The rodeo as a sporty manifestation of cultural identity of São Paulo countryside

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ABSTRACT: The sport rodeo comes more specifically if developing of surprising form in the Brazilian territory and in the interior of the State of São Paulo, deserving attention in the sport and cultural scope. The present study had for objective to verify if the rodeo can be considered a sportive manifestation of cultural identity of the country of São Paulo. The type of study was characterized as a descriptive, qualitative research that it raised the main characteristics of structure of the rodeo and searched the deepening of the concept of cultural identity, making possible the construction of four (4) extracted references of three great culturalist authors: Stuart Hall (Construction Discursive and Feeling of Belong); Benedict Anderson (Imagined Communities) and Eric Hobsbawm (Invented Tradition). The sample was selected amongst the practitioners of rodeo and university professors, in a twelve total (12) interviewed. The instrument of collection of data was the structuralized interview type, effected through questionnaire. The result of the answers gotten in the questionnaire found characteristics of the four (4) references in the rodeo; indicating that the same a sportive manifestation of cultural identity of the country of São Paulo can be considered.

Keywords: Rodeo, Cultural Identity, Culturalists, References.

Correspondence to:

**INTRODUCTION**

The sports practice which involves man and animals is quite ancient. The games and sports, which involve both, are earlier than Jesus Christ’s birth. In the Ancient Greece, the car or chariot races had already taken part of the competitions of “funeral games.” Generally, these games were ordered to celebrate for Troy (Montenegro, 1979:33). At that time, this sports practice was considered a sport for powerful men who valorized and praised their animals, symbols of power and vanity. Esteves (1975:12) also adds that “the praise for animals was so great that, in some cases, famous horses were sometimes buried along with their owner.”

Through the time, it could be observed the set man and animal in several other sports. Tubino (Personal Communication, 2002) indicates that there are two way of sports practice relating man and animal; “the former in which the man is grouped with animals, and the latter sports against animals.” In relation to the set man-animal (sports with animals) we find some evidences of rodeo, which were also classified by Renson (1993: 37) as “traditional.” According to Silva (1987:404), “the term rodeo comes from Spanish, and they were festive competitions which consisted of the demonstration of abilities in activities linked with cattle-raising, as regards of specific rules, for instance, the rider has to tame wild horse, ride on bulls, lasso and immobilize calf.” Serra (2000:17) also adds that “besides riding on bulls and horse, and other types of competitions take part in the rodeos and are called by their cover of complete rodeo, for the competitions include riding, lasso, lasso in pairs, bulldogging and three barrel course”.

As Brazil is a country full of richness, diverse cultures, it is also found some differences in the rodeo practice, for it varies from state to state. This fact makes the sport be seen, interpreted and practiced differently here. In a sense, the present study focused on the rodeo culture practiced in the countryside of the São Paulo state, aiming, broadly speaking, at examining the rodeo contribution as one of the forming elements of regional cultural identity in this area, seeking to identify the concept of cultural identity for its relations with globalization, nationalism, differences and Brazilian characteristics. Another point, it enabled to establish some references which could take the rodeo or any Brazilian cultural manifestation to be considered as a positive variable for its acceptance as Brazilian cultural identity.

In this direction, it is suggested some references that could from the methodological validation evidence that the rodeo may contribute for regional cultural identity in this area. They are, for instance, the discursive construction, the feeling of belonging, the imagined communities and invented tradition.

**LITERTURE REVIEW**

**Rodeo in Brazil**

It cannot be precisely affirmed when this practice has its outset, however, the first register dates back to 1950’s (Jornal “O Mundo do Rodeio”, 1997:2), in the city of Barretos in the countryside of the state of São Paulo. Serra (2000:8) observes that “the first official rodeo took place in the city of Barretos in 1956 and derived from the competitions staged on the weekends among working vaqueros”. Such event gave rise to the current Festas do Peão de Boiadeiro de Barretos has been staged 47 times so far. Usually, the party is staged in August in an arena of tarmac for more than 30,000 spectators (Serra, 2000:23). It has been noticed that with the technological advances, globalization, and means of communication are keeping track of all places. The rodeo has been attracting a considerable number of followers,
which it can already be compared to the main sports for audience success and turnover for an event. In the past few years, it can also be noticed a considerable increase of rodeos which has spread the sports worldwide, pointing to a wide-ranging and profitable market. This fact has attracted big size companies from the most varied segments of the economy. The big figures which go around the rodeo market also arouse the media interest, which began to spread more frequently issues related to the sport. According to Pimentel (1997:545), “the rodeo, presenting as a sports entertainment, has sought support to its spread within the press, as the importance given in the specialized magazines.” The space which the rodeo has conquered in the press has been in charge of its huge success in Brazil. Beting (2000:25) has estimated that the paying audience for season is approximately R$26 millions, with a total of scheduled events about 1.238 in the circuit São Paulo, Minas Gerais, Goiás, Mato Grosso do Sul and Paraná. The same author also highlights that “the rodeo has moved R$530 millions yearly in direct and indirect businesses, and generating approximately 240 thousands positions.”

Only in 2000 the rodeo of Barretos attracted nearly 1,2 million visitor, in one of the arenas which had already been over 140 thousand visitors (Beting, 2000:36). As for Neto (1999:184) “the tendency is turn the arenas into stadiums, and entertainment and leisure complexes”. It was noticed that only in the countryside of São Paulo in the area comprising the cities like Presidente Prudente with 117 thousands inhabitants, rodeos have attracted an audience of 40 thousand visitor for merely 4 days of events (Isto É, 1998:114). The same applied to the city of Jaguariúna (SP) which has already rounded up 150 thousands visitors in 10 days of party. Today this party is considered one of the main poles of the Brazilian rodeo (Neto, 1999:114). In addition to these two cities, we mention Americana (SP), which only in 2001 welcomed an audience of 266 mil visitors (10 days of party) and earned a title of the best rodeo in the country (Rodeo Country, 2001:18).

Dimensionally speaking, it was evidenced, however, that the greatest star of the rodeos is the city of Barretos (SP), which yearly stages the “Festa do Peão de Boiadeiro de Barretos”, considered by Mira (1998:55) as “a worldwide event.” Confirmed by Matsuda (1999:32) who affirms: “Barretos is a milestone in the Brazilian rodeo history.” According to him, in the years of 1996, 1997 and 1998, the party rounded up nearly 4 million visitors in 10 days.

In this sense, the rodeo has deserved an analysis in relation to its culture, particularly in relation to the countryside of the state of São Paulo, seeking to interpret in the sociocultural context, using as reference of cultural identity through their relations.

The Cultural Identities and their relations to the globalization, nationalism, differences and Brazilian characteristics

The cultural identities possess an intimate relation to globalization, nationalism, difference and Brazilian characteristics. Nowadays the historians have expressed this worry as regards the studies on the identities in their most dissimilar levels, be it by the global, local and/or personal order. This occurs, according to Woodward (2000:16), because “there has been a discussion that suggests, in the past decades, some changes have been happening in the field of identity – changes that come to the point of producing an identity crisis.”

According to Gidens, apud Woodward (2000:20), these crises of identity “are characteristics of late modernity, and which its current centrality only makes sense when seen in the context of transformations which have been defined as characteristics of the contemporary life.”

In this sense, globalization exerts some influence in regard with the identities upon producing, according to Woodward (2000:21), “different results in terms of identity. The cultural homogeneity promoted by the global market may drive to the distancing of relative identity to the community and local culture.”

Such a fact may promote changes involving an interaction among several factor which, subsequently, may prove changes, resulting in news and globalized identities. For Hall (2000:76) there is “a tension between the ‘local’ and the ‘global’ in the transformation of national identities.”

In relation to the described process above as globalization, Castells (1999) observes that the same has a strong influence over the reappearance of advent called nationalism and its relation to the construction of identities basing upon the nationality.

The nationalism is seen as one of the elements of national conscience and development of national characteristic feeling of a given community/nation. Therefore, it arouse in a sense of identification in the individuals who compose this nation, confirmed by Breulby, apud Balakrishman (2000:157), when he affirms: “apart from the conscious feeling of identity in a group of people (i.e., the national feeling), there are some traits which the member of nation supposedly share, irrespective of their personal identity.”

The experiences, histories and life project which the individuals are accustomed to sharing are already enough factors in the encouragement of nationalism, which, as a result in the view of Castells (1999:46) form a “strong cultural identity which it is manifested as national character.”

In the formation of identities, it is also noticed the issue of “differences”, Silva (1999:26) indicates that the otherness plays a significant role concerning the formation of identities upon affirming which “the process of formation of identity is always referred to an ‘other’. I am what the other is not; I am not what the other is. Identity and otherness are inseparable processes.” Hall (2000:110) highlights that “above all, and in a way directly contrary to that through which they are directly evoked, the identities are formed by means of differences and not out of them.”

Therefore, the identities are defined according to what Silva (1999:25) quotes “by means of a process of production of difference, a process which is fundamentally cultural social”.

Likewise, it occurs to nations as regards a feeling of national identification when we refer to the notion of “brasilidade”, in which it is enough to say I am Brazilian and not English. This difference characterized to some extent the sense of brasilidade formed by a discourse which can be confirmed with Da Matta (1986:16-17) when he approaches: “I don’t know, then I am Brazilian because
This feeling of belonging is clearly noticeable in the rodeos, assimilated as self identity, and thus taking part of them. Used by other groups or societies by the fact of having already as being exclusive or typically themselves and that should not be.

It can be understood then the feeling of belonging of possession of our "belonging" to cultures such as ethnical, racial, linguistical, and above all, national aspects. That there are some aspects of our identities which arouse from the daily trainings, in the trip to events. Their imaginary within the sport are formed in certain regions, and in which through his/her companionship which ties the cowboys of the same group, in the roles of a cowboys of the countryside of São Paulo, we are establishing, for instance, an interpretation of them in relation to the working vaqueros of the south of Brazil. These have habits and customs that come to mark the differences between both, forming as a consequence an identity.

Reference for cultural identification – Discursive construction, feeling of belonging, imagined communities and invented tradition

After the authors’ review previously aforementioned, the references were established, which made the rodeo be considered a regional cultural identity.

In relation to the national culture as a discourse (discursive construction), we followed the current theory of cultural analyses, which according to Fiske, apud Silva (1999:45), "it is more productive to say that what is accepted as reality in any social formation is product of discourse."

Hall (2000:50) highlights that "a national culture is a discourse, a way of making meanings which influences and organizes our actions as for the conception which we have about ourselves."

Supported by these references, the rodeo can be treated as a discourse construction, at the moment in which the individual develops meanings with which it is possible to identify, that he/she is capable of creating specific forms of communities, when certain groups that do the sport are formed in certain regions, and in which through his/her representations, behaviors, folklore and music, create system of cultural significations and representations of a given group/community.

On the other hand, the feeling of belonging is expressed by national cultures as the representations of belonging. Hall (2000) shows that there are some aspects of our identities which arouse from our "belonging" to cultures such as ethnical, racial, linguistical, religious, and above all, national aspects.

It can be understood then the feeling of belonging of possession of certain groups that take symbols for themselves, habits, languages as being exclusive or typically themselves and that should not be used by other groups or societies by the fact of having already been assimilated as self identity, and thus taking part of them.

This feeling of belonging is clearly noticeable in the rodeos, through groups of cowboys and the spectators that insist on being noticed by the way of wearing, chewing the tobacco, wearing boots and hats, which distinguishes them from the urban man and characterizes them as a legitimate representatives of this "rural world", which they take part and at the same time feel the "owner" of those habits which in their mind are exclusive and do not belong to the other environment. According to Hall (2000:76), "it is a particular way of bond or belonging."

Also, the imagined communities are expressed as national cultures, evidence that the cultural identities have been seen recently within a continuum of construction and reconstruction of national culture of a nation. According to Anderson’s interpretation (1989), the nations refer to national identities as a group of “imagined communities.” This goes with the anthropological concept, used by the author that understands the nation as “politically imagined communities,” limited and sovereign. It has become important to highlight still that the characteristics of a nation can also be seen in the regional aspect regional.

Anderson (1989:14), in this discussion about the nation, considers it imagined because: "not even the members of minor nations will ever know the majority of its compatriots, not even will meet, not even will hear about them, although in the mind of each one should be alive the image of communion.”

Gellner quoted by Anderson (1989:14) clarifies that man’s imagination plays a preponderant role in the creation of these communities, which takes part of each individual’s imagery. Hence, it is noticed that the way the question of nationalism is able “to invent nations in which they do not exist.”

Anderson (1989:15) still reports that “the communities should not be distinguished by their falsity/authenticity, but by their style in which they are imagined.” In addition, he exemplifies the importance given to the past, which connects people with one another, through the family and the importance of their ancestors, in which their bonds are imagined in a particular way, by their kinship and dependence. This means that the national identities are the product of the cultural creation and imagination of each community.

In this perspective, the rodeo can be observed as one of the symbols of ‘imagined communities’ which make up the national or regional culture, for it is imbued of elements which make it be considered a community, such as the strong feeling of friendship and companionship which ties the cowboys of the same group, in the daily trainings, in the trip to events. Their imaginary within the specific ‘world’, the life style typical of them which was created by their ancestors and kinship, and passed down to the others. These groups, however, the greater they may be, they will always be limited in the number of members, and imagined by their participants.

As regards the invented or that may be noticed through the cultural identity as invented tradition.

About this subject, Hobsbawm (1997:9) described that “many traditions which seem or claim a great antiquity in their origin, at times as inventions from 19th century, and even from the 20th century.”

This relation to the past to which Hobsbawm refers is one example of situations in which it is made a supposed recovery of it, in
order to establish some continuity with the present, establishing ‘invented traditions,’ so as to give some artificial continuity to what is ‘told’ in the present.

Hobsbawm (1997:10) observes that “the aim of traditions is, including the invented ones, the invariability”, i.e., the reference in relation to the past be it real or forged, it will depend on stock and repeated practices.

The invented traditions are hardly ever changed. The habit of wearing a rodeo hat may be a typical example of this principle. Nowadays, for matters of security it is advisable the use of helmets for head protection. However, with rare exceptions, almost the totality of the cowboys prefers to wear a hat to a helmet. In this type of behavior, it is observed an old tradition that has perpetuated through the times, characterizing him among other things by his hat, without which he might lose part of archetype which always was the symbol of those who do the sport.

In this aspect Hobsbawm (1997:12) highlights that “the traditions have their place of importance diametrically opposite to the pragmatic conventions or routines”.

In a sense, the rodeo should be place in this perspective of culture, as an invention of tradition, for it is rich in rituals and symbols, composed of elements of its traditions, when it is expressed through saint protecting images for the cowboys, typical setting of the opening ceremony of each event, with its ritual, sports myths which are sung in prose and verses, habits of the past as the cattle herders who until today seek to take their animals in groups, establishing the repetition of an old custom. We observe that these issues seek a historical past of a region, identifying the sheer rodeo, legitimate and original.

**METHODOLOGY**

**Study type**

The present study was developed through the descriptive research methodologies, once the descriptive studies describe situations of collective event from primary data, be it qualitative or quantitative (in our case qualitative).

**The Sample**

This sample comprised 6 cowboys which frequently present in rodeo competitions in the countryside of São Paulo and 6 professor of incontestable intellectuality.

**Instrument of study**

The instrument of data collection was a structured interview by means of a questionnaire composed of questions those of dichotomic type and multiple choice.

**RESULTS**

As the study aimed at confirming that the rodeo is a sports manifestation of cultural identity in the countryside of the state of São Paulo, it was created the four previously aforementioned references based upon important culture theorists, by quoting them we make up questionnaires of self-concept of identity. In respect to the first reference called discourse construction, two questions were made out of it which formed the instrument of self-appreciation.

In this manner, the first reference based upon Stuart Hall, we obtained the first question to the six interviewees with six positive answers (cf., questionnaire). As for the academicians, it was obtained one negative answer and five positive answers.

In regard to the second question six respondents and six academicians answered that the sentences and verses used by the rodeo announcer are specific for this activity. This confirms the rodeo characterization as a discourse construction.

In connection with the second reference based upon, entitled feeling of belonging covered four questions understood between the items 3 to 5, in which in the item 3, six respondents answered positively. As for the academician five answered positively and only one did negatively. For the item 4 so much the respondents as the academicians answered positively. In the item 5 all the academicians answered positively, however, for the respondent only one answered negatively and five did positively. In the item six all the respondents and five academicians answered that the rodeo is a Brazilian cultural manifestation, where only one academician answered that the rodeo is a cultural manifestation in the countryside of São Paulo.

With the exception of only one discrepancy (in the item 6), it could be confirmed the feeling of belonging in relation to the rodeo.

Concerning the third reference understood as imagined communities (item 7) based upon Benedict Anderson, it was predominance in all responses of recognition of soccer, country music and rodeo as elements of the countryside of São Paulo. It confirmed among these manifestations, rodeo as a politically imagined community, limited and sovereign. This evidence underpins the aims of our study.

Furthermore, upon dealing with the reference of invented tradition (items 8 to 9), based upon Eric Hobsbawm, the entirety of respondents claimed that the rituals which take place during the opening of each rodeo event were created by the working vaqueros, and still, which the cattle herders are a category created in function to the rodeo.

To the academicians, we observed that the index of four responses affirming that the rituals which take place in the opening of each rodeo event were created by the working vaqueros and two responses affirming that these rituals has no relation to the rodeo. As for the cattle herders, three academicians believe that his reference was created in function to the rodeo, whereas the other three respondents believe that the cattle herders belong exclusively to the rodeo environment.

This way by the prevalence of the analyzed responses, it reached the conclusion that invented tradition is a reference that is clearly present in the surveys of this study characterizing between the study objects, the questionnaire and what was wanted to know.

**CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

After the data collection, it enabled a description of rodeo in the countryside of São Paulo (Jaguariúna, Americana, Barretos and
others), and the evidence that this sports modality has constantly increased in social, economic, tourist and cultural terms. It was possible to draw from the literature some references on cultural identity which could be used in this study.

The references discursive construction, feeling of belong, imagined communities and invented tradition were brought to this study and applied in the sports sociocultural context of rodeo, they made clear that the rodeo sports practice is actually a manifestation of cultural and regional identity in the countryside of São Paulo.

As a result, it is recommended that further studies of cultural interferences in the area of physical education should be developed for the completion of futures researches which approach to sports as the rodeo, about which a wealth of information can still be written, which can contribute for the culture of sports and physical education in Brazil.

**QUESTIONNAIRE**

1 – The country music portrays the daily life in the rodeos?
   ( ) yes ( ) no

2 – The sentences and verses used by the rodeo announcers are:
   ( ) specific for this profession activity ( ) of other activities.

3 – The rodeo users are in the majority Born in the countryside?
   ( ) yes ( ) no

4 – The rodeo cowboys have their protecting saints?
   ( ) yes ( ) no

5 – Is there a typical clothing in the rodeo?
   ( ) yes ( ) no

6 – Do you think that the rodeo is a ________________ manifestation?
   ( ) cultural of the countryside of São Paulo. ( ) Brazilian cultural.

7 – In your point of view, which of these elements can be considered cultural regional manifestation in the countryside of São Paulo?
   ( ) soccer          ( ) capoeira          ( ) samba          ( ) volleyball          ( ) bossa nova
   ( ) country music    ( ) forró             ( ) muppets         ( ) rodeo

8 – The rituals, which take place in the opening of each rodeo,
   ( ) were created by the rodeo working vaqueros. ( ) have no relation to the working vaqueros’ habits.

9 – The cattle herders are:
   ( ) a category created because of the rodeo. ( ) a category which does not belong to the rodeo environment

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