are precisely there in the value of the Tradition. In other words, today what do we think we have received, what do we think it is necessary to transmit, why, how? It is there an important debate in society that we would like to open. We are therefore in front of important questions as: « which forms to give to our leisure, to these moments of life and shared emotion? », our leisure pursuits being linked directly to the society in which they were forged. It is now necessary to bring to fruition all the ideas contained in the different exchanges that researchers have had for several years on this topic. Here are some directions that should not leave the reader indifferent.

The word tradition or traditional is a word used for many different meanings, it is also sometimes attacked. Many presupposed are stuck to its skin, often carried as cannonballs. Thus, at the time of a recent meeting with a European deputy, he said: "*all sports are traditional games by origin*". He was right, as with a sixth sense that a historian can acquire, but his affirmation was also too basic, nearly grotesque, like a hand gesture to push away an embarrassing question, as if to show that it was not important to treat it in a serious way. In fact, in this short sentence, this people's representative had told too much and not enough.

Sports are all traditional games by origin: it is correct if we only glance; they are similar, like a path in the countryside and a motorway, both human constructions used for human displacements, as traditional games and sports serve to displace the pressure of every day life, during leisure time. Soccer, the best known sport in Europe, has some

traditional games ancestors almost everywhere that I won't call foot-ball, an English term that only means *foot to the ball*. The word ball in German and English, *ball* in Swedish, *bold* in Danish, *bal* in Dutch, is also the word *pelota* in Spanish, *palla* in Italian, *pila* in Latin, designates a sphere, *bhel* in Indo-European, and symbolised also the sun, the source of life of revival every spring. Most of our games originated to close funeral ceremonies or life revival (births, weddings, May festivals), formerly in Greece, in China and with the Incas for example, but still today in Mongolia, in Uzbekistan, and even sometimes in Europe at saint's day festivals, after Mass. We can notice a certain similarity between the games of the former Roman stadiums, and their violence, and some soccer matches of today serving as an outlet for the population. We have the same similarity between the antique *pancrace* and the modern *pride*, more precisely in the structure of the sport itself.

## FROM THE FOOT TO THE BALL TO THE SOCCER OF THE STADIUMS

Variations of the foot to the ball, often thought to be exclusively English, were played almost everywhere in the world, with different rules according to the regions and different environments. It even mixed the game with hands and feet, which means that the old style of Irish Gaelic football is a part of soccer's ancestors. Nearly all peoples had their game of ball, as they had their wrestling style, at the same time similar from a distance, but also very different when we analyse their internal<sup>1</sup> logic, in two words the universality and the local. A ball is a ball, wrestling is wrestling. Among the most well known, in addition to soccer, the European football, we have Australian football, American football, and many others, hundreds of them undervalued. Indeed, in the modern world, who knows the Melanesian foot to the ball where the ball is an empty coconut, or the Chinese Tsu-Chu, a sport of the Chinese emperors for centuries, but hurling is a word that speaks to us. Yet the game that are described as hurling, *la Soule* or *Choule*, *Chole*, *Velad*, *Cnappan*, *Shrove Tuesday Foot-ball*, etc., was played by foot, by the hand, with both, with a stick, in the different regions of Europe. Therefore, sometimes the same name represents different games, and at other times different names are sometimes given to the same game, according to the cultural areas. In the regions from North England to the Southwest of France, these games have often differences in their internal logic, the rules, but the external<sup>2</sup> logic, the context, had strong similarities in these different regions. Thus, every year, for many centuries, the different farming or urban communities have organised recreations during calendar festivals, where the authorities accepted some excesses, as a social valve "to let off steam".

Re-speaking about the modern soccer is now necessary, to question the myth of a game that would have existed since the eternity. Joseph Strutt, the great reference for medieval games in England, described towards 1790 a game called Goal at Foot-ball or Camp-Ball<sup>3</sup>: "*When a match at foot-ball is made, two parties, each containing an equal number of competitors, take the field, and stand between two goals, placed at the distance of eighty or an hundred yards the one from the other. The goal is usually made with two sticks driven into the ground, about two or three feet apart. The ball, which is commonly made of a blown bladder, and cased with leather, is delivered in the midst of the ground, and the object of each party is to drive it through the goal of their antagonists, which being achieved the game is won. The abilities of the performers are best displayed in attacking and defending the goals; and hence the pastime was more frequently called a goal at foot-ball than a game at foot-ball. When the exercise becomes exceeding violent, the players kick each other's shins without the least ceremony, and some of them overthrown at the hazard of their limbs*". The internal logic of the game looks like that of present day soccer, but Strutt specifies that if this game was formerly very popular among the people at the end of the Middle Ages, it was completely abandoned by the time he wrote. Later, in 1826, William Hone, who had republished Strutt's work and was a specialist in the popular traditions of England, wrote that the game of Foot-Ball « *is, and remains a game of Shrove Tuesday in England*

---

<sup>1</sup> According to the concept of Pierre Parlebas, the internal logic appears in the system of constraints imposed by the rules of a game. The code of the game introduced by these rules predetermines to participate in a particular type of corporal relations carrying the print of the culture that generated them. It doesn't refer to psychological or sociological type of considerations.

<sup>2</sup> The external logic is the context, as the type of sociocultural relationship lived by the protagonists in very distinct geographical zones, at a date or a very determined temporal period.

<sup>3</sup> In *Sports and Pastimes of the people of England* – 1801 (published after his death).

and in Scotland<sup>4</sup> ». The same year, a British gentleman reports, following a festivity of Shrove Tuesday that the term of *Foot-Ball day*<sup>5</sup> was unknown to him, these two examples confirming the Strutt explanations concerning the *Camp-Ball*. The *Foot-Ball day* or *Foot-Ball of Shrove Tuesday* was indeed different to the *Camp-Ball*, it was played like *la soule* and one of the main goals was also to collect money to pay for the feast in the pubs. It appears therefore that the modern soccer is a reconstruction, in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, from a former practice whose ashes were still hot, without a complete rupture of memory, a bit as it was the case for judo and ju-jitsu in 1882.

Now about Australian football, this game is derived from Gaelic football played in Ireland and was revised by the Australians. They introduced an oval ball instead of a round one, and an oval pitch instead of oblong. This example shows once again that human beings, even in a society highly “technicised”, always look for activities in which their community can recognise itself. In this case it was mainly due to the fact that the Irish had suffered from prolonged English expansionism and wanted to develop their own sporting identity. Their motto was, until recently, that a sport must be developed in the cultural community that forged it, where the game offers understandable cultural references to its members. Gaelic football is also a ball game descended from what is often mistakenly considered as one and same game: « hurling ». In 1527 a text from Ireland tells us that every hurling match had about hundred players, later another one describes a meeting between married and unmarried people at a saint’s day festival. The game was considered as brutal and was codified around 1880 by the Gaelic Athletic Association, which is the time when it was fashionable to transform the internal logic of games to create what we have called sport everywhere in the world (the word sport, in England, originally meant “leisure, pastime and also competitive games”).

American football also descended from modern English soccer; circa 1870 in the US the game developed in the universities and then diverged in numerous directions, to such a point that in 1873-74 it was no longer possible to organise a match between different universities because each had introduced new rules locally. Later, under the influence of what today we call rugby, an association was created and decided to develop independently from the corresponding European game. Today, even if the speech of the actors still affirms that there are elements of soccer and rugby in the game, we can say that the internal logic of this game looks more similar to what was probably the ball game of the Indians from Central America, the *Tlachtli* or *Pokyah*. This game was organised during ceremonies to celebrate the sun and the stars, symbolised by the ball. It opposed two teams, whose structures reflected the dualisms used during religious ceremonies to represent good and evil, or day and night, summer and winter. The game was so violent that the players had to wear leather protections on the shoulders, hips, and elbows, and the rules, with long runs, had similarities to American football which therefore carries its name well ... The paintings and bas relief’s of the time show this similarity. May we note that in the 1905 season American football, matches had eighteen deadly injuries and one hundred fifty nine serious injuries<sup>6</sup>!

This is to focus the incontestable relation between sports and traditional games. It is often confused, but real, and their internal logic has common points if they are of the same games family. If we take the family game of ball, it is an object with which we have to run or to hit, then a goal we have to reach. If we take a small ball, it is an

---

<sup>4</sup> In *The Every day book and table book* - written in the 1820’, published in 1841 by William Hone, London., Hone mentions the letter of a Scottish gentlemen from 1815 that speaks about « foot-ball » as an old tradition still perpetuated in some towns in Scotland on shrove Tuesday, between married men and bachelors. The married had to hang the ball, hanging symbolised by a ball put 3 times in a nest of moor. The bachelors had to drown the ball 3 times in a river. At the end the game the ball was cut in slices as in the game of *Ruzzolone* (throwing the cheese) in Italy where slices of cheese are offered to the participants...

<sup>5</sup> A friend of M. Hone, who passed by coach on shrove Tuesday through several cities in the vicinity of London noticed that all the inhabitants secured their windows on the street side. The players push a wooden ball forwards, and beg money from door to door (misfortune to the house windows that didn’t give anything some...). Several teams of subscribers went all over town. At noon, on « foot-ball day » matches took place in the streets, and after four hours all players retired to the pubs to spend their collection money. The author have participated in such similar games on February 2008, 4<sup>th</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup>, for the “Hurling Silver Ball”, the day before and on the shrove Tuesday, at St Ives and St Columb, Cornwall - England.

<sup>6</sup> World Sport Encyclopedia – Wojciech Liponski, 2003, Poland.

object that we have to hit, to throw, to try to catch. If it is wrestling, it is a game where we must defeat the adversary by throwing him, reversing, or the immobilisation of an opponent (according to the different representations that the different social groups have of games). It is the universality of games, but we know that next to this universality, all the games have been in fact constructed in a different way, through their environment, language, history and different cultures, what we call the *habitus*<sup>7</sup>. Today's modern sports are not therefore an evolution of the former traditional games. Volleyball was thus created in USA in 1895, and basketball in 1891; table tennis was invented in England in the 1880s, popularised in 1890s when an American created a factory to manufacture and to sell the materials of the game. All could have instituted continuity with existing games, that of the Chinese for table tennis, or the Aztecs for volleyball, the Dutch korfbal for basketball, but to erase the local culture and substitute it with a new one is a strategy that had already been proven effective during colonial times. For commercial companies, it is as always easier to penetrate a society without references, acculturated, than a so-called traditional society. It is therefore necessary to distinguish, on one hand, the game itself and the actors of the game, and on the other hand the other various external elements that create a situation whereby the game becomes the central element of a commercial activity in which the goal of the game is not to play, but to win and earn money.

### TRADITIONAL GAMES AND OLYMPIC GAMES

The modern sports, or rather the sport system, are in fact very different from the traditional games of today, however, we live in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and we are not defending social activities that existed in antiquity, the Middle Ages or at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The process followed by the majority of modern sports, in the 19<sup>th</sup> and especially the 20<sup>th</sup> century, saw the bureaucratisation of sports and their internal logic, not for the game itself, but for control of the system, for power, following the model of the state, but also from the economic revolution, elitist and productivist, the 'market'. The rupture of a corner stick is enough to stop a professional soccer match! This tendency to complexification of the rules by elements having nothing to do with the game itself is characteristic of all modern sports. Our example is significant of the system of sportification: control of the game by the bureaucracy - the fundamental role of the economic through material calibrated to the millimetre - the social power of those who control the whole system. The big international sporting federations and their satellites, specialised newspapers, TV, commercial markets, tend therefore to become globalisation companies of culture, with objectives of control, of power and of finance, precisely like multinational companies. The doping scandal on a big scale, particularly those implied by big laboratories working with professional athletes is meaningful; their details are very quickly suppressed from the press. Otherwise, how is it still possible to say that the Olympic games are not concerned by the politics, as Mr. Serandour, president of the French NOC and member of the IOC proclaimed it in April 2008, at the time of the controversy on the Beijing Olympic games?

On this subject it is interesting to do a small parenthesis on the modern Olympic Games, which were reinvented at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century by Pierre de Coubertin and his Anglo-American allies. Previously, from 1612, games looking backwards to antiquity, the *Cotswold Olympick Games* had been organised by a group of former catholic dissidents of Queen Elisabeth 1<sup>st</sup>, some having been young friends of Shakespeare. The ethos of the games was in opposition to the rising puritan movement, which sought to control and destroy all the old joyful traditions of England and impose their bleak views over society, which brought the Civil War of 1646-1649. The games had in their programme wrestling, sword fighting, cudgel-playing, leaping, horse-shoe throwing, hunting or hare coursing, women dancing and various other activities in what was the natural environment of games of the period in this region of England. Then in 1788 a project started in Harvard, USA, in 1793, it was in Germany, in 1813 in Rome. In 1834, it was the turn of Sweden. Greece finally, when it gained independence in 1829, wished to restore the games of Olympia to its roots and especially its prestigious past, and organised the Hellenic Games in 1859, 1870, 1875 and 1889. In this case the so-called link with tradition was false and relates solely to the myth. Indeed, when a practice dies and when someone

---

<sup>7</sup> The habitus is the social print left on the personality of any human being by the various structures at the very centre in which this person has lived: culture, language, social, legal, natural environment, personal experiences, etc... It is a social matrix of the community giving individual grids of interpretation.

rebuilds it, the transmission has been broken, it is a false tradition. It is the case with the Olympic Games, the construction of the myth is comparable to the myth of the origin of States.

The new Olympic Games used therefore the Olympic myth to dress with respectability a new practice, but with a code of Western Anglo-Saxon thought. Indeed, the development of modern sport in the United States, bound to the commercial system, was the American lobby and had the need to support the utopian Pierre de Coubertin and his English supporters to create a system of competitions at world level. This was created on the society model already put in place by the New World inhabitants, according to their own *habitus*. This was a system whereby adventurers, the poor, ordinary workers or outlaws could gain a decision-maker's position, exploiter and rich, by an almost religious concept of the right to succeed and to be part of the elite. This concept is partly inherited from frustrations felt before by these same adventurers, the poor, ordinary workers and outlaws. Constructed by them, the Olympic Games were originally an event with Anglo-Saxon games, but reserved for the upper classes and the aristocratic elite, because the high-level working class athletes had been professionalised since the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century. We are aware that games, as languages, are the results of thought models and of different environments. The 1896 recreated Olympic Games were therefore, in fact, even involuntarily, greatly ethnocentric games, as they still are largely today. They inoculated, often without obvious pain, an acculturation in all countries not having sufficient economic strength to develop their own indigenous games. They were and remain, games of the rich countries, representing the economic dominating model.

On one hand we have modern sports which pretend to be the heirs of the former physical activities or traditional games, affirming to be the extension, the direct descendant of these practices which therefore gives them respectability. This has been so much emphasised by official speeches that researchers, during the last hundred years, haven't judged it necessary to be interested in the traditional games, as if these last had evolved merely, as explained in Darwinism, throwing their old dresses aside just to put new one. Therefore former games do not exist any more because they had transferred, this untruth can be found in the statement of a French high sports ministry commissioner at the 1988 symposium in Villa Real, Portugal, organised on behalf of the Council of Europe, on traditional games. He said that his country supported other countries working on this theme, but stated that France was not concerned because there were no longer any live traditional games in France! He was and is utterly wrong because there are several hundred thousands of players of hundreds of different games!

#### ABOUT THE IGNORANCE OF TRADITIONAL GAMES IN THE UNIVERSITIES

Next to these complex connections between traditional games and sports, the word *traditional* is often used to designate the evil, the grain of sand that embarrasses the well lubricated mechanic of the dominating sporting system. The image is *animalised*<sup>8</sup> in order to have the complete right to destroy it, which has hidden the true problems, as in a conjuring trick. Is it this motivation, masking the genocide of traditional games, which inspired Mr. Stefano Cavazza, professor in the university of Bologna, when he wrote in the preface of the book *Giochi tradizionali Valle in d' Aosta*, a book financed by the Valdotan regional government to valorise traditional games? "*Almost everywhere in Europe we notice nationalistic implications at the level of traditional games collection, as it is the case for the Serbian Karadzic (...), this interest for survival is bound to the refusal of industrialisation and modifications brought to society, that industry introduced (...). We find the proof of this (of the modernity refusal) in the debate on the presumed decadence dragged by the development of the cultural industry and mass culture (...)* the ideological combination between right wing regimes and folklore is henceforth amply documented". To conclude, he advances, "*that fortunately the Valdotan games showed a better spirit hiding themselves in the CONI, the Italian Olympic committee*", which means that they are therefore absolved from any sin...

---

<sup>8</sup> Concept where a human being is dressed as an animal picture to justify treating him like a lower human. Descartes spoke of « animal-machine, opposed to the man who reasons »; Taine spoke of « The primitive animal who subsists indefinitely in the human being ».

There we touch the taboo of the Olympic Games, to the taboo of Sport. The OLYMPICS, it is necessarily the picture of the well, it is universal human values, egalitarian; those of democracy, of friendship between peoples, etc. Therefore modern Sport is also necessarily a tool with exemplary social and human values. Thus, when a parent brings his child to the door of a training room, he leaves completely reassured, absolutely convinced that it is a place where his child is entirely in good hands. The sporting activities have taken more and more space in our present world and these places have therefore more and more importance, but nevertheless the positive *a priori* stays. There is no surveillance of the system, not even the setting up of interdisciplinary structures whose role would be to control the correct democratic and educational functioning of an activity which is widely subsidised by public taxes. In the French sporting federations, the agendas of the council meetings only foresee points concerning the organisation of competitions, the formation of trainers, refereeing, and selections for the main competitions; nothing concerning their non elitist and educational role, cultural training, the blossoming of youth in general. Is it solely for this that these official organisations get public money, and are fully conscious of their role in the formation of the society of tomorrow?

But perhaps the reflection on youth education is reduced to the reproduction of an elitist sporting model. Whereas traditional games are accused of playing the nationalist game, what is still obviously to prove as a general law, nothing is said about Olympic state nationalism and that of big international sporting meetings. The bigger the lie, the more it is believed, says the adage. It is saddening that this scientist, Mr. Cavazza, who is not the only one, was not capable of seeing the innovative, critical, and alternative work of the movement that gives life currently to traditional games. It is though possible to find works about this movement in many scientific texts, where play and games are used for social education and the education of future generations. However Mr. Cavazza is right when he puts us on guard against the quest for origins, against false traditions, of rediscoveries, but then, why is he not also critical of the OLYMPICS? Like Don Quixote attacking his imaginary windmills, he abstracts a part of the reality. He doesn't want to see that for about thirty years some federations of traditional games, of which in particular, that of the Val d' Aosta, have proposed egalitarian international exchanges, with very interesting experimentation's and results. These meetings put forward games of all the protagonists, without standardisation of the rules, without one unique language of exchange. Everybody must play the game of the others in a sign of respect for the culture of the others. There are also competitions, but it is only a pretext for the human encounter.

However, in this debate, forget the false signification given to the term "traditional games" by Norbert Elias and Eric Dunning demonstrated in the book "Quest for excitement, Sport and Leisure in the Civilizing Process" (entitled "Sport and civilisation" in the French version), arguments used by these opponents of traditional games. Indeed, these authors obviously don't know the world of what we currently call "traditional games" because they only refer to sports existing in the 18<sup>th</sup> century such as foot-ball, wrestling and boxing and they call them *traditional games* instead of *games played formerly*. In fact they refer to the external logic, or context, of the games from the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and of course the environment of the 18<sup>th</sup> century in England is not that of the 20<sup>th</sup> century even if the internal logic, or the rules, are still more or less the same with an adaptation to the present cultural values! *i.e. description of Camp-ball by Strutt in the 18<sup>th</sup> century*. This is true for all the games still alive today. Moreover, the authors speak about only one society, England, and a society that has changed greatly, where sport practices are only one of the elements to have made changes in this society (the society of the 18<sup>th</sup> century was probably more violent, but it changed, and the games followed this change). We still await the same evidence about the evolution of games from other areas of the world, with a complex process of comparatism including a survey of the context; there the conclusions could have been very different. Besides this ethnocentric approach, the authors refer to a text of Richard Carew written about 1590 and published in 1602. This text describes two different practices of Hurling<sup>9</sup> in Cornwall at that time, but why did they not refer to one of these games still practised every year and why did they not go to observe them? Why did they not go to study the wrestling style described by Carew and still practised in England?

---

<sup>9</sup> One is the same as described by Mr Hone (Shrove Tuesday Foot-ball), and the second has an internal logic similar to modern Rugby.

Elias and Dunning suggest that modern sport, invented in England, would have the effect of releasing tensions caused by the very strong and increasing social constraints of our modern societies, to pacify the relations between the actors while causing tensions and emotions out of real time, and very much framed by regulations. Indeed, humans being animals, they explain that in civilised societies where the states of tension and excitation are permanently greatly curbed, sport releases, in a very controlled setting, the liberation of emotions, which is necessary for mental health. Without entering into the debate about the concept that they defend, which could also be applied globally to current traditional games or any leisure practise with emotions, it is necessary to note that this is especially the general theme of states, which seek for control of individuals. States try more and more to control everything, and generate rules that ordinary citizens are forced to respect. The demonstration could have been done using other themes such as work rules, those of commercial exchanges, but there the critic is very vigilant.

Through the modern sports the two authors imagine also the Olympic sports; sports which draw their mythology from antiquity, exactly in these former games in which the authors condemn the violence; there we can find the same paradox as in Cavezza. Elias and Dunning had therefore a certainty to demonstrate, an important and recognised academic thesis, but it is not their demonstration or logical gait, that demonstrates this theory. The tool “traditional games”, which did not exist as far as they were concerned when the articles were written, was a scapegoat, which would not answer them... When they promote sportification<sup>10</sup> as being a process of civilisation, a fundamental element for the creation of a *habitus* where the human being learns to control himself, then to reinject this impulse control into his own society; we are not convinced. Is to complexify the rules or to impose a uniform a way to achieve this goal? Is to impose referees at all levels in all sports, at school for example, a way to generate debate and negotiations between the players, and thus a way to reduce violence? If the objective is justifiable, it seems that we must be very prudent of the means, if sport is first of all education. The violence has perhaps only changed, it could be still there, but different.

We must be always very prudent with concepts, which announce “an improvement of the civilisation process”. It is when Elias declares that it is more violent for a hunter to kill a fox with his own hands than to give this work to his dogs (to delegate the act of killing therefore), does that mean to him that it is less violent to delegate the act of violence to someone else, even to the State? One can pursue this demonstration while saying that it is less violent to decide to bomb a city rather than to go there and fight ourselves! It is the apologia of the deresponsibilisation, of the scapegoat, and also of the expert’s right to think for the whole of civil society. It is the right to “animalise” the one who doesn’t think like you, to justify the necessity to destroy him. The setting up, in Britain, of millions of camcorders to supervise the streets, motorways, roads in the countryside, and even in villages, is the logical continuation of this state civilisation process whereby it is necessary to impose control of oneself, following a logic that we find in the two books: “The Best of the Worlds” by Huxley and “1984” by Orwell.

Norbert Elias, a well known scientist who has studied in numerous Western universities, used his appraisal for demonstrations where we can see the logic of the religious environment, the culture and the language of his adopted country, England, (he had escaped Hitlerian Germany). The thought is, as the games, at the same time universal and local, rich in its differences. Let’s take the example of languages that are constructions of thought codes modelled by the *habitus* from which no one can completely escape. Languages are therefore the spoken representations of situations limited geographically and temporally. The notion of Logic (the science of the language, of clear and coherent expression of thought) expresses itself only through the elements of a language, and is only valid for the human beings immersed in the environment of the culture represented by this language. Thus, when we intend to install any societal logic in another country, as the Elias “process of civilisation”, we in fact speak only about the representation of our own logic, or of one mode of thought of a particular

---

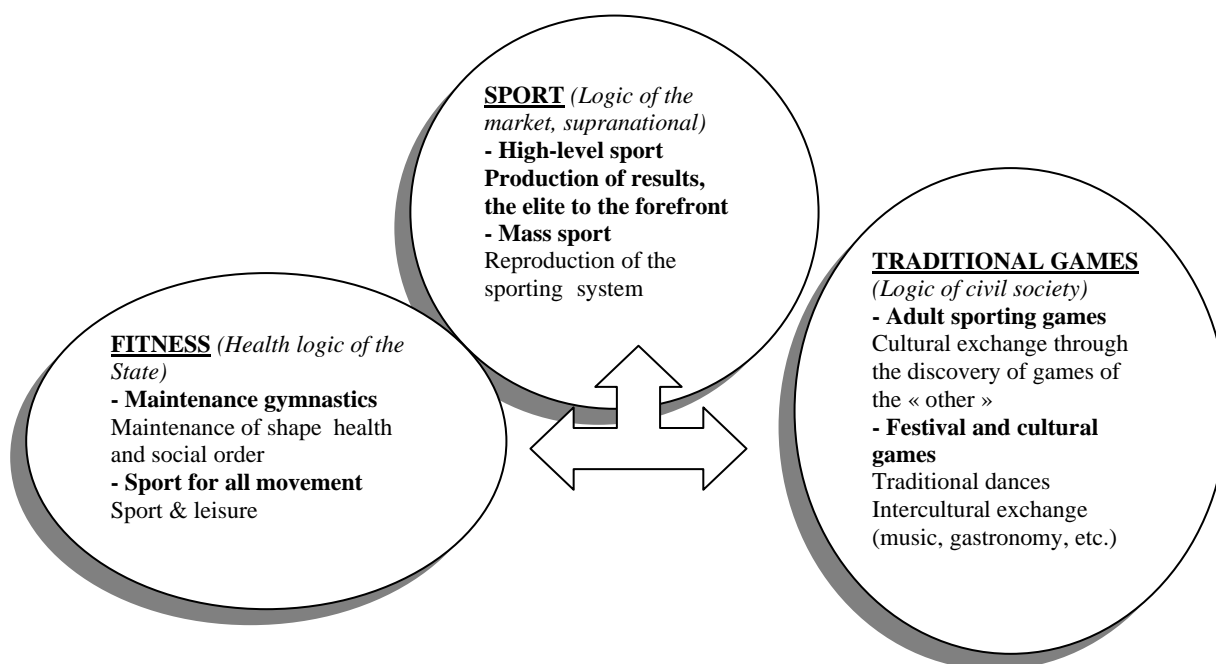
<sup>10</sup> The sportification process is a complex ensemble consisting of rationalising the practice : standardising the rules and the dimensions of playing areas, the creation of institutions and bureaucratic organisations, regulatory decisions, laws, quantification, scientific statements and specialisation of roles.

civilisation. There is therefore a part of ethnocentrism in the concept, and it is the same thing with sporting games. This system of thought can be assimilated to a will of acculturation for the societies on which it is imposed, as it is always accompanied and accentuated by the technological means of our time, much more influential if we also possess economic power. It can be compared to the globalisation phenomenon that we observe currently, where the dominating economic system tries to impose its concept, where everything can be merchandised.

We are aware that today numerous structural modifications of our societies are imposed by multinational companies, and before we can start to analyse whether we have to adopt or to reject them, another modification invades our lives, ruining all possibility of answering, and so forth. Everybody loses by this their reference marks and therefore their critical spirit, since the critic is always fed by the reference marks that we have. Moreover we perceive that the sports system promotes activities that are more and more merchandised, purposely, to increase the temporal space in which the citizens become more and merely consumers, of TV, at matches, in training rooms and in fitness halls. The following diagram presents three shapes of the societal physical education expression, with three different logics. The sporting system is at the summit of the hierarchy, the activities of the second movement, fitness, are considered lower because they are non competitive, even though they copy many elements of sport. The third movement, centered around the regional festive and traditional activities, is in general completely unknown or infantilised<sup>11</sup>. While considering that sport follows the logic of the 'Market', the fitness system another logic of the state, and traditional games a third logic so-called of civil society, we approach the true problem, that of democracy, because the sports system tries in general to establish a decisional supranational level whereas the traditional games are at the level of local decision making. It is in this approach that we truly find today the difference between traditional games and mass modern sports.

### The Body Culture

(These three elements are to be considered as social facts)



### TO RETURN TO AN OPEN MIND, EXCHANGES AND LOANS WORLD

The equitable exchange, balanced and respecting the cultures of others, without domination or expansionism, that has already been discussed, once put in place through traditional games meetings, is much more efficient for the progress of democracy in the

<sup>11</sup> The “infantilisation” is an attitude consisting in considering the other as a child, incapable to manage himself alone, to take the good decisions or to judge by himself what is good for him.



world than that where the dominant model wishes to impose its vision, its personal representation of democracy by strength and by competition. Egalitarian exchanges, participants with an open mind, who wish to learn from one and other. This creates exchanges and cultural loans, which are very rich if we consider the great diversity of traditional games, but also voluntarist, with collaboration. The loans, are also the transmission of what we think right for our community, in order to give to civil society the governance of progress. It is also necessary to wonder very seriously about the results they will have, on several generations of youngsters, the habits created by human encounters called sports meetings, where the main objective is always to dominate the “other” through competition. The introduction of this antagonistic spirit in all sporting competitions risks at the end returning to the rituals of the South American Indians of the 13<sup>th</sup> century “my team is the good one, and the other the evil one”.

However, let's remain very humble and let's not reverse an absurdity, with modern sport as a miracle solution to social problems, then by putting forward traditional games instead. These are not evidently by themselves an answer to all the problems of society, but questions revealed by their survey permit us to detect the concerned problems, sometimes to unmask them, and therefore to approach them. Traditional games can then become alternative post modern tools, in the domain of leisure and sports, not to become themselves sports of the modern type, because they are different, but on the contrary to serve as a laboratory for a global reflection on this theme, to help society to reform the system of leisure and sports competition. For this it is necessary to renourish curiosity and knowledge through a fundamental and experimental scientific research, into the historic, ethnological, sociological and psychological domain.

Never forget that to know where one goes, and why, it is first necessary to understand from where one comes.

## REFERENCES

- 1 - BARREAU J.-J. & JAOUEN G., « *Les jeux populaires, des traditions aux régions de l'Europe de demain* ». (1998), Confédération FALSAB.  
 - « *Les jeux traditionnels en Europe - los juegos tradicionales en Europa* ». With LAVEGA P. (2001), Confédération FALSAB.
- 2 - BAXTER W. & JAOUEN G., « *Celtic wrestling, our culture - les luttes celtiques, notre culture* ». (1990). Fédération Internationale des Luttes Celtiques.
- 3 - CAREW R. “*Survey of Cornwall*” (text from 1592). (1602), Reprint 1968. London, Melrose.
- 4 - EICHBERG H. « *A Revolution of Body Culture* » in *Les jeux populaires, des traditions aux régions de l'Europe de demain*. Barreau J.-J. & Jaouen G. (1998), Confédération FALSAB.  
 - « *Playing and displaying identity* » in *Postmodernity and Olympism*. Pawlucki A., (2003). Academy of Physical Education and Sport, Gdansk.  
 - « *The people of democracy* ». (2004), Klim/Ifo, Arhus.
- 5 - ELIAS N. et DUNNING E., (1994), « *Sport et civilisation. La violence maîtrisée* », French edition, Paris, Fayard.
- 6 - GUIBERT J. & JAOUEN G., dir. (2005). « *Jeux traditionnels - Quels loisirs sportifs pour la société de demain ?* » Institut Culturel de Bretagne (France).
- 7 - HONE W. “*The every-day book and table book, sports, pastimes, ceremonies, manners, customs and events*”. Written in the 1810' & 1820', published in 1827, T. Teggs, London.
- 8 - JAOUEN G. Articles.  
 (1989). - « *Gouren, Sport et Jeu de Lutte* », dans *Körperkulturen und Identität*, Eichberg H. & Hansen J. Lit, Hamburg.  
 (1996). - « *The necessity of preserving and promoting traditional games*”, dans *I° congreso internacional de luchas y juegos tradicionales* - Canaria, Gobierno de Canaria (Spain)  
 (1997). - « *Sports et Jeux traditionnels de Bretagne* », dans *Revue Lo Joa e les Omo*, FENT (Aosta - Italia)  
 (2003). - « *L' éducation et la culture au travers de la transmission des jeux traditionnels* », dans la revue *Hopala*, Brest (France).  
 (2004). - “*The need for unity - example of Brittany*”, in *The way ahead for traditional sports in the 21<sup>st</sup> century*, Federation of Indigenous Scottish Sports and Games, Glasgow.

- (2006). - « *Les jeux et sports traditionnels en Bretagne, Inventaire 2006* », in *Juegos tradicionales y sociedad en Europa*. LAVEGA P. dir. AEJST, Santander (Spain).
- (2007). - “*Un necesario recoñecemento para os xogos tradicionais*”. In *Revista Galega de Educación* N° 37, Santiago de Compostela (Spain).
- 9 - JARVIE, GRANT (1991), “*Highland Games. The Making of the Myth*”. Edinburgh University Press.
- 10 - LIPONSKI W. & JAOUEN G. (2003). « *Ethnology of Sport. Special issue of Studies in Physical Culture and Tourism* ». University of Poznan.
- 11 - LIPONSKI W. (2003), « *World sport encyclopaedia* ». Atena, Poznań, Poland.  
- « *Rochwist I Palant* », (2004) Akademia Piaseckiego, Poznań, Poland
- 12 - MacALOON J. (1981), “*This great symbol, P. de Coubertin and the origins of the Modern Olympic Games*”. University of Chicago.
- 13 - MAUSS M. (1950), « *Sociologie et Anthropologie* » PUF, Paris.
- 14 - PARLEBAS P. (1999) - « *Jeux, sports et sociétés* » - Lexique de praxéologie motrice - Paris - INSEP Publication.
- 15 - RENSON R. (1997), “*The reinvention of tradition in sports and games*”, in *Journal of Comparative Physical Education and Sport*, XIX (2), pp. 46-54.