

## BOOK REVIEWS

### Why do we need to consider traditional games part of our cultural heritage?

*Traditional games and society in Europe*, (ed.) Pere Lavega, Asociation Europea de Juegos y Deportes Tradicionales. Valencia, Spain 2006, 287 pages, rev. Małgorzata Bronikowska

In September 2006 in town of Santander in Spain during the International Congress of Skittles and Traditional Games a book *Traditional Games and Society in Europe* was presented by its editor Pere Lavega Burgués.

Traditional games and plays recently have become an important issue in Europe. The project *Culture 2000* was developed by European Traditional Sport and Games Association (ETSGA) and European Commission, doctor Lavega was appointed as a coordinator.

The idea of this project was to learn, to communicate, work and get to know better others cultures without regard for historical barriers and to strive to recover part of Europe's rich and diverse intangible heritage. All these for helping to create a territory where people can truly live well in harmony with different cultural expressions, and creating an opportunity to exchange each other cultures in order to enhance mutual understanding.

This project shows how traditional games can be the bearers of innovative, enriching ideas, and is an experience that can serve as an example to other regions, countries and continents seeking to launch similar action with regard to traditional games, understood as instruments for entertainment, socialization and education.

Book *Traditional Games and Society in Europe* was an outcome of the above mentioned project. It was divided into four chapters.

First *European Culture in the Light of Sports and Games* by Lavega et. al. gave a vision of socio-cultural conditions in which traditional plays may become a laboratory for learning. It was observed that many practices are being transformed into regional sports.

Second chapter *A Socio-Cultural Approach to European Traditional Sports and Games* included papers on sporting traditions of various regions in Europe. There was a paper on traditional games and plays from the region of Aragon where author showed the current situation of traditional activities. Some of them converted into sports, other local games have only been conserved with great difficulty. There still is a lack of institutional support and there is a little coordination to promote traditional sports and games and to gain them the appreciation that they deserve as an important part of cultural heritage.

In the paper about Brittany author Guy Jaouen points at educational value of traditional rituals and festive occasions. Those living games refuse to become of museum value only, their deserve broader social recognition.

On the Canary Islands according to dr Adelantado and dr Núñez tradition of plays and games is rooted back 500 years ago, with Norman and Spanish influences. Traditional games and plays play an important role in this highly leisure dominated resort policy.

More games were presented in the papers on the regions of: Catalonia, Cantabria, Flanders, Portugal, Valencia and Murcia.

Among those there was a paper by professor Lipoński, which presented the situations of Polish traditional games and sports in the past and present time. Poland has a long and rich sporting tradition and documents indicating various pastime activities can trace back in 13<sup>th</sup> century. Later on in the 19<sup>th</sup> century one of the greatest European ethnographers, Polish Oskar Kolberg produced 73 volumes documenting Polish cultural heritage (folk music, dancing, craftsmanship, village architecture and also folk plays and games). A hundred years later, W. Lipoński produced his *outstanding World*

*Sports Encyclopaedia* with hundreds of different kind of sports from all over the world. But he reminded also a pioneer of Polish physical education, Professor Eugeniusz Piasecki, who was involved onto preserving ancient Polish plays and games by announcing in the press one of his famous questionnaire. He asked about forms of folk plays and games found in areas of living in order not only to preserve them but also to use them as a national heritage of culture in practice of school physical education.

In third chapter *Education in Traditional Sports and Games* there are two papers of participants, one of them from Cantabria and another from Catalonia. Fernando de la Torre Renedo claims that skittles, known in Cantabria as bolos, was an important part of everyday life in all villages for centuries. But the new generations according technological and social progress did not care enough for local games of different forms of skittles. In now days skittles again become necessary leisure activity.

The regional federation of skittles (Federación Cántabra de Bolos) started to promote this sport with two main aims: spreading educational information about the game of skittles among schoolchildren who are given a chance to play various forms of the game. The second aim is to promote skittles for recreational purposes and with the help of local councils encourage mass participation.

Bill Pubill in his paper shows a possible transition of the idea of experiencing traditional games from the level of primary schools to the level

of university. A “Festcat” Catalan summer school specialising in promotion of popular culture serves here as an example of training base, where children and teachers from the region of Catalonia can participate in a special sessions practising lots of traditional plays and games.

Final chapter *Tradition and Modernity in traditional games and sport* contains a dr Lavega’s summarising paper. In his work dr Lavega listed out all some important documents from the UNESCO declarations concerning preservation of “fruitful diversity” of European Unions’ states culture. In the article we can also find out what recognition is necessary (at the local and regional levels) and what models for the institutional organisation of traditional sports and games may be employed. This idea requires establishment of museums, travelling exhibitions, use of information and communication technologies as well as organizing of international congresses and debates. Scholarly support through publications and educational materials will also be necessary.

The book on almost 300 pages presents thoughts and ideas of the most outstanding scholars working in the area of anthropology of physical culture. These forerunners of modern university scholarly approach to the phenomenon of traditional plays and games open a new era of academic works. Let’s hope their works will gain proper recognition they certainly deserve.