

History and Cultural Context of Traditional Sports and Games in Selected European Countries.

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Abstract

This work is aimed on Traditional Sports and Games (TSG) as an important factor of cultural aspect of European identity in a historical perspective. The authors ground their explorations in findings from culture-historical and contemporary studies on TSG in selected countries. This work is directed particularly to those interested in historical knowledge and development on the study of TSG. Play[1] as a part of human culture has been researched on historical, biological, psychological and social/cultural bases. Research has proceeded based on extensive survey data (e.g. Strutt, Piasecki) with other, more specific methodology (e.g. Huizinga, Møller, Lipoński). In that article the authors try to describe chosen examples of European scholars' thoughts from different times and different cultures on TSG.

Introduction

Ever since the most famous historian Johan Huizinga published his book, "Homo Ludens [2] – a Study of the Play-Element in Culture (1955), it has become clear that playing games, including sport games, is a basic element of human social existence and behavior. Games vary by age, but generally occur throughout life depending on the the needs and motives of people taking part-in them.

TSG are generally considered to come from survival activities (like hunting), specific lifeways or military activities (such as archery, riding a horse, fencing, etc.). Activities pursued for pleasure have become sport that usually demands the players' strength, speed and other motor skills particularly if played under regulated conditions, on a pre-defined field or track, or according to pre-determined rules. Major differences occur when the performance is timed, measured and recorded (irrespective of the results they achieve in the contest) and winning is the goal. In contrast, in TSG the best performances are preserved in local legends, but never in a statistical form, and thus they can alter and change according to recollection in the course of time.

The most important modern sports event, the Olympic Games, has the word 'game' in its name. In contests organized by the ancient Greeks at Olympia, Delphi and Nemea, only the names of the winners were recorded. Their performances were not measured, and neither was the name of the second and third runner-up recorded. Were these, then, games or sports? The possibility of being engaged in education played a big role in participating in the Panhellenic Games held at Olympia. A great emphasis was laid on both spiritual and physical education (in Greek, *kalos kagathos*) in the over one thousand years long survival of these games, which would today be called sports or sporting events.

Movement-based games reenergize the individual exhausted from daily occupational or school work. Games create new roles and opportunities and provide new experiences accompanied by emotions. For example, one can gain joy and be distracted from worries from creative play.

The activities that school aged children perform and practice are mostly games with rules. This way, games create order (Huizinga, 1938) and with rules, certain drill can be practiced and underdeveloped skills can be improved. Spontaneous and freely invented games based on local traditions help to develop creativity and social, cognitive and motor skills. They also provide a valuable opportunity to explore “other cultures and learn more about one’s own is through play. [...]. A multicultural, multiethnic approach to education provides children with information they can use to form opinions and practices for they own lives.” (Barbarash, 1997, 11).

1. TSG in Selected European Countries – Historical Background in a Cultural Context

English Ethnographer and Folklorist as TSG Heritage Guardians

As a past-time, games have been the center of empirical attention among scholars, but only a few have pioneered its purpose, understanding and preservation. One exception would be the English ethnographer, anthropologist and historian, Joseph Strutt (1749-1802), a pioneer in ethnography and probably the first person to be seriously interested in describing English sports and recreational past-time activities using ethnographical and historical frameworks. Strutt wrote about the socio-cultural and national heritage of TSG and therefore informed a public who knew little of their local culture. His work laid the foundations for future historic and ethnographic research in this area. Strutt dedicated his life’s work to exploring and analyzing the cultural and sociological phenomena associated with human play activities. Strutt developed a strong interest in the history and habits of the life of ‘ordinary’ people in England. This was epitomized by his first book entitled, “*The Regal and Ecclesiastical Antiquities of England*”, which was published in 1773. This led to a further set of volumes including “*Sports and Pastimes of the People of England*” where he focused on TSG in England. He wrote of his observations of peoples’ emotions during play:

In order to form a just estimation of the character of any particular people, it is absolutely necessary to investigate the Sports and Pastimes most generally prevalent among them. War, policy, and other contingent circumstances, may effectually place men, at different times, in different points of view, but, when we follow them into their retirements, where no disguise is necessary, we are most likely to see them in their true state, and may best judge of their natural dispositions (Strutt, 1801).

He pointed out and described the socio-cultural characteristics of the sports of the nobility and the common origins of some popular English games some of which are still known (Macków, 2008).

Sometime after, Alice Bertha Gomme (1853-1938), a leading British folklorist, and a pioneer in the study of children's games devoted herself to her major work, which was the big two volumes book dedicated to *"The Traditional Games of England, Scotland and Ireland"* (1894 and 1898). It contained descriptions of some 800 children's games, collected with the help of 26 correspondents (Boyes, 2001). Among other works was *"Children's Singing Games"* (two vols., 1894) and several later works in collaboration with her husband Rober Gomme or with Cecil Sharp. Her *"Children's Singing Games: with the Tunes to Which they are Sung"* was also notable for being one of the finest illustrated arts and crafts books produced by the Birmingham School of Art. Thus, English scholars not only focused on modern sport, they also wrote about TSG dedicated to children (Gomme) and adults (Strutt).

Johan Huizinga with his Revolutionary Idea of Play

Johan Huizinga (1872-1945) was a cultural historian and anthropologist who devoted his life to study theory of play as a significant element of human culture. He found play to be „ a free activity standing quite consciously outside 'ordinary' life as being 'not serious' but at the same time absorbing the player intensely and utterly. It is an activity connected with no material interest, and no profit can be gained by it. It proceeds within its own proper boundaries of time and space according to fixed rules and in an orderly manner. It promotes the formation of social groupings that tend to surround themselves with secrecy and to stress the difference from the common world by disguise or other means” Huizinga, J (1980). Perhaps he is most famously remembered for his bold statement that “civilization arises and unfolds in and as play” (Huizinga, 1955, Forward, unnumbered page).

Due to his scientific interests, cultural anthropology became the crucial foundation of his analysis of play and its role in developing civilization by cultural creation. He was searching mainly for a relationship between play and culture, social and scientific life, starting with religion, philosophy, law, art and even war. According to his conception, play was a primitive phenomenon based on voluntary, artificial and limited activities, which might be the first step to civilized culture. And in this sense, he argued that culture originated from play as opposed to play being derive from culture. In *"Homo Ludens"* (1937), he maintained that “play is the greatness given to culture, existing before the culture itself, interwoven in human living from the very beginning up to individual experiencing it by each of us, even the research” (Huizinga, 1955, p. 15).

Huizinga identified play, with its improvement and migrations, as natural source of research study. Similarly to Eugeniusz Piasecki (mentioned below), Huizinga claimed that play has not only a biological or psychological aspect but it should be seen as a cultural act which served as a foundation for great civilizations (Huizinga, 1955). Even Piasecki and Huizinga have never met each other they were representing similar way of thinking: the play is the source of culture.

Polish Initiatives of Preserving National Heritage Through TSG

The Polish Sejm issued a decree in 1788 introducing physical activity into schools Poland, making Poland the first country in Europe to have PE as a part of compulsory education. It was believed then that PE should be more concerned with the hygiene. Jędrzej Śniadecki, a

Polish physician who published the book “O wychowaniu fizycznym dzieci” [About Children’s PE] said, “We need to make our children learn by playing and having fun, and it is our duty to give them such toys, to engage them using different tools...[...] Educating body in this way, we educate also their mind.” (Śniadecki 1990, 50). Later this view was turned into a more pedagogical perspective with little emphasis on preserving Polish sporting traditions.

Nonetheless, sometime later the Polish society tried to cultivate its sporting tradition by following the Czech idea of the Sokol (Eng. *Falcon*) movement (a youth movement and gymnastics organization founded in Prague in 1862 by Tyrš and Fügner). In 1867 in Lvov and then in 1885 in Krakow, prominent figures in Polish physical culture managed to establish the first Sokol associations. A fitness-training center was established, offering lectures, discussions, and group outings. It provided physical, moral, and intellectual training for Polish young intelligence (Bronikowska, 2010). Though officially an institution “above politics,” the Sokol played an important part in the development of Polish nationalism by offering a forum for the spread of mass-based nationalist ideologies. At the same time, Poland -- like the Czech Republic, Slovenia and even Russia -- was flooded with Western sports (particularly of Anglo-Saxon origins) introduced to Polish society by specially hired foreign instructors. It was a matter of societal prestige to have such an instructor and to attend their classes or private lessons of horse riding or lawn tennis (Lipoński 2004). Lipoński (1999, 230) stated that “in general, in the Slavonic countries, modern sports, based on the British or indeed any other cultural model, have been important to national aspirations during the era of foreign domination or on independence.” He adds, “...the appearance of modern sport was responsible for the gradual elimination and virtual extinction of traditional sports” (at least in that part of Europe). This situation has remained until today. Lipoński reviewed the edition of Encyclopedia of World Sports written by Levinson and Christensen (1996) and remarked regretfully, that “no wonder that there is nothing about Russian *Narodnyie gulanya*, *Kulatshanoie boi*, Polish old sports like *Rochwist*, *Czoromaj*, *łapa*, *Browar*, or *Kwadrant* (which is similar to *Palant*). Nothing about Bulgarian *Djilyak*, *Djangur*, *Butanista* or *Pouplyak*.”

The situation could have been identified earlier if the influential work of Eugeniusz Piasecki had been recognized and taken into account. Piasecki was an outstanding figure in the history of PE and sport sciences in Poland; his work is still very important today. His enormous collection of TSG came to public light in 1959, twelve years after his death when his findings titled “Tradycyjne gry i zabawy ruchowe oraz ich geneza” [Eng. *Origins of traditional games and activity plays*] were published in the monograph “40 lat od Katedry Wychowania Fizycznego UP do Wyższej Szkoły Wychowania Fizycznego w Poznaniu”. [Eng. *40 years of the Department of Physical Education of Poznan’s University...*]. His work dates from the 1900s when Piasecki began collecting old folk TSG, mostly from Polish areas that currently make up modern-day Poland, and then from other parts of Europe and in other parts of the world. But it was his passion for Polish TSG that sparked his life research on ludic pieces of Polish cultural heritage. He believed in the long-term reform of PE based on regional and traditional folk TSG as the only way to create a healthy society. This was supported by medical authorities, pedagogues, psychologists and philosophers. This creative and fruitful period of his scientific career was interrupted by the outbreak of World War I.

During the war, when he was forced to move to Kiev, he prepared his first nationwide survey on TSG called 'Ankieta Kijowska' [Eng. *The Kiev's survey*]. in 1916. Having recorded hundreds of regional TSG he published his first book "Zabawy i gry dla dzieci" [Eng. *Plays and games for children*] in 1916. It was mainly written for teachers to provide them with resources and practical examples for transmission of national and cultural heritage into the educational system. The book was unique in that it was published at the time when Poland was still struggling for its independence. The second national survey (The Poznan's survey), carried out in 1922, brought much more evidence and data on the survival of national TSG, despite the previous 123-years of foreign dominance.

And then in 1928 Piasecki announced his third research project where he collected unique information on culture and traditions of other Slavic nations. He wrote:

"We are a nation of rich traditions in all areas of culture. We have, however, little inclination to research such traditions and certainly little interest in nursing these elements, which can be assimilated in contemporary life. One of the most striking examples of blameworthy indifference pertaining to the treasures of native civilization is our attitude toward Old Polish play and folk games. Among many Western nations serious scientific works have been made part of national education. Not in our country" (Lipoński 1999: 230).

Gathering the data and after his analysis, Piasecki was able to revive several hundred original TSG, describing them in articles and a series of books. It took a quarter of a century to collect material for a monograph on Polish origins of folk forms of physical activities. TSG that cultivated local and regional customs and strengthened the sense of national identity were to be crucial part of that program. It was supposed to be published in 1939, but the outbreak of World War II ruined his plans. The monograph contained findings and conclusions of an analysis of 2,800 responses from Polish nationals and re-settled citizens from Ukraine and Belarus. The majority of returned questionnaires confirmed the common origins of many TSG types with very similar structures or plots, differing only in name.

Piasecki was strongly convinced that PE should serve everybody in the same way: as an educational tool supporting health with joy and satisfaction. He claimed also that the reform of sports education in schools should be carried out through the introduction of TSGs common in different cultures and traditions and thus combine and strengthen international understanding and exchange of cultural traditions (Piasecki, 1916).

Following his exceptional and unique international survey of 1922, he established that some folk TSG were rooted in the traditions of several nations that arouse simultaneously in different parts of Europe or even world. Although they had different names, but their plots were basically the same. For example the play of Polish *Chusteczka* has lots of analogies in different countries: Belarus and Russia *Paduszaczka*, Czech *Sáteček*, England *Babbity Bowster* or *Cushion dance*, German *Kranzsingen* or *Polstertanz*. The most characteristic TSG from Piasecki's archives were *Sobótka*, *Palant*, *Mak*, *Ojciec Wirgiliusz* and *Jawor* but he never had a chance to popularize them in the international context.

Only in the 1990's did Polish scholars see a benefit of TSG. The most outstanding work in this field a publication by Wojciech Lipoński, edited under the UNESCO auspices, entitled *"Encyclopedia of World Sport"* (2003), which contains over 3,000 TSG from most of the regions and cultures around the world. Each sport, each game and play comes with a careful, ethnologically supported background, rooted in various historical sources from antique vases, through paintings, sculptures and literary sources. To collect and analyze all these games and sports Lipoński designed his own theoretical framework for studies exploring the patterns of traditions hidden in rural and primary games. The framework, the 'plexeological approach' (Polish *metoda spłotu kulturowego*), was used in almost all of his work on the subject so far. Its essence is to consider both historic and cultural factors and involves an analysis of the social role they play. These elements constitute a 'plexus', similar to an entanglement of muscle fibers and resemble to some extent a knot that should be disentangled by scholarly procedure and analysis. This method also involves elements of the holistic approach, cultural statistics and, as is the case in most of the humanities, also makes use of intuitive evaluation in cases that cannot be evaluated on an empirical basis (Lipoński, 2004).

Hungary – National Awareness of TSG

Initially, the Hungarian folk games were related to beliefs regarding the nature or agricultural holidays (harvests), and later to church holiday services (Pentecost, Easter). The competitive nature of games strengthened when Protestantism (Luther, Calvin, Thomas More) appeared in the 16th century, when a major attitude change occurred. Worldly happiness, growing in daily life, and fair competition was not a sin any more, but a fact of life, advocated by Protestant preachers, educators and teachers. The renewal of national language was important to facilitate accessibility to basic education to everyone (girls as well) in which subjects such as PE were included. In addition, motivation was important as a part of competition. Professional guidance (a professional teacher) was in keeping to moral bases. It should be added that the Roman Catholic Church had to respond to this "competitive situation" - to whom the majority belonged to – this was the process of counter-reformation. What is certain is that the Protestant schools were earlier in introducing PE in their schools than the Roman Catholic (Piarist, Benedictine, Franciscan) schools. The importance of play was considered important from the pedagogical point of view; it was the „image of life” in which the importance of age was emphasized.

Games mostly for boys were important in terms of military service: a team game practiced in the young age could be effective later on during military actions. For this reason, government leaders supported PE, which shorten military training, and emphasized character through the education.

In the 18th century during the Habsburg absolutism, PE was listed as recommended subject in the Ratio Educationis (the first Law on Education) in 1777. The games were divided into permitted and forbidden ones (gambling vs. forbidden games with weapons), but it supported games with physical performance. Games varied from region to region and had different names.

Hungarian educational works appeared in the 19th century. Sport games were listed in the curriculum in the first half of the 19th century, but they were not standardized. The biggest problem schools faced were in relation to the lack of space. Schools in cities and urban areas gradually were losing their space: as urbanization monopolized areas for manufacturing, factories, homes public transportation, land for schools gradually decreased. The curriculum and teaching material was adjusted accordingly.

With the law of József Eötvös (1868), PE was obligatory in public elementary school. Later, in 1883, during the time of Trefor Ágoston cultural minister, PE became obligatory in secondary schools as well and a 24m² sport's hall was mandatory. Schools hired club facilities and sports classes were given by club leaders. These leaders were not interested in maintaining the „old” games, but rather encouraged participation in new sports (athletics, gymnastics, football). During this time school sports played less important role, but this isn't clear if it was due to a lack of money or space, or other reason.

Csilla Siklódi's work (1996) shows that industrial development, political and economic power of the bourgeoisie was strongest in England. Hungarian statesman and politician Istvánj Széchenyi (1791-1860), brought many things from England, not only various machinery, modern political and economic ideas, but England's idea of sports and its potentially important role in Hungarian life. He can be credited with the introduction of British sports and fostering the development of sports associations in Hungary.

Until the turn of the 19th century, aristocrats followed the Anglo-Saxon trends in sport games. TSG were only kept in rural schools longer, however, after they started to disappear and were replaced by modern sports.

Hungarian history of the 20th century includes the development of the pedagogical aspects of sports. Youth games still existed at the turn of the century thanks to a teacher's manual written according to ministerial mandate (Otto, 1897). From 1910 TSG games disappeared according to Miklós Hodászy (1931).

The turn of the century was a big change for Hungary. János Kmetykó a contemporary expert (1912) provides a written documentation about reforming the Hungarian PE system. There were no games included at that time, just gymnastics for educational purposes.

In the 20th century Hungary was characterized by German influence. Hungarian experts went on study tours mainly to Germany and Scandinavia. In respect to pedagogical representation, the experts (who were mainly from lower middle class) represent the Scandinavian influences (German system was more military based). Competitive spirit got attention, and measurability and documentation became more important than participation. Therefore, from this time on, TSG attracted only ethnographers and folklorists as they worked to maintain traditions. The unification of modern sports games also 'forced' TSG to be preserved as tradition. Modern sports were taught within the framework of compulsory PE (appearing first in protestant schools).

After World War I military cases were important and after Treaty of Trianon [3], sport was characterized by political influence mostly focused on results. It was in 1920 when Kuno Klebersberg, minister of education brought back PE to school (but in Anglo-Saxon ways). With the appearance of national curriculum (general educational regulation in the content of PE classes) from 1920-21, then games disappeared even from the countryside (Szabó, 1996), but there were few people who were still aware of TSG and its role in the society, claiming: “We know that our folk games lost in the fight for being official sport but they can play very important role in educating children and saving our national values” (Szabó, 1996).

Danish Researchers ‘in the Service’ of TSG

The most outstanding game teacher and researcher in contemporary Denmark was Jørn Møller (1943-2009) - a philologist and culture theorist who devoted his professional life to work in Gerlev Academy of Sports and PE (which has a mini campus connected to University of Southern Denmark, Institute for Sport and Biomechanics). His main aim of study was the cultural context of traditional European games, their cultural diversity and identity. Jørn Møller was specializing in historical context of games, physical active games and body culture not only in Denmark but also in Europe. During the 1980ties Møller’s research started focusing on TSG in Denmark. In 1990 Møller finished his Ph.D. dissertation on TSG. This publication includes four books contain 400 European TSG. Each book describes their different types: 1) Ball and throwing games; 2) Finding and caching games; 3) Strength and supple games and 4) Battle and tumble games. Each game is carefully defined with rules, equipment, procedures and culture-historical background His big work came to be very important for the re-vitalization of TSG (Hazelton, 2014).

These four books are the core in Gerlev’s campus used as a dissemination and teaching tool of TSG for students, professionals and volunteers in the field of physical culture in Denmark who get the knowledge and skills through courses and workshops. The campus still makes research in the historical, philosophical, ideological aspects of sports and physical culture in concerning Denmark, Scandinavia and Europe. In this sense for several years Gerlev published many reports and books on these topics, as well as of the structure in sport organizations and there economy. Also many Møller's articles and discussion papers are collected in one of the latest book entitle “Med leg skal land bygges” (Eng. With Leg must land Build, meaning: through play and game you build the nation – an ironic commentary on the role of TSG had in Denmark since 1980 until 2009). The book was published in 2010, after Møller’s death, edited thanks to his research colleagues from University of Southern Denmark, Karen-Lis Egedal Kirchhoff and Henning Eichberg.

Møller was a board member of The Danish Association for Sports History – Body and Culture (DIHF: Dansk Idrætshistorisk Forening), a Member of The Danish Sports Research Council (Den. Idrættens Forskningsråd) and an academic expert in TSG. He was involved in a number of major projects within the field and was devoted to a comparative study of European regions where traditional games were collected, still practiced, studied or revitalized. From this project he noted five factors that help to answer the question: “what made traditional sports and games lose or preserve their meaning?” (Møller, 1995, 50). He concluded that Huizinga was wrong in arguing that modern economic and political forces significantly affect

position of play. First of all Møller believed industrialization, was not a reason *per se* for the disappearance of the ancient games. Rather, other factors such as modern sport and its organization with the 'sportification process wiped out the previous original games. He claimed also that there were five other factors which might influence on TSG position. In his view it was religion (Catholicism vs Protestantism), cultural diversity and identity which maintained stronger bonds among the population as they struggle for their own culture, independence (islands and periphery areas), and where they care for traditions as a survival objects of identification in the sub-national creation of an identity. The bearers of cultural initiative are not only people from rural communities any more, they are also intellectuals, professionals and civil servants "who attempt to keep local culture alive and with it the ancient games" (Møller, 1995). In his studies he argued that those aspects are very important and essential for research the topic.

The fruit of his work was the third of his book entitled "Euro Play". It describes 121 Danish and European forms of play and games to make the Park more accessible to guests from other countries. "Euro Play" is illustrated with a drawings and instructions for every play, and provided with a brief information of play culture and historical background. The idea of the book was to transfer TSG into a modern cultural and communicative context. What's more "Euro Play" is the only book on play translated into English. Møller was driven by the desire to bring TSG back to the people. He claimed that TSG and its rich cultural heritage could be a friendly, fun and social activity for all generations and an important alternative to modern Olympic Sport where power and money dominate. Møller found that TSG to be a social alternative in contrast to fitness training's boring movements.

The next and possibly the most important research of Møller conducted under the title: "The Workshop of Sports History" concerned of the research due to create a 'living museum' for society, based on traditional (mainly) Danish games collected and revitalized during the study. He claimed that "sports museums are often quite boring halls of fame or dead exhibitions of old requisites" (Møller, 2003). In his opinion, "the important thing to bring to a sports museum is the fugitive movement of the body. That is what is normally neglected, and that is where animation and workshop methodology brings you as close as possible" (2003). In this sense there were two priorities to the research: 1) collecting, registering and describing in a data base games from Danish area in scientific and educational perceptions 2) collecting experience from existing institutions in Europe occupied with the research, collection and promotion of TSG and then creating a survey of the extent and character of the localities in Europe where games were practiced in order to expand understanding of the conditions for survival and growth of the games (Møller, 1996). The studies were combined with real trialing and teaching TSG to the students in Gerlev. In this respect this was a unique combination which created pedagogical superstructure reflecting history and animation methodology. It is worth to add that this particular task ended successfully with the design of a huge playground with TSG in Denmark (Lege Park). And research findings were also published in several scientific and educational journals concerning the meaning, function and relevance of the games.

He also put an interesting suggestion of his own play definition. He described play as a kind of process (P) that in this case is more important than its result (R), and he proposed the formula showed below:

$$P/R > 1 = \text{Play}$$

An entirely different state of affairs occurs when the process (P) itself is not as significant as a particular result (R), which takes a central role over play. This was then what he defined as a work and the formula then should be:

$$P/R < 1 = \text{Work}$$

(Møller, 2010, p.153)

Thus, Møller made not only a big step forward theoretically, but provided a practical framework concerning play as a part of cultural heritage of European countries. In building a special place such as Lege Park he made his society (Danish people) become more interested in and knowledgeable of their country through various forms of TSGs. His doctoral thesis was the first inspiration behind Gerlev Playpark with the main aim to facilitate the TSG and describe them in the study to the population. TSG in his view were meant to be an alternative to body cultural activities which develop also other values from the ones seen in the Olympic Sports (Gerlev took up the battle to bring back TSG in Denmark). (For more information on Gerlev Play Park please see the article: "Traditional Sports and Games in Europe - from research to living practice").

Another researcher to mention here is Henning Eichberg, a German sociologist and historian, teaching at the University of Southern Denmark in Odense. He initiated the so-called Eichberg-Mandell-Guttman theory of the specific modernity of sport, understanding sport as a pattern of industrial productivity, "There were games and athletics in ancient Greece, but no sport." Eichberg (1973) focused on popular games and play as a national heritage mostly in philosophical and social context. His many works on this topic are valuable to other researchers concentrating on the play, i.e.: "Folk sports and traditional games, Europe" (2012), where readers can find information of different European games like Fistball, Kolven, Lapta, La soule, Pelota, Petanque, Bocce, Boules, Schwingen, Wrestling from Brittany – Gouren and from Iceland – Glima.

Recently he published several books about play and games i.e.: Bodily Democracy – Towards a Philosophy of Sport for All (2010), where Eichberg emphasizes educational philosophy of play, phenomenology of the imperfect human being concerning sport and laugh and inter-ethnic football in the Balkans: reconciliation and diversity and sport cooperation between Denmark and Tanzania regarding development and recognition. In the Danish book entitled: Idrætspolitik i komparativ belysning – national og international [Sports policy in comparative perspective – national and international, Danish] published in 2012, one chapter is dedicated to Scottish Highland games and indigenous games and other one to folk football as a game, different from standard sport in European Union.

Irish Responsiveness of Preserving TSG through Gaelic Games

The case of the Gaelic sports in Ireland is perhaps a good example of how tradition can be adapted to fulfill particular political, cultural and social conditions. Gaelic sports and Games, in risk of extinction during the British governance as a result of the nationalist aspirations of ambitious leaders in the late 1880's, enjoyed a fast and consensual expansion and popularity which persists today (Koch, 2006).

With the creation of the Gaelic Athletic Association in 1884 by Michael Cusack, the Gaelic Games undertook a process of 'sportification', very much aligned with a broader movement of sport's codification in Britain in the late 19th century. Yet, the Gaelic Games are a distinctive case in the panorama of globalised sport. Even as Irish emigrants have taken the sports to the different parts of the world, these games were always been perceived and transmitted as a distinctive mark of Irish/Gaelic culture. In this sense, for its historically identifiable links with a popular Irish tradition, for its ability to keep a cultural essence distinctive from any other sports and games and an amateur ethos, Gaelic sport can still be considered traditional, although, at least in Ireland, in the more competitive contexts, these sports are highly institutionalized and standardized.

The origins of *Gaelic Games*, which comprise *Hurling/Camogie* (hurling's version for women), *Gaelic football*, being the first two the most popular sports in Ireland and *Gaelic handball* [4] all dates back to 1272 BC, when as a prelude to a battle over the control of the region, two different tribes have played the game. The source are the Gaelic Annals, quoted by Prior (1997, p. 17):

"Ruad, with 20 sons of the courageous Mil, spend westwards to the end of Mag Nia to offer a hurling contest to the Tuatha De. An equal number came out to meet them. The match began. They dealt many a blow on legs and arms until their bones were broken and bruised and they fell outstretched on the turf and the match ended".

Historical accounts portray hurling as a form of martial art closely related to ability in battle. Despite several attempts by several colonial powers to ban the game during the Middle Ages, hurling continued to be played in the islands as a violent game, which often would serve to settle disputes. It was mainly a sport played by the lower classes of society and different counties would often have different rules for the game.

The origins of *Gaelic football* are more difficult to locate. There are different accounts of the game throughout the Middle Ages. Formal events seemed to be held, particularly before the Great Potato Famine of the 1840's [5], during which all TSG declined in popularity and importance. It apparently did not possess sufficient appeal to counteract the increasing popularity of the sports of the British rules, such as football and rugby.

Handball seemed to have been also popular in the country side, whenever a gable wall and some space existed, but as the other games, its importance declined significantly with the famine.

Camogie, the women's version of hurling, began with the first club established in 1903 with the formation of the first club. In any case, whether the origins of these games date from much before the Anglo-Saxons colonisation or if they constitute an "invented tradition" (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 2012), they became uncontestedly adopted as a critical mark of "Irishness".

The Irish revival starts following the Norman invasion in the 12th century with England's claim over Ireland's sovereignty, lasting until December, 1921 with the Anglo-Irish treaty which gave complete independence to Ireland. As a British colony, Ireland was during this time under great cultural and economic pressure, as the rulers have tried to force Irish people to adopt British culture, but with very limited success.

After the famines of the 1880's, many Irish thinkers and leaders started a cultural and social 'revolution' which became known as Irish renaissance, which aimed to revive Irish traditional culture and to distinguish and unite the Irish people against the British ruling. It was evident that without the preservation of a distinctive Irish culture, it would be very difficult to claim independence for Ireland. Thus, the revival of Gaelic Games, a mark of a pre-British era in the late 19th century, constituted a critical part of the cultural affirmation of Ireland as a nation, against the Anglicisation imposed by centuries of English rulers (McDevitt, 1997).

The founding of the Gaelic Athletic Association in 1884 marked the most important milestone for the dissemination and preservation of Gaelic Sports and its institutionalisation. It facilitated the organization of competitions and standardization of rules and generally created the conditions for the Irish men to engage in these more masculine games (in opposition to the 'gentle' English Games). GAA modernised the Gaelic Games without lowering itself to the process of global sporting homogenisation (Rouse, 1993).

For the Irish nation, Gaelic sports and games fulfilled important cultural, social and political functions. Culturally, it bolstered a sense of pride in Gaelic culture as the core of "Irishness" (McDevitt, 1997). Socially, it provided a means for social cohesion both in the homeland and in the many areas of Irish immigration spread across the world (Moore and Darby, 2011). Politically, it was instrumental for the political activity and organization of the nation in its fight for independence (Rouse, 1993). Fortunately, all Gaelic Games are still quite popular in Irish society playing an important role in their culture as a 'identity card'. Irish/Gaelic traditional culture provides a excellent example for other nations.

Portuguese Roots of Folk Games as Ancestors of TSG

To show the TSG history in Portugal the researchers who studied TSG will be presented next in more or less in chronological order.

First to mention is Ernesto Veiga de Oliveira (1910-1990), a lawyer and historian, who together with academics Jorge Dias, Fernando Galhano and Margot Dias, and later Benjamin Pereira became a pioneer group in creating the Ethnology Studies Centre, which later restored the ethnographical studies focus on TSG in Portugal. Oliveira started publishing

books and papers dedicated to TSG in the 1950s. The most interesting in this field were: *“Game of Pela in Póvoa da Atalaia”* (1952), *“The ‘bombos’ of Fafe and other periodical entertainments”* (1952), *‘The ‘Jeu de Toupiole’ in Portugal”* (1954), *“Some Folk Popular Games”* (1956) and *“The Game of Stick in Portugal”* (1972). Then in 1956 Maria da Graça Sousa Guedes, who published her final dissertation in National Institute of PE entitled: *“Portuguese Traditional Games – its pedagogical interest for PE,”* started to write more about TSG in Portugal from the pedagogical and psychological point of view. She argued that Portuguese TSG did not differ much from the games played in other European countries. The variations depended on group of people and their own way of living and feeling alive.

The next expert of TSG in Portugal worth to mention is António Cabral (1931-2007), poet, fiction writer and essayist. As a sociocultural animator he founded the Regional Cultural Center of Vila Real, where he was nominated for the President based on his earlier research work on TSG. Then he was also selected as an ‘expert’ on European Council in the 2nd European Alternative Internship on Traditional Sports and Folk Games (Lamego, 1982). He organized the Transmountain Folk Games and Galaico-Transmountain Folk Games in 1977 and 1983. As a result of his research he published numerous books on TSG matter specially dedicated to children, their parents, youth and teachers.

Jorge Crespo (1936–), professor in Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities of New University of Lisbon and Scientific Coordinator of The Studies Center of Portuguese Ethnology (from 1994 to 2006) and researcher of Study Institute of Traditional Literature, published many works on the subject. Here we highlight only few: *“The Civilization of the Game. The transformations of the Playful Element in Portugal (18th and 19th Century)”* (1989) and in 2012 an interesting publication was written by him entitled: *“The Spirit of the Game – Studies and Essays.”* According to the author, *“This study is the result of a systematic research on the problems of game, in a first phase taken to effect under the domain of the pedagogical and ‘educative’ concerns to which psychological influences over the subject were not odd. Then was progressively revealed the disappointment over certain reductionisms that did not allowed a global view of the phenomenon and, mostly, was asserted the conviction that was not the game itself but the games that formed the main subject of analysis”* (Crespo, 2012, 3).

There are other researchers to be mentioned: For example, anthropologists Raúl Iturra and Filipe Reis, Graça Índias Cordeiro. Mario Cameira Serra dedicated a special attention to the game categories, focusing on *“memory revival”* of some of those lost playful practices, while others nowadays have *«a place»* in the educative institutions, in kindergartens, in primary and secondary schools. He believed that TSG *“still has today a large significance”*.

We learn from Rui Proença Garcia that (2001, 3):

“Mário Cameira Serra is today, with no doubt, a top figure of our country in the matter of the anthropological research of traditional game and culture. Faithful to the thoughts of the wistful Noronha Feio, Jorge Crespo or Graça Guedes, the author gave a strong step ahead,

since lives and acts in a transition of historical ages where, unquestionably, the playful will be one of the most important elements of the new axiological hierarchy.”

We can then state that among the leading Portuguese researchers of TSG are Graça Guedes e Mário Cameira Serra, and for folk games is António Cabral, although there are others.

2. Contemporaneity and a Future of European TSG

The University of Leuven was the first Flemish university to develop TSG research in the late 1970s. This academic enterprise had a background in the socio-cultural movement leading towards Flemish self-determination against the French (Wallon) supremacy of the Belgian state (Smulders, 1981). A similar situation brought attention to the rural games of Brittany in France (Floc’h & Fanch, 1987) and then in different parts of Spain as well. Folk sports became active manifestations of regional identity, particularly in the Basques Country (Aguirre, 1978), Catalonia (Lavega, 2003) and on the Canary Islands. All those initiatives influenced the foundation of The European Traditional Sport and Games Association (ETSGA) in 2001 (Jaouen, 2006).

In a current scientific climate there are increasing demand for the up-grading of folk traditions research concerning different local sports and games. As a result of these calls, the European Traditional Sport and Games Association was established in 2001. However, even before that, the issue of the popularization of different cultures’ traditions was discussed at the 1989 UNESCO meeting in Paris. The traditional games were recognized at the meeting as a symbol of “a cultural community, expressed by a group or individuals and recognized as reflecting the expectations of a community in so far as they reflect its cultural and social identity; its standards and values are transmitted orally, by imitation or by other means. Its forms are, among others, language, literature, music, dance, games, mythology, rituals, customs, handicrafts, architecture and other arts” (UNESCO 1990, p. 254).

Recently, an even more notable committee of UNESCO addressed TSG in their resolutions as a cultural phenomenon and cultural heritage, closely linked to issues related to cultural diversity (Lavega 2006). Moreover, the UNHCR (the Convention on the Human Rights) launched a fundamental document for which UNESCO prepared a preamble, which appealed to the conventions’ principals, saying:

“[...] one the essential conditions for the effective exercise of human rights is that everyone should be free to develop and preserve his or her physical, intellectual and moral powers, and that access to physical education and sport should consequently be assured and guaranteed for all human beings” (International Charter of Physical Education and Sport, p.1).

Lately scholars such as Guy Jaouen, Pere Lavega, Wojciech Lipoński, Biel Pubill and organizations have tried to bring, above mentioned Coubertin’s maxim alive. They have formed an unofficial traditional games support movement, which is in line with Olympic values of encouraging international tolerance and understanding.

TSG have become an important issue in Europe, but also all over the world. One of their initiatives has been organizing the Sport for All Games with TAFISA and UNESCO as an opportunity to learn, communicate with and get to know other cultures without regard for historical barriers, and to strive to recover part of the world's rich and diverse intangible heritage. TAFISA founded the quadrennial World Games of Traditional Sports, the first taking place in Hanover (Germany) in 1996 and most recently in Šliauliai (Lithuania) in 2012. The central idea of the Games is to promote the diversity of national cultures and cooperation, peace and welfare through sport. This provides a platform where each nation can share a piece of their sporting heritage, and then attendees to take up the challenge of trying these new sports and practices. The Traditional Sports games differ from professional sport games, as victory is not the priority. Indeed, what is important is that the Games are inclusive and accessible for all (History-Šliauliai 2012). In this sense it is the only occasion where participants, spectators and citizens can meet e.g. Dutch *Fierljeppen* or Polish *Pierścieniówka*, Iranian *Zurkhaneh* or TSG of India *Kabaddi* along with examples of Spanish speaking culture *Pelota* or French *Petanque*. But who would know of these in the first place as they are not televised? These kinds of events show us – the global society, how a little we know of each other and how exciting it is to experience different cultures' sports heritage. This sports heritage can help to create an environment where people live in harmony with different cultural expressions and build bridges between cultures in order to enhance mutual understanding. Common bonds, values, and practices are increasingly needed to knit such societies together. A shared appreciation of sport and physical activity is one such obvious example.

Fundamental differences in the understanding of universal values brought to the multi-religious and multi-cultural 'melting pot' of modern multi-national societies have resulted in a lack of 'ludo-diversity' a concept which explains the mechanisms of extinction, survival and invention of movement cultures and to warn against modern sport mono-culture (Renson 2004). Few children today probably know sports other than those mainstream or standard ones played in school or seen on TV screens. Names of the traditional games like *Pesapallo*, *Fustball*, *Pierścieniówka* probably do not ring any bells for the vast majority of today's 'couch potato' generation. Ironically, television has enlarged the audience for sports while lowering the quality of their understanding of the matter.

Sports, and many 'traditional' sports in particular, have fallen by the wayside of modern living. Therefore, we should remember that ignoring or even neglecting traditional sporting heritage is simply like "killing" the physical culture of individual region, country or continent.

Final remarks

It is the high time to share our cultural heritage and exchange the most valuable elements of our traditions in physical culture. This project helps us to realize our main mission and at the same time ambition to collect, reconstruct and re-introduce as many TSG as possible in educational and cultural process all over the European and even world countries. This particular knowledge, detailed with selected European countries, show their diverse way to

acknowledge TSG through national history, cultural backgrounds and on the other hand research environment.

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Notes

1. Play in this sense means a form of physical, playful activity, and a very first variety of game and sport. It refers to a range of spontaneous, voluntary, frivolous and non-serious activity. Some plays exhibits no goals nor rules and is considered to be “unstructured” in the literature. For more information on play see the book of Garvey, C. (1999),. Play. published by Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
2. Ludens comes from Latin word ‘ludere’, which covers the whole field of play.
3. The Treaty of Trianon – the peace agreement of 1920 to formally end World War I between most of the Allies of World War I.
4. Gaelic handball – known in Ireland as handball (Irish: *liathróid láimhe*) is a sport played in Ireland where players hit a ball with a hand or fist against a wall in such a way as to make a shot the opposition cannot return, and that may be played with two (singles) or four players (doubles).
5. The Great Famine (Irish: *an Gorta Mór*) was a period of mass starvation, disease and emigration in Ireland between 1845 and 1852.

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