

Galhofa: the Portuguese wrestling between tradition and survival

Thabata Castelo Branco TELLES^{12*}(ABCDEF) , Bernard ANDRIEU²(BEF) , Cristiano Roque Antunes BARREIRA¹(ABEF) 

¹ *University of São Paulo (Brazil)*

² *University of Paris – I3SP (France)*

Received: 20/08/2021; Accepted: 07/02/2022; Published: 12/02/2022

ORIGINAL PAPER

Abstract

This paper aims to present the *galhofa*, a traditional wrestling style practiced in Portugal, especially in Trás-os-Montes, in the northern region. Part of an oral and folk tradition, *galhofa* has survived with no systematic organization, either regarding its rules or even its techniques. Thus, this paper is focused on introducing and discussing the *galhofa* as an activity between tradition and sportization. Data was collected in Bragança in 2019 through interview and immersion activity, along with images and videos from field research conducted in Parada between 1997 and 2001. Both the visit to Bragança and the analytical process were conducted via phenomenology and inspired by esthesiology and emersiology. Overall, the experience of *galhofa* encompasses a free way of fighting with the main objective of keeping the opponent's back and shoulders on the floor for a few seconds. It is historically related to a manly activity and it is often associated as a ritual of passage from adolescence to manhood. As the only traditional Portuguese wrestling modality surviving nowadays, the *galhofa* can be considered as a very unique fighting practice. However, there are some shared aspects with other martial arts and combat sports, especially more traditional ones, such as capoeira, *loita* or *lucha leonesa*. Under the risk of disappearing, it faces an ongoing sportization process, which includes a more gender equality agenda and a systematic organization of techniques and competition procedures. Relevant changes have also been made towards making this practice more popular and widely known, such as establishing it as part of the undergraduate curriculum on Sports degree at the Polytechnic Institute of Bragança.

Keywords: Martial arts; combat sports; galhofa; traditional wrestling; traditional games; intangible cultural heritage; phenomenology.

Galhofa: la lucha portuguesa entre tradición y supervivencia

Resumen

Este artículo tiene como objetivo presentar la *galhofa*, una forma de lucha tradicional practicada en Portugal, especialmente en la región norte de Trás-os-Montes. Parte de la tradición oral y popular, la *galhofa* ha sobrevivido sin una organización sistemática, ni en sus reglas ni en sus técnicas. Así, el trabajo introduce y discute la *galhofa* como una actividad a caballo entre tradición y deportización. Los datos se recopilaron en Bragança en 2019 a través de entrevistas y actividades de inmersión, junto con imágenes y videos de investigación de campo recogidos en Parada entre 1997 y 2001. Tanto la visita a Bragança como el proceso analítico se realizaron a través de la fenomenología y estuvieron inspirados en la estesiología y la emersología. En general, la experiencia de la *galhofa* engloba una forma libre de luchar con el objetivo principal de mantener la espalda y los hombros del oponente en el suelo durante unos segundos. Históricamente se relaciona con una actividad masculina y, a menudo, se considera como un ritual de paso de la adolescencia a la madurez.

Galhofa: a luta portuguesa entre tradição e sobrevivência

Resumo

Este artigo tem como objetivo apresentar a *galhofa*, uma luta tradicional praticada na região norte de Portugal, principalmente em Trás-os-Montes, na região norte. Parte de uma tradição oral e folclórica, a *galhofa* sobreviveu sem uma organização sistemática, seja no que diz respeito às suas regras ou mesmo às suas técnicas. Assim, este artigo centra-se na introdução e discussão da *galhofa* como uma atividade entre tradição e desportização. Os dados foram recolhidos em Bragança em 2019 através de entrevista e atividade de imersão, juntamente com imagens e vídeos de pesquisa de campo em Parada entre 1997 e 2001. Tanto a visita em Bragança quanto o processo analítico foram conduzidos por meio da fenomenologia e inspirados na estesiologia e na emersologia. Geralmente, a experiência do *galhofa* abrange uma forma livre de luta, com o objetivo principal de manter as costas e os ombros do oponente no chão por alguns segundos. Historicamente relacionada com uma atividade masculina, é frequentemente associada a um ritual de passagem da adolescência para a idade adulta.

* *Corresponding author:* Thabata Castelo Branco Telles (thabata@gmail.com)

Contributions: (A) Study design. (B) Literature review. (C) Data collection. (D) Statistical / Data analysis. (E) Data interpretation. (F) Manuscript preparation.

Funding: This study was financially supported by PNPd/CAPES and FAPESP (Fundação de Amparo à Pesquisa do Estado de São Paulo) – grant # 2019/03947-5.

Como la única modalidad de lucha tradicional portuguesa que sobrevive hoy en día, la *galhofa* puede considerarse como una práctica de lucha muy singular. Sin embargo, comparte ciertos elementos con otras artes marciales y deportes de combate, especialmente las más tradicionales, como la capoeira, loita y lucha leonesa. Bajo el riesgo de desaparecer, está experimentando un proceso de deportivización, que incluye una agenda más equitativa en relación al género y una organización sistemática de técnicas y procedimientos de competición. También se han realizado cambios significativos para hacer que esta práctica sea más popular y llegue a ser ampliamente conocida, como por ejemplo incluirla como parte del plan de estudios del Grado en Deporte del Instituto Politécnico de Bragança.

Palabras clave: Artes marciales; deportes de combate; galhofa; lucha tradicional; juegos tradicionales; herencia cultural intangible; fenomenología.

Sendo a única modalidade de luta de agarre tradicional portuguesa, a *galhofa* pode ser considerada uma prática com características peculiares. No entanto, existem alguns aspectos compartilhados com outras artes marciais e esportes de combate, principalmente as mais tradicionais, como capoeira, *loita* e *luta leonesa*. Correndo o risco de desaparecer, enfrenta um processo contínuo de desportivização, que inclui uma agenda mais equitativa de género e uma organização sistemática de técnicas e procedimentos de competição. Mudanças relevantes também foram feitas no sentido de tornar esta prática mais popular e amplamente divulgada, como por exemplo, sua inserção como parte do currículo de graduação da Licenciatura em Desporto do Instituto Politécnico de Bragança.

Palavras-chave: Artes marciais; desportos de combate; galhofa; luta tradicional; jogos tradicionais; património cultural imaterial; fenomenologia.

1. Introduction

This paper aims to present the *galhofa*, a traditional wrestling style practiced in Portugal, especially in Trás-os-Montes, in the northern region. Such activity can be found specifically in the district of Bragança, particularly in some towns, namely Grijó de Parada, Parada, Freixedelo, Coelhoso, Paredes and Carocedo. *Galhofa* is both a cultural and a sportive way of wrestling, under the risk of disappearing. It is noteworthy that such expression in Portuguese language can refer to sarcasm, a joke or even a joyful moment¹. Thus, the term “*galhofa*” is generally associated with a playful form of fighting.

The traditional game is part of the Saint Stephen festivities that take place every year between December 25th and 28th, during the winter solstice. As those small towns were close to each other (less than 10 km), people were used to celebrate this date in different places. There was some rivalry among these towns that could be felt more intensively during these encounters. However, a sense of cooperation and collaboration might also be considered in such events (Bragada, 2004, 2017; Gutiérrez-García et al., 2000, 2001).

The northern region of Portugal is close to Spain, especially to the areas of Galicia and Castile y León, where other forms of traditional wrestling can be found, such as the *loita galega* and *lucha leonesa* respectively, the latter nowadays solidly practiced as a traditional sport (Robles-Tascón & Gutiérrez-García, 2020). It is also likely that *galhofa* has been influenced by these fighting practices (and vice-versa) once it was usual for groups of Spanish workers to come to Trás-os-Montes in the wheat and rye harvest season (June-July). The permanence of these groups for some time in other regions might have allowed them to play and show the typical games of their lands.

Although it is traditionally part of a religious celebration, Saint Stephen festivities have also maintained a profane aspect, especially regarding such embodied activities. One day should be dedicated to the holy ceremonies, while the other one could embrace the games and sportive traditions, such as the *galhofa* and the *rosca* race (“*corrida da rosca*” in Portuguese, a running race in which the winner is awarded a “*rosca*”, a ring-shaped traditional cake). The *galhofa* used to take place on hays or straws inside the barns at night (Picture 1).

Part of an oral and folk tradition, the *galhofa* has survived with no systematic organization, either regarding its rules or even its techniques. According to Gutiérrez-García, Espartero & Villamón (2000), *galhofa* is the only case of a traditional fight in Portugal and Spain that was surviving with almost no sportization process. It was a popular practice in rural areas in the north of Portugal, but it has diminished due to recent changes in Western society. Lately the Portuguese have surrendered to the most common fighting modalities, such as judo, karate and more recently

¹ Gutiérrez-García et al. (2001) have interpreted the term as a loud and happy celebration (“fiesta ruidosa y alegre”).



the Brazilian jiu-jitsu (as an example of such interest, Lisboa is the city that holds the European Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu Championship every year²).



Picture 1. Parada, Portugal, 1999. *Galhofa* wrestling. Photo courtesy of Carlos Gutiérrez-García.

Nevertheless, *galhofa* can still be found in a few rural areas of Trás-os-Montes as an easy-learning practice, taught by the elderlies. In Bragança, an urban city in the northern Portuguese region, there can be found *galhofa* courses in the Superior School of Education in the Polytechnic Institute of Bragança (Escola Superior de Educação do Instituto Politécnico de Bragança), as part of the undergraduate curriculum of Sports degree. Such initiatives have been vital to revitalize this practice, along with an ongoing sportization process and the creation of tournaments by the Portuguese Federation of Amateur Fighting (Federação Portuguesa de Lutas Amadoras). Thus, this paper is focused on introducing and discussing the *galhofa* as a Portuguese wrestling practice, considering it as an activity between tradition and sportization.

2. Method and procedures

This work is part of a broader research entitled “Body to body in movement: an exploratory and phenomenological study in Martial Arts & Combat Sports”³. It consists of a phenomenological study that aims to map these practices and to understand how the body fights through cultural nuances, and it is not only based on the reflexive sphere and verbal language, but also on pre-reflexive experiences and body listening. Its method includes technical visits with interviews, observations and the practical experience of the researcher. Its results are expected not only to understand existing fighting practices but also to explore methodological possibilities in the field of phenomenology and embodiment, focusing on martial arts and combat sports. In addition, this investigation primes for developing specific methods and procedures to fighting practices research. It consists of four main steps regarding data collection which were all followed during the *galhofa* exploration process:

² For 2022, the European Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu Championship is expected to happen in Rome, according to the IBJJF website.

³ Developed at the Escola de Educação Física e Esporte de Ribeirão Preto - Universidade de São Paulo (EEFERP-USP), and funded by CAPES/PNPD and FAPESP grant #2019/03947-5.

Cristiano Roque Antunes Barreira's contribution to the writing of this article is a conceptual part of research also supported by the São Paulo Research Foundation (FAPESP), grant # 2019/11527-6.

- (1) Identification: knowing the name of the practice, where it takes place, when and who the leader/s is / are (e.g. a coach, a master, a professor or someone that is a reference for the group);
- (2) Contacting: reaching the leader or a reference of the group to present the research and ask for permission to go there. This phase also involves preparing the field trip (clothing, schedule, etc.);
- (3) Mapping: going the place where the activities take place and practice it along with the group. This is the only mandatory procedure; however, interviews and other processes can also be conducted. Besides, pictures, videos and other forms of recording are frequent, whenever it is possible and necessary. In such cases, authorization is previously required;
- (4) Exploring: after the practice(s), description through autobiographical narratives are made. This material is considered as well as others' narratives and literature findings on the same topic.

The above procedures, as well as the analytical process, are conducted via phenomenology (Merleau-Ponty, 1945, 1953/2011) and inspired by esthesiology (Nobrega & Torres, 2018) and emersiology (Andrieu, 2018). These perspectives have in common an important consideration on the theme of body and movement in terms of agency (Gallagher, 2005) and situatedness. The emergence of internal sensations in the course of bodily action defines an important cartography. This map of lived sensitivity is the way to locate the parts of the body involved in the motor interaction.

The immersion in such activities is guided by an attentive perception of our senses and feelings (Legendre & Dietrich, 2020) in specific movements and environments (Andrieu et al., 2018), especially considering the domain of martial arts and combat sports through the notion of a corporal fighting (Barreira, 2017a,b). This methodological process pertains that perception is already an action, relying on our intentional acts towards otherness (Noë, 2004).

A visit was made in October 2019 to the Superior School of Education in the Polytechnic Institute of Bragança (Escola Superior de Educação do Instituto Politécnico de Bragança), in order to participate in a *galhofa* course through an immersion activity and also to interview the Prof. Dr. José Bragada, responsible to the recent initiatives towards the sportization and revitalization of *galhofa* in Portugal. In addition, materials from ethnographic field research on *galhofa* conducted by Prof. Carlos Gutiérrez-García in the town of Parada between 1997 and 2001 were also considered in this study⁴. Such material consisted of about 180 pictures and three videos of the *galhofa* and other activities celebrated on Saint Stephen festivities.

Thus, as a methodological procedure, we count on an intertwinement which includes: (1) the description from the immersion activity in the School of Education of Bragança in 2019, (2) the process of interviewing Prof. Bragada in 2019 and (3) the analysis of images and videos from field research conducted in Parada between 1997 and 2001.

3. Describing the fight

The connection with rural events is kept in *galhofa's* clothing: no shoes, only pants, usually jeans ones, and each fighter can grab the others' belt loops. The original place of the fights was on the hay (or on the straw) inside the barns (Bragada, 2004, 2017; Gutiérrez-García et al., 2000, 2001). Although traditional fighting may still happen, the *galhofa* can also be played nowadays in schools and other education settings. This has changed due to a sportization process, and this topic will be more detailed below.

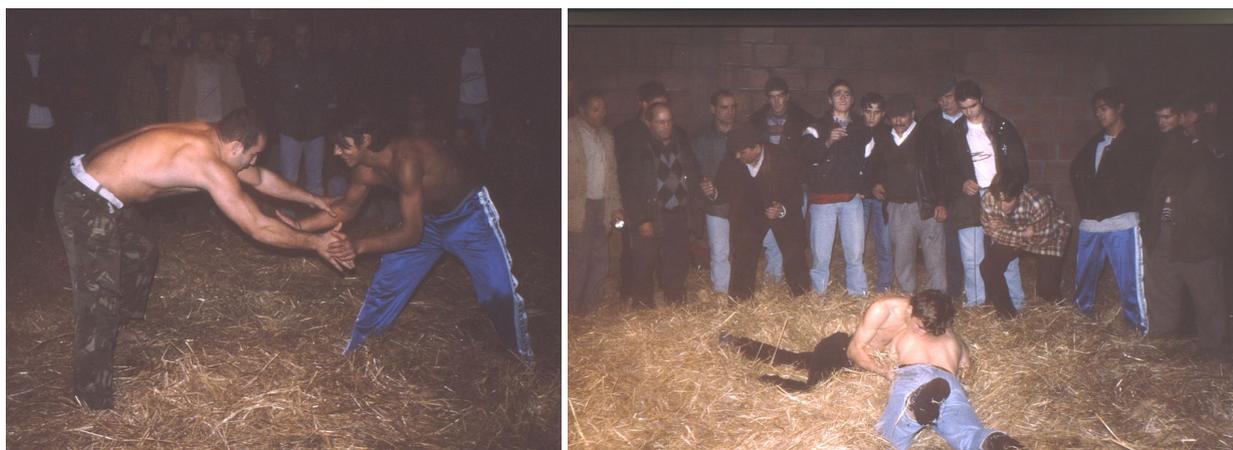
The *galhofa* can be easily understood through its main objective: keeping the opponent's back and shoulders on the floor for a few seconds. This can happen either through takedowns, when the opponent falls with back and shoulders on the floor, or if the fight is on the ground and one opponent succeeds in turning over the other's body (Bragada, 2004, 2017; Gutiérrez-García, et

⁴ We warmly thank Prof. Dr. Carlos Gutiérrez-García for the material provided.



al., 2000). The fights usually start with both wrestlers standing up and there is no gripping position before the beginning of the fight, as other types of traditional wrestling – e.g. ssireum in the Korean peninsula (Telles & Barreira, 2020). They stay away from each other (2 m, approximately), bending their torsos to avoid being chased by the legs (Picture 2). The main attacks consist at trying to take the opponent down and they are usually focused on the pants, the back and the legs. It continues as each wrestler moves whether pushing, pulling, and fighting for grips and takedowns. Despite the *galhofa* pertains different techniques, especially those regarding takedowns, there is no precise glossary to name them:

Likewise, when the fight continues on the ground, there is a clearly defensive position adopted by the dominated fighter: belly down, legs apart and elbows bent outwards. The opponent tries to turn him using all his strength and skill. As with standing combat, there are different ways to turn your rival over but no precise name corresponds to them⁵ (Gutiérrez-García et al., 2000, n/p) – free translation (picture 3).



Pictures 2 and 3. Parada, Portugal, 1997. *Galhofa* wrestling typical standing and ground positions. Photos courtesy of Carlos Gutiérrez-García.

Overall, the experience of *galhofa* encompasses a free way of fighting (Bragada, 2004). Along with other forms of traditional wrestling, there is no time limit. The combat continues until there is a winner. In addition, a specific tournament system is absent. Traditionally, the competitors fight one another pairing up through similar weights and sizes during the event and the winner is defined by the number of victories. The one who loses is out. In the video analysis of field research, it can be also noted that people could match the opponents during the event, depending only on the willingness of the wrestlers to participate in the contest.

In its traditional version, each situation requires a distinct organization and the strong aspect of spontaneity is preserved. Nothing is pre-determined or settled before the event: number of competitors, competition system, how it begins or how it ends. The *galhofa* can be considered an intuitive fight (Gutiérrez-García et al., 2001) and the characteristics of creativity, spontaneity and freedom are usually related to the main features of a traditional game (Bragada, 2004). They can be observed in the techniques during the fight:

Given the freedom at the start, the movements, in principle, are much more ample and fluid than in the other forms of wrestling. On the other hand, once a grip is reached, the movements are slower and more sustained, since any movement of one wrestler can be quickly controlled and thwarted by the other⁶ (Gutiérrez-García et al., 2000, n/p) – free translation.

⁵ Original extract: “De même, quand la lutte continue au sol, il existe une position clairement défensive adoptée par le combattant dominé: à plat ventre, jambes écartées et coudes repliés vers l’extérieur. L’adversaire essaie de le retourner en utilisant toute sa force et son adresse. Comme pour le combat debout, il existe différents moyens pour retourner son rival mais aucune appellation précise ne leur correspond”.

⁶ Original extract : “Etant donné la liberté du début, les déplacements, en principe, sont beaucoup plus amples et fluides que dans les autres formes de lutte. Par contre, une fois arrivés à une prise de maintien, les

As a game for developing specific psychomotor skills, such as strength and fast reaction, the fighter can grab any part of the opponent's body in order to try to take him down. However, special caution is needed when they are grabbed by the neck. An interesting aspect of the traditional version of *galhofa* is that the fighters are not used to train regularly and they enhance their performances from the experience of previous years or from instructions by the elderlies during the combat. This characteristic is opposed to that of a sport practice, which is systematized and requires both an exclusive dedication and the need to reach a peak of high performance (Bragada, 2004).

Once this is a very communitarian practice, the others are very close to the fighters and they participate whether as audience, coaches or referees. They seize this moment together as part of a celebration:

After the fight, the losing or both boys are welcomed with encouragement and congratulations from the residents of the town. Thus, the fighting continues, according to the agreed competition system. During its course, lemonade is distributed among the attendees, a fact that underlines the festive character of the *galhofa*. When there are no more young people who want to fight, the event is over, and everyone heads to the dance, and the party will end⁷ (Gutiérrez-García et al., 2001, p. 31) – free translation.

Along with the party aspect, Gutiérrez-García et al. (2000) mention a special cake (*rosca*) as a reward to the winner in the traditional version of the *galhofa*. Besides, those authors have reported it as a celebration not only regarding the playful aspect of *galhofa*, but also as a ritual of passage between adolescence to manhood through a sense of rivalry among the different villages:

The fight, considered in its broadest sense - that is to say, clashes between groups, between young men or girls, between neighboring villages, as well as simulated fights during winter masquerades, etc.... -, constitutes an almost omnipresent rite of festivals. The latter can be interpreted as the expression of the dichotomous tensions that punctuate the lives of men: good and evil, life and death, masculine and feminine. [...] What is certain is that the *galhofa* must have a special meaning given that it takes place on a specific date⁸ (n/p) – free translation.

These dichotomies seem to be strongly present in the traditional version of *galhofa*, especially in two main characteristics: as a manly practice with apparently no place for women and as a tradition that struggles to be part of a sportization process in order to survive. On the other hand, whether in pictures and videos from the field research or in the immersion practice, women and girls could be seen both watching or wrestling the *galhofa*. Despite they were largely fewer than men and boys, those places seemed to be welcoming places for them – at least through observation from recent years.

4. Approaching *galhofa* in situ

Although the immersion part of this research could not reach the rural areas of Trás-os-Montes, a visit was made to the city of Bragança, one of the main towns in this region. As far as we were concerned, the Superior School of Education in the Polytechnic Institute of Bragança (Escola

mouvements se font plus lents et plus appuyés, puisque n'importe quel mouvement de l'un des lutteurs peut être rapidement contrôlé et contrecarré par l'autre".

⁷ Original extract: "Tras la lucha, el mozo perdedor o ambos mozos son acogidos en el corro con ánimos y felicitaciones por parte de los vecinos del pueblo. Así, los combates continúan, según el sistema de competición acordado. Durante su transcurso, se reparte limonada entre los asistentes, hecho que subraya el carácter festivo de la Galhofa. Cuando ya no quedan más jóvenes que quieran luchar, se da por concluido el acontecimiento, y todos se dirigen al baile, donde finalizará la fiesta".

⁸ Original extract: "La lutte, considérée dans son sens le plus ample – c'est à dire, des affrontements entre groupes, entre jeunes hommes ou jeunes filles, entre villages voisins, ainsi que les combats simulés au cours des mascarades hivernales, etc.... -, constitue un rite quasi omniprésent des fêtes. Ce dernier peut s'interpréter comme l'expression des tensions dichotomiques qui jalonnent la vie des Hommes: le bien et le mal, la vie et la mort, le masculin et le féminin. [...] Ce qui est sûr est que la Galhofa doit posséder une signification particulière étant donné qu'elle se déroule à une date précise".



Superior de Educação do Instituto Politécnico of Bragança) is the only place where formal *galhofa* courses can be taken. However, they are exclusive to undergraduate students in the Sports degree offered at the Superior School of Education.

The practice of *galhofa* was made by the first author of this paper. Before this activity, information was given by Prof. Dr. José Bragada regarding the time of the session, the directions to reach the exact place and the clothing (rash guard or T-shirt, jeans pants and tennis shoes). He is from a village in a rural area near Bragança and has had personal experience with the *galhofa* when he was younger. Then, in addition to the practical session, an interview was conducted with him focusing on grasping the phenomenon of practicing the *galhofa* as a traditional activity.

Before the beginning of the class, students were asked for permission to take pictures and record videos. They all agreed and seemed very comfortable with the researcher's presence. The session took place in a gymnasium. Instead of the traditional hay or straw, there was a mat covered with canvas (Picture 4). The students have paired up and the session was elapsed as a regular sportive activity: warming up, techniques and progression to the fighting moment.

Regarding the specific techniques, two main moves were taught and trained: the first one was focused on learning how to turn the opponent over. Once the fighter loses when touching back and shoulders on the ground, a common defense position is to keep the body on the floor with the belly down. In order to win, one needs to turn the opponent over putting their back and shoulders down. During the session, Prof. Bragada had also shown different ways of turning the fighter over through variations (e.g. grabbing the other's pants, using the legs as a hook, etc.) (Pictures 5 and 6). The other technique was a progression to the fight itself. We were asked to try to take the opponent down (back and shoulders on the floor) turning them sideways. However, we could not stand up and we must remain our knees on the floor.



Pictures 4, 5 and 6. Bragança, Portugal, 2019. *Galhofa* practice at the Superior School of Education in the Polytechnic Institute of Bragança.

Although a few techniques were taught and some progressions towards fighting were developed, it seems the spontaneous aspect of *galhofa* is kept throughout the session. During these last moves, we have had one main objective (trying to take the opponent's back and shoulders

down) but each one was able to experience such situation and feel the best way to attack and defend. Thus, we can consider it a creative and playful way of fighting.

Most of the students were men, although there were a few women (two students and the researcher). The first author of this paper is a woman who has paired up with one of the men during the technical instructions. However, she was not allowed to experience the *galhofa* fight with him at the end of the session. It was argued that it would be better if there was another woman to fight with her, instead of a man. In this regard, *galhofa* is often reported as a men's fight (Bragada, 2017; Gutiérrez-García et al., 1999, 2000, 2001). Although our findings on the literature frequently mention that it was an activity restricted to men and women were not allowed to participate, Prof. Bragada has brought a different version during our interview:

Traditionally, girls didn't normally play this game. And on those festive days, where there was competition among the villages, the girls didn't go either. They were hardly even on assistance. Just a few watched this type of game. [...] It was not forbidden. There is no prohibition nor is there any obligation. [...] They didn't watch it because the boys wore no shirts, and at that time, to see people with naked bodies... especially in a dark environment, because there was no electricity as there is now. [...] And the ladies, usually the most daring ones, let's say, are those who liked to participate. But there was no prohibition⁹ - free translation.

This is a very interesting aspect because there can be an interpretation of the *galhofa* as a rite of passage for boys to manhood from the literature. However, according to Prof. Bragada's experience, this was lived as a game with no major restrictions or obligations. On the other hand, the traditional *galhofa* could have been felt by the community as a social gendered activity: hostile for girls and a requisite for boys.



Picture 7. Parada, Portugal, 2001. Young boys playing *galhofa* wrestling. Photo courtesy of Carlos Gutiérrez-García.

Those gender issues on *galhofa* may find similarities within the discussion on the role of women and girls in *lucha leonesa*, a traditional Spanish wrestling style. They used to participate in the festivities as spectators (usually as mother, wife or neighbor, for example), however in recent times it has been more common to see them as competitors (Fernández, 2013).

⁹ Original extract: “Do ponto de vista tradicional, as raparigas normalmente não faziam este jogo. E naqueles dias festivos, aonde havia competição entre as aldeias, também não iam as raparigas. Até quase nem em assistência estavam. Poucas iam assistir a esse tipo de jogo. [...] Não era proibido. Não há qualquer tipo de proibição, também como não há qualquer tipo de obrigação. [...] Não assistiam porque os rapazes estavam em tronco nu e naquela altura, ver assim pessoas em tronco nu... ainda mais em ambiente um bocado escuro, porque não havia eletricidade como há agora. [...] E as senhoras normalmente as mais atrevidas, vamos dizer assim, é que gostavam de participar. Mas não havia proibição nenhuma”.

5. Revitalizing between tradition and sport

Under the risk of disappearing, the *galhofa* has been facing the need of a revitalization process. This kind of wrestling is similar to others in Iberian Peninsula (where Portugal and Spain are located). Despite *galhofa* has been present over the years, a lot of other traditional fights in this region no longer exist, such as *La Lucha de la Bandera/ de la Cruz, Valto, Echar unas trinchas, las Vueltas, Tirar al Cinto, Valtu, Lucha del Roncal, Probar a Juntar, Engarrucha / Engarruche*, etc. (Espartero et al., 1997; Gutiérrez-García et al., 2000). On the contrary, and in comparison with *galhofa*, its neighbor *lucha leonesa* has faced a relevant sportization process in the past decades. With its first regiment written in 1954, 14 rules were established, along with the basic aspects of the fight (weight categories, clothing, female participation and a specific agenda, among others). There is also an aesthetics that seems closer to recent combat sports (Gutiérrez-García et al., 2001; Robles-Tascón & Gutiérrez-García, 2020). Regarding the *galhofa*, these changes towards a sportive version seem to be part of an ongoing process which is also referred to as an *adulteration* (Espartero et al., 2000), once the fighting experience becomes distant from the traditional practice. Despite such disadvantage, this has been a common process in cultural activities under the risk of disappearing.

As we have referred to, the *galhofa* is related to a manly activity and it is often associated as a ritual of passage from adolescence to manhood. Such psychosocial aspect is frequently mentioned on the literature:

But, perhaps more conspicuous or more important, from a psychosocial perspective, the consideration that youth was - like the current adolescence - a stage of transition to adulthood, in which a series of features had to be manifested, highly valued in traditional society, which would enable the individual to assume this status. In the case of males, some of these traits are: strength (not only physical), vigor, courage, agility, etc., which have a maximum expression in the practice of certain traditional games (races, jumps, tests of strength, games and bullfights...), among which is wrestling. In contrast, attributes associated with females - passivity, submission, delicacy - generally imposed a veto towards this type of exercises¹⁰ (Gutiérrez-García et al., 2001, p. 27) - free translation.

Thus, part of a sportization process in the *galhofa* must include women participation as well as child engagement, whether boys or girls. Contemporary sportive standards include a gender equality agenda and constant adaptations in order to engage people of all ages and making such practice more popular. During our interview, Prof. Bragada has mentioned this aspect when considering gender issues in *galhofa's* sportization process:

The game itself doesn't have a feature that can inhibit girls from playing. There are other fighting games and other sports that are much more aggressive than this and that are played by girls. The only rule we had to change was that instead of playing with no shirts, as they were before, they play with a T-shirt. [...] Usually girls play with girls and boys play with boys¹¹ - free translation.

Although current sportive competitions are divided in male and female teams, recent trends on the topic have been discussing this aspect, especially in the field of martial arts and combat

¹⁰ Original extract: "Pero, quizá resulte más llamativo o más importante, desde una perspectiva psicosocial, la consideración de que la mocedad suponía -al igual que la actual adolescencia- una etapa de tránsito hacia la vida adulta, en la que se debían manifestar toda una serie de rasgos, enormemente valorados en la sociedad tradicional, que posibilitasen, por parte del sujeto, la asunción de dicho estatus. En el caso del género masculino, algunos de estos rasgos son fuerza (no solamente física), vigor, valor, destreza, actividad, etc., que tienen una máxima expresión en la práctica de ciertos juegos tradicionales (carreras, saltos, pruebas de fuerza, juegos y corridas de toros...), entre los que se encuentra la lucha. En contraste, los atributos asociados al género femenino -pasividad, sumisión, delicadeza- imponían, generalmente, un veto hacia este tipo de ejercicios".

¹¹ Original extract: "O jogo em si não tem uma característica que possa inibir as raparigas de jogar. Há outros jogos de luta e outras modalidades esportivas muito mais agressivas do que isto e que são praticados por raparigas. A única regra que nós tivemos que mudar foi que ao invés de jogar em tronco nu, como eram antes, jogam com uma T-shirt. [...] Normalmente jogam raparigas com raparigas e rapazes com rapazes".



sports, where mixed-gender training appear to be more common (Channon, 2013). Considering this study with the *galhofa*, gender issues can be highlighted as an important topic to be noted in order to promote such activity as a practice which can be played for all, aligned with the LNOB (Leave No One Behind) perspective. This latter consists in a non-discriminative agenda, focusing on reducing inequalities and discriminatory barriers through specific strategies and can be adapted to different fighting practices (Telles, 2020).

Another interesting aspect observed during the interview is that Prof. Bragada has frequently used the term “game” to refer to the *galhofa*. In addition to this feature, the characteristic of a creative and spontaneous fight, as well as played along with others from the same community share similar aspects with Capoeira¹² (Telles, 2018; Telles et al., 2018; Valério & Barreira, 2016a,b). This can be a relevant clue towards comparative research on traditional fighting practices.

Bragada (2004) defines traditional games as “the playful, recreational-cultural activities practiced by children, young people and adults, transmitted over generations fundamentally through orality, observation and imitation”¹³ (p. 8, free translation). They have recently been disappearing due to urbanization processes, the growth of digital media and the globalization of more institutionalized practices. Moreover, Saura and Zimmermann (2021) argue that the scope of TSG (Traditional Sports and Games) can be understood as a way of living time and inhabiting space through a particular mode of practicing. This comprehensive view is anchored not only in a phenomenological approach but also in sustainable actions for promoting dialog among people, considering our corporeality and cultural diversity.

6. Conclusion

As the only surviving traditional Portuguese wrestling style, the *galhofa* can be considered as a very unique fighting practice. However, there are some shared aspects with other martial arts and combat sports, especially those more linked to traditional culture. Under the risk of disappearing, the *galhofa* faces an ongoing sportization process, which includes a less discriminative and more gender equality agenda, along with a systematic organization of techniques and competition procedures. Relevant changes have also been made towards making this practice more popular and widely known, such as establishing it as part of the undergraduate curriculum on the Sports degree taught at the Superior School of Education, Polytechnic Institute of Bragança, Portugal.

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¹² Although Galhofa and Capoeira do not share similar moves or techniques, they both have an important aspect of a playful fight in a communitarian environment.

¹³ Original extract: “as actividades lúdicas, recreativo-culturais praticadas por crianças, jovens e adultos, transmitidas ao longo de gerações fundamentalmente pela oralidade, observação e imitação”.



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Author's biographical data

Thabata Castelo Branco Telles (Brazil) is a postdoc researcher at the University of São Paulo (EEFERP) and the University of Paris (I3SP). She is a Licensed Psychologist in Brazil, Portugal and France, PhD in Psychology



(University of São Paulo - FFCLRP). She is a visiting professor at IESF (CIIDEBE) and currently the vice-president of the Brazilian Association of Sport Psychology (ABRAPESP), 2022-2023. She co-organized the book "Psicologia do Esporte nas Lutas, Artes Marciais e Esportes de Combate" (Sport Psychology in Fighting, Martial Arts and Combat Sports). Her main research interests include an interdisciplinary-oriented approach on human movement through psychology, philosophy, neurosciences, sport and social sciences, focusing on perception-action processes, embodied cognition, martial arts & combat sports. She is also a Brazilian jiu-jitsu practitioner and a karateka (2nd dan).. E-mail: thabata@gmail.com

Bernard Andrieu (France) is a philosopher and Professor at the University of Paris, Leader and Director of the project of URP 3625 I3SP (Institut des Sciences du sport-santé de Paris; 2019-2023). He develops a reflection on the relationship of the living body and the lived body via emersiology (hybridization, immersion, incorporation, prostheses) through the autonomy of the subject in health (story of the sick, touching, self-health), the self-help and the agency of the body in 1st person (handicap, self-narrative, data collection) and also well-being medicines, the philosophy and ethics of sport. He also reflects on the emersive arts (Circus art in collaboration with the CNAC, Immersive devices, Brain-Interface Machine, Orgasme, Vertige, Cosmose dans la nature and Dismose dans la technique). E-mail: bandrieu59@orange.fr

Cristiano Roque Antunes Barreira (Brazil) is a Psychologist, PhD (Psychology) at the University of São Paulo (USP- FFCLRP). He is Professor at the University of São Paulo (USP-FFCLRP/EEFERP) and former Dean of the School of Physical Education and Sports of Ribeirão Preto at the University of São Paulo (USP-EEFERP). He is also former president of the Brazilian Association of Sport Psychology (ABRAPESP), 2017-2019 and he is Special Advisory on ICM-UNESCO (The International Centre of Martial Arts for Youth Development and Engagement). He wrote the book titled "O sentido do karate-do: faces históricas, psicológicas e fenomenológicas (The meaning of karate-do: historical, psychological and phenomenological aspects)", co-organized the book titled "Psicologia do Esporte nas Lutas, Artes Marciais e Esportes de Combate (Sport Psychology in Fighting, Martial Arts and Combat Sports)" and his key research interests include phenomenology (especially Edmund Husserl and Edith Stein), history of psychology, sport & exercise psychology, martial arts & combat sports, corporeity. He is also a karateka (3rd dan). E-mail: crisroba@gmail.com

