

THE OLYMPIC GAMES AS A CULTURAL EVENT

Zvezdan Savić

Faculty of Sport and Physical Education, University of Niš, Niš, Serbia

Submitted in April, 2007

The Olympic Games have become a multi sport event, which entertains not only athletes from different countries, but a world wide audience numbering millions. They therefore exceed any other sports or cultural event when it comes to matters of public interest. Deriving from the initiative of a few countries and a small number of athletes, a historically significant phenomenon of the civilization of today has developed, each time with a designated location, its own competitors, propositions and rules. The Olympic Games represent the ideology of different peoples in one place, the ideology of religions, customs, traditions, languages, or cultures in general. They make mass communication between the contestants and the rest of the world possible. Social, scientific, sports-technical and political evolution has opened up great horizons for sport as a socio-cultural phenomenon, and it has become a common good. Over one hundred and ninety countries take part in the Olympic Games today. Athletes and judges come from various social settings, something which was unimaginable in the day and age from which the Games originate. Yet, what constitutes a landmark of today's Olympic Games is the social communication among the youth of the world within a grandiose event.

There we can see athletic mastery and a coming together of young people without regard to ideology, race and religion. This is what makes the Games the most beautiful and most significant event. The authors of this research paper have tried to give a more detailed explanation of the most important cultural aspects of the Olympic Games and to describe their social context.

Keywords: Game, culture, tradition, religion, customs, the Olympic Games.

INTRODUCTION

The second half of the 20th century was significant for the development of physical education and sport in general. During this time, systematic archaeological studies were widely published not only in Greece, but in other countries of the Mediterranean as well. Many significant monuments of the culture of ancient Greece were discovered. The study of these monuments enabled one to look upon the entire significance and role of physical education in the life of the society of that time. Having recognized this role and its significance, modern society has come to feel the need that physical education take its well deserved place in the life of the community, that is, that physical education be included in the general education and upbringing of youth (according to Kragujević, 1984, 6).

The most perfect creation of the Greek civilization was, no doubt, the Olympic Games (776 BC). In ancient times they succeeded in uniting the Greek polises. The Greeks admired and loved the beautiful appearance of the body, its health and strength. To be healthy is the greatest human value thing to a man – this is what the ancient Greeks thought. The second best thing was to be beautifully in shape, and the third is to enjoy the

wealth one has acquired in an honest fashion (Durant, 1996, 229). The perfection of physical abilities was of great importance for the defense of the country. War in ancient times depended not only on the physical strength and skills of the individual, but also on those of a group of warriors. The ancient Greeks were interested in sport and their favorite athletes were their earthly gods. Therefore, the first organized participation in a sports event as a social event, the onset and early beginnings of professional sport are to be found in ancient Greece, 15 centuries before the Christian era.

The Olympic Games, on a world wide scale, were brought back to life 15 centuries later. When they were resurrected for the first time since ancient times, the Games became an international event playing its role and having its place in the civilization of the 20th century. Today these games represent the greatest celebration of humanity, they are a joyful event, one filled with optimism and peaceful contests, in which the entire world participates. Each fourth year, the human race celebrates and glorifies sport, and the world recognizes the Olympic ideals of culture and peace.

The Olympic Games have become an extraordinary multi sports event, which entertains not only athletes from different countries, but a global audience num-

bering millions. In this manner, they exceed any other sports or cultural event when it comes to public interest. Deriving from the initiative of a few countries and a small number of athletes, a historically significant phenomenon of the civilization of today has developed, each time with its designated location, its own competitors, and with its propositions and rules. The Olympic Games are an event which is of great social importance. They represent the integration of different peoples in one place, a tolerance between various religions, customs, traditions, languages, or cultures in general.

The Games make mass communication between the contestants and the rest of the world possible. Social, scientific, sports-technical and political evolution has opened up wide horizons for sport as a socio-cultural phenomenon, which has become a part of everyday life. Over one hundred and ninety countries take part in the Olympic Games today. Athletes and judges come from various social settings, which was unimaginable in the day and age from which the Games originate. Yet, what is a landmark of today's Olympic Games is the social communication among the youth of the world within a grandiose event. There we can see athletic mastery, a coming together of young people regardless of bad influences (such as politics, marketing, drugs, etc.), and without regard to race and religion. This is what makes the Games the most beautiful and most significant event.

Historical roots

The naked, sculpted bodies of the contestants, the twitching of muscles, the sweat, the excitement and uncertainty, superhuman efforts, strength and sacrifice, and in the end, the entrance into the arena before 30–40,000 viewers who had walked for days in order to cheer for the contestants, were all part of the games which originated from before the start of the Christian era. It was a time when the gods roamed the earth. The winners of the Games would then become immortal, and during their lifetime they would be referred to as divine beings and their bodies sculpted in stone. For each winner, the height of the games would be the moment they placed the laurel of olive branches on his head. The winner's laurel in Olympia was woven out of the branches of a sacred olive which grew in Altise, west of the temple of Zeus.

In ancient times, at the end of the competition, the name of the winner would be spoken out loud, along with the name of his father and the country he was from. Today, the national flags of the winners flutter from the winners' pedestal, national anthems are played and medals awarded along with cash prizes or other privileges. There is a legend which tells the story of a Greek called Hillon who died at the moment his son's name

was spoken and the winner's laurel placed on his head. Today, no one is indifferent or calm when watching the announcement of "their winners". It is precisely that feeling which has kept the spirit of the Olympic Games going for thousands of years (Douskou, 1982).

The first historical evidence that we have of the Olympic Games having taken place dates from 776 BC and the location was Olympia. It was the time of Homer and of constant disputes and wars which ceased every four years in honor of the great Games. The first Games were held in honor of the god Zeus. Olympia at that time was not able to accommodate the thousands of people who would come every four years to see the competition. The Games were the greatest sports event of that time. The ancient Olympic Games were held in mid summer and lasted only 5 days. Among the philosophers who came regularly to see the games we come across the names of Aristotle and Plato. Plato is claimed to have participated and won in the Isthmian games and to have gotten his name based on his involvement in athletics (Plato – the wide). These games had come to life for political reasons. The story closest to the truth is one that speaks of the Spartan king of Licurg and the Elidic king Iffit as their founders. In the desire to prevent frequent wars and destruction in Greece, and at the recommendation of the prophetess Pythias, they dedicated the games to Zeus – the god of gods and ruler of nature (Bart, 1970).

The official history of the Olympic Games started with a race at a distance of one "stadium" (192.27 meters). Running was the dominant discipline at the games. Later, a discipline of five events was introduced (wrestling, running, jumping, discus and javelin), wrestling was introduced as a separate discipline, fist fighting – boxing, the pankration (a combination of wrestling and boxing), running with a weapon, a carriage race and a horse race with racing foals (Vuković, 2001, 16). The beginning of the competition would be declared by messengers and trumpeters. According to legend, they were enormous men whose voices and trumpets could be heard all the way to the sea. Perseverance and stamina, the strength and beauty of each movement were what characterized the competitors in ancient times. The Greeks were well known for their celebration of the beauty and strength of the human body. Great attention was paid to the physical education of their youth. All men, before they became soldiers, had to practice and prepare for battle. The state made arrangements for their physical education. It was practiced in their high schools and Palestras.

The Olympic Games were terminated by the roman emperor Theodosius the first (346–395). He was the one who united the Roman empire but is also remembered for his termination of the Games in 394. The town of Olympia disappeared soon after that as it was destroyed by the Goths. The Olympic Games were brought

back to life 15 centuries later in 1896, thanks to the French baron Pierre de Coubertin.

The game as culture

Within the context of all the happenings related to the Olympic Games, it is clear that they are an integral part of modern sport and of course play a part in a large number of modern day civilizations. This is why they should be viewed also as a social occasion. This is because sport, athletes and all those who are in any way connected to sport, are a part of certain social events and movements. The Olympic Games are an opportunity for athletes from various cultures to gather together every 4 years and to show off their fitness, but also the extent to which they have adjusted to the general movements and sports, economic, cultural and political demands.

The Olympic Games have, no matter whether it's a case of those which had been organized by the ancient Greeks, or those from the new age, always caught the attention of experts from various areas. The **subject matter** of this research is part of the scope of the research conducted by experts from the areas of the social sciences, physical education and sociology. The context of the research is made up of the cultural aspects of the Olympic Games.

The **problem to be resolved** by this research can also be determined based on this kind of assumption; it would refer to the Olympic Games as a historical phenomenon of the civilization of today. The Olympic Games have: an arranged time and place when and where they occur, as well as contestants, propositions and rules. They have been characterized as an event with a strong social context. They are a multicultural event, or rather, a gathering of different people in one place, an integration of religion, customs, traditions, languages, behavior, and therefore an integration of culture in general. The Olympic Games are a cultural phenomenon of our day and age. They are of global proportions, so their multiculturalism can clearly be seen. It is at these Olympic Games that Western and Eastern culture can be seen to merge. Countries with various modes of behavior, countries of different cultural beliefs, different ethnic and language backgrounds, accept the forms and rules of conduct of life and work in the Olympic settlement, in the stadiums and bleachers. At European championships, a smaller number of competing countries and contestants participate, so there are fewer cultures involved there.

Over a longer period of time, during which the new Olympic Games have been taking place with their inevitable ups and downs, they have progressed. This progress has to do with certain social, economic, and political events in the world. Alongside the general development of the Games, sports results have also been improved,

along with the social relations among the groups of contestants in the Olympic Games. These relations are to be viewed within the general cultural and social context of the Games. The results of this research can be used in further multidisciplinary research on a similar topic. Of course, this theoretical analysis can be of great importance even for sport historians, or historians specializing in physical education, as it offers a new perspective on the sociological study of the Olympic Games.

A magnificent multicultural challenge

In ancient Greece, games and various sports competitions were very popular, and the occasions for which to organize them were various: in honor of a king who had died, in honor of someone's return, as part of a festivity, in honor of some divinity, in honor of an alliance, in honor of a military victory or for political reasons. The ancient Greeks wanted, and achieved, the following: to motivate their youth to exercise by means of these games, to entertain people during them, to allow for the growth of philosophical ideas at these gatherings, to let people become familiar with certain agreements existing between states and to achieve a closeness among people (Živanović, 2002, 112, 113).

Sport is a complex social occurrence. Its place in and role it plays in the life of a community are conditioned by material and social development, as much as by the character of the dominant social relations in the spheres of production and division, politics, education, culture, recreation and entertainment. Sport, in its top and mass form, is considered to be an indicator of the material and social development of a community as well as of the development of their ideas. "Sport is a domain of everyday human life offering great possibilities for human essence to emerge and to realize that basic characteristic of its nature. Sport can be the arena of the most magnificent human victories, but also of human defeat and of degradation and dehumanization." (Koković, 1986, 155). That is why today we approach sport in different ways. These include: recreational, educational, mass, amateur, and professional approaches. What characterizes sport at the Olympic Games is the fact that the relations among the contestants and the other participants are at a higher level and are very often put before any victories.

The first few lines of the "ode to sport" by Pierre de Coubertin indicate the significance and glorification of sport: "*Oh, sport, the joy of the Gods, the essence of life*" (Manojlović, 1996, 7). It was still in ancient times that it was determined that sport was much more than a game, entertainment, pastime or recreation. Unlike the ancient games, which were based on religious inspiration and were strictly discriminatory (neither women, nor slaves, nor foreigners, even though only in origin, could partici-

pate), the aim of Pierre de Coubertin with their renewal included a humanist inspiration and pedagogical intent: free access to all men and all women (with a limitation dating from 1908), an explanation of the educational value of sport, and an incentive for good international understanding. Sport today is a significant means of influencing human behavior. It belongs human creations and expresses our primeval need not only to compete with one other, but also to win. He also came up with rules which are adhered to more meticulously on an international level than the rules of any other activity. This kind of sport was the vision of the founder of the new Olympic Games, of the baron Pierre de Coubertin. The Olympic Games as a combination of several sports in one location are the most massive sports spectacle making up an important socio-cultural occurrence in the modern world. They affect our modern way of life, the behavior of people which participate in sport but also those who only watch the Olympic spectacle. The Olympic Games have significantly contributed to the mass popularity of sport and competition on the one hand, and on the other, have contributed to the presence of sport in the mass media, especially when it comes to TV. This has enabled people of all races, classes, ideologies and political views to directly be granted equal rights to participate in sport, to compete, to win, and especially, to be the audience and watch.

“The competition is primarily connected to the game and to culture, but it reaches further than the game” (Božović, 2003, 67). The contestants and the viewers who come from various corners of the world pour into one city in one state, getting to know its culture, customs and way of life. At the same time they bring with them the national characteristics and cultural habits and customs of their country. The meeting of various countries, cultures, languages, customs, religions, and traditions in one place is a clear indicator of the multicultural nature of the Olympic Games. Everyone comes there with the same aim: to compete as champions, honestly, for the glory of sport and for the honor of their teams (these words are taken from the Olympic pledge), to win, to support their athletes, to get to know the sports achievements of other people and the customs and culture of their host country. This unity on a global scale is characteristic only of the Olympic Games.

At the Olympic Games both Western and Eastern cultures coexist, even though there are theorists who consider it impossible to create multiculturalism in our modern society. Countries with different forms of human behavior, cultural beliefs, and ethnic and language backgrounds accept the forms and rules of conduct of life and work in the Olympic settlement, its stadiums and bleachers. In some western countries we find examples of communal living involving several peoples in one country, that is, a cultural mix but not in the form

of life and work as is the case with the participants of the Olympic Games. Every culture has its own unique patterns of behavior, which seem foreign to people of other cultural milieus (Giddens, 2003, 27). This is not the case with the Olympic Games. The collective performance at the opening is a true form of multicultural life. In their national uniforms, together, they strive to a united goal, victory and fame at the Games. All the participants, by means of the competitions, take part in the life of the Olympic settlement, and spontaneously get to know each other and other cultures.

The Olympic Games represent an irreplaceable moment in which the unity of thought and emotion of people is achieved. Today they rely on democratic ideals and internationalism, which in fact represent the foundations of a new social system, which cannot be said about everyday life. The international Olympic Committee is without a doubt the first international organization of modern times.

No other sports event, be it even the World Championship in soccer, creates such strong feelings in the viewers. Enthralled by the results, the audience stands up and shouts, prays, cries, the viewers contradict one another and clash (Bulogn, 1984, 5).

To be a participant in the modern Olympic Games means to belong to an international elite – a sports elite of the best. Each athlete in the Olympic Games is influenced by the culture of the country he comes from and whose national colors he is defending. It is still the case today that the Games represent a call to establish peace among all peoples by means of sports challenges, competitions at which racial, religious and cultural differences will be respected and tolerated, along with the differences in the political regimes of the countries that the contestants come from. Olympianism still leans towards establishing a global community (even if it lasts for only half a month), during which time the rules of honest competition and life will dominate.

Even though it is often thought of in a negative way, having been both historically and socially degraded, the Olympics have withstood the test of time. While they could never be torn from the roots of social and political events, what makes them lasting and faithful to civilization are their cultural aspirations. One of the principles of the Olympiad speaks of the attempt of Olympianism to create a way of life by uniting sport and culture and education.

This method is based on the pleasure which can be found in physical strain and the educational value of a good example and the respect of basic principles. The aim of Olympianism is for sport to exist everywhere, so that it can serve the harmonious development of individuals and society.

The cultural framework of the Olympic Games is obvious. In that way we can define culture as the total-

ity of our existence and manifestation. Culture refers to the way of life of the members of a society, or groups within a society.

It includes the manner in which people dress, their marriage customs, family life, the way they work and create, their religious services, free time, etc. "The culture of a society encompasses both non material aspects – beliefs, ideas and values which make the content of a culture, as well as material aspects – objects, symbols or technology by means of which the cultural content is expressed" (Giddens, 2003, 24). Multiculturalism as the combination of cultures of equal status, achieves its full realization precisely at the Olympic Games. The contemporary thinking of anthropologists of sport speaks in favor of sport being viewed as a social phenomenon in contemporary science, and of the human being being viewed as a bio-psycho-socio-cultural phenomenon (Koković, 2000).

CONCLUSION

Sport is part of the social structure and should not be seen as an isolated phenomenon. It is closely connected to culture, art, politics and also religion. Sport today meets the demands of various cultures, and itself enriches the cultural image of the world. It carries in itself some of the characteristics of a game. Of a game itself we primarily say that it is a freely and a voluntarily chosen activity, which is at the same time pleasant entertainment, and has its rules just like the Olympic Games. Games, including the Olympic ones, have been an integral part of culture and all human activities throughout history. The game as such has in fact been an integral part of all civilizations up to date, as well as an important factor in the lives of people, it has been the subject of thought and study of some of the wisest people. It is not only important for us, it is unavoidably our essential need. "Empires and kingdoms were made, lasted and disappeared and games have always existed and have remained the only lasting occurrence, as an inseparable part of human life" (Pavlović, 2002, 5).

The Olympic Games in a way represent the foundation of human existence, as they are not isolated occurrences, but are open and in constant development. The Olympic Games have the following cultural characteristics: they were chosen freely and within them there are certain rules which guide the game and which must be respected. They have a cultural norm because they have their own place, time, rules and propositions, and no game can last indefinitely. Only certain examples from the history of Rome are known where the games, in the interest of the emperor Marcus Aurelius, lasted for 135 days a year. These Games were a very important political device for gaining the approval of a large

number of people. This was not only the case with the Olympic Games.

The tradition of the Olympic Games for the winner to be rewarded has been kept alive to this day, but in a somewhat altered form. Today those prizes are much greater, along with the acclaims and privileges awarded to Olympic winners. It is for those awards and acclaims that during the course of training some people turn to illegal stimulants in order to achieve these aims, which is a negative side effect of today's games. The Olympic Games today are connected to large amounts of money and large transactions, which has caused the involvement and interest of an increasingly larger number of people outside the sport area (politicians, managers) in this lucrative and profitable cultural branch, as sport has turned into big business today. "Sport events and competitions are becoming 'richer' in ideas (*idée fixe*) originating from people who are outside the sport arena" (Božilović, 2003, 98).

To be a participant in the Olympic Games means to belong to an international elite – *the sports elite consisting of the best*. Each contestant comes from a certain social group, becoming a star which attracts the public. Having the appearance of an idol thanks to marketing and the media, he/she becomes a promoter of world fashion lines. In that way athletes become popular figures in videos, advertisements, various humanitarian activities, and promotions. Thus, they create an image of unreachable authority. Athletes from Serbia who take part in the Olympics have so far been more successful in collective sports (basketball, handball, volleyball and water polo) than in individual events, even though we have had an Olympic winner in one of these events (archery). They represent the culture of the society they come from, including ethnic characteristics and the idiosyncrasies of their mentality. The feature they have in common is that they are young people with positive attitudes toward sport, they spend a lot of their time in training, they are ready for great victories, and for these they give to the maximum of their abilities. Their social backgrounds differ. Mostly they come from urban sports areas, which are at the same time the centers of sports in which they participate either as individuals or on a group basis. These settings allow them to achieve top results. They come from families of various educational profiles, where one of the parents or close relatives actively participated in sport. Their family functions as a factor motivating them to achieve the best results they can (Savić, 1994, 84).

But today, there is a whole other side to participating in the Olympics. It is an ugly and difficult one, it chastises and warns of the possibility that these Games that involve the human body and spirit can turn into a means of bullying and demeaning. This is due to the fact that besides the economic, there is a strong pres-

ence of political and ideological aspects. It seems that the Olympic Games of today have somewhat changed their original ethic guidelines (*Mens sana in corpore sano*), which was promoted by their founder Pierre de Coubertin. It is obviously a case of “stepping in the wrong direction”, as sport is gaining the tendency to turn into a cult characteristic of only one form of culture (Božilović, 2002, 97). The cited conclusions speak in favor of the necessity for suggesting new criteria for the organization of the Olympic Games. One of them is for the Games to constantly be held in their homeland of Olympia. It would be a new step towards possible peace in the ever increasingly divided world.

In the context of faith and religion it is necessary to point out the religious practices of the ancient Greeks, who held the ancient Olympic Games in honor of Zeus, the God of all Gods. The games were originally dominated by religious contents, but over time the sports competitions became increasingly popular, so that more days were set aside for them during the games. The ancient Greeks made human beings – athletes mystical by assigning them divine significance. The best athletes were given a religious, mythological character. Thanks to the Olympic Games, the culture of ancient Greece rose to unimaginable heights, rose to that extent that it was built into the foundations of modern European culture (Živanović, 1992, 103).

Pierre de Coubertin was convinced that to bring people together necessitated a greater familiarity among them (Manojlović, 1996, 41). One such opportunity was offered by the Olympic Games. As the greatest event of today, they have been characterized as a gathering of several nations of different languages in one place at one specific time. Language represents the basic means of communication among people. It is the cultural heritage of each nation. The Olympic Games are a combination of various people and their languages. During the Games, at one time ancient Greek was used, and today we use English as the official language of all the athletes, judges, coaches, the press and all the other people involved. It is only the audience that uses its own language and in that way points out its nation and culture. Between the audience and the competitors a relation exists which is full of tension, but of expectation as well. The audience, by cheering, fulfills its ancient need to belong to its own nation. The audience out there in the stands forgets for a moment the real world, the world full of crises, wars, floods, violence, illnesses and poverty. Together they represent a single unit which is characteristic of large cities, large sports events, and therefore the Olympic Games. This specific group of people in one place can serve to help us understand our modern society. That mass of people at the Olympic Games represents a large number of common interests which mutually affect each other; they have

a sense of belonging to each other and of participating in a common activity. The voluntary gathering of large groups of people where a direct contact among individuals lead to a sense of identification and community, is the characteristics of various sports events, including the Olympic Games (Adorno et al, 1980, 62).

Today, over one hundred and ninety countries take part in the Olympic Games. Athletes and judges come from various social settings, something which was unimaginable in the day and age from which the Games originate. Yet, the social communication among the youth of the world within a grandiose event constitutes a landmark of today's Olympic Games. There we can see athletic mastery and a coming together of young people without regards to ideology, race and religion. After such a long period of time, they now serve to spread the idea of peace among men and nations. Yet, this humane idea is often neglected in this day and age, and the Games serve some other ideas of greater or smaller ethnic groups.

An important characteristic of both ancient and modern Olympianism is the fact that athletes celebrate their nation, their race, their flag and anthem. The Olympic Games in relation to their traditional and contemporary nature have been and will continue to be a challenge to all the nations of the world. There is enough dynamics and faith in them to let us join those who claim: “If there were no games, they should be invented” (Žvan, 1983, 116). All our modern day athletes should participate in the Olympic Games, like in ancient times, without weapons, in order to use “the weapons of sport” to fight for world peace. The idea of the human race elevating itself by means of sports competitions and the glory in honor of the human race still needs more work. Because, people and their needs to compete and prove themselves in sport surpass state borders, and the idea of peace and harmony among people exceeds all the meridians of the world.

REFERENCES

- Adorno, T., & Horkheimer, M. (1980). *Sociological studies*. Belgrade: The School Book.
- Bart, V. (1970). *Life in the ancient world*. Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga.
- Božilović, N. (1998). *The sociology of culture - prolegomena*. Niš: Prosveta.
- Božilović, N. (2002). *Kitch: A study of the human being and pseudoculture*. Niš: Zoograph.
- Božović, P. (2003). U traganju za dokolicom. In *Pursuit of leisure*. Podgorica: NPP “Victory” Podgorica.
- Bulogn, P. I. (1984). *The Olympic spirit of Pierre de Coubertin*. Belgrade: The People's Book.
- Douskou, I. (1982). *The Olympic Games in ancient Greece*. Athena: Ekdotike Athenon S. A.

- Durant, V. (1996). *The life of Greece*. Belgrade: The People's Book.
- Giddens, E. (2003). *Sociology*. Belgrade: The Faculty of Economics in Belgrade.
- Koković, D. (1986). *Sport without games*. Belgrade: PPO Titograd.
- Koković, D. (2000). *Social anthropology*. Belgrade: The High School of Basketball.
- Kragujević, B. (1984). *From the Olympic battle fields*. Belgrade.
- Manojlović, P. (1996). *Pierre de Coubertin: His ideas, work, and life*. Belgrade: The Yugoslav Pierre de Coubertin Committee.
- Pavlović, P. (2002). *Prilog egzegezi igre*. Serbian Sarajevo: The Knightly Organization the Serbian Hawk.
- Savić, Z. (1994). *A comparative study of some socio-psychological characteristics of female volleyball players of the First Federation League and the United Serbian League*. Novi Sad: The Faculty of Physical Education.
- Vuković, R. (2001). *Forerunners, organizers, contestants and guests at the Olympic Games in Athens in 1896*. Belgrade: "Logos" Totovo village.
- Živanović, N. (1992). *The ups and downs of sport*. Paraćin: Vuk Karadžić.
- Živanović, N. (2002). *Prilog epistemologiji fizičke culture* (2nd ed.). Niš: Panopticum.
- Žvan, M. (1983). *Olympianism and Olympic ideas*. Belgrade: Ideas.

**OLYMPIJSKÉ HRY
JAKO KULTURNÍ UDÁLOST**
(Souhrn anglického textu)

Olympijské hry se staly událostí zahrnující mnoho sportů, která zaměstnává nejen sportovce z různých zemí, ale také milióny diváků z celého světa. Z hlediska veřejného zájmu tedy převyšují jakoukoliv jinou sportovní nebo kulturní událost. Z iniciativy několika málo zemí a malého počtu sportovců se vyvinul historický fenomén dnešní civilizace, odehrávající se na určeném

místě, s vlastními soutěžícími, nabídkou a pravidly. Olympijské hry vyjadřují ideologii různých národů na jediném místě, ideologii náboženství, zvyků, tradic, jazyků nebo obecně kultur. Probíhá při nich masová komunikace mezi soutěžícími a zbytkem celého světa. Sociální, vědecký, sportovně-technický a politický vývoj otevřel sportu jako sociálně-kulturnímu jevu široké obzory a sport se stal obecně prospěšným. Olympijských her se dnes účastní více než sto devadesát zemí. Sportovci a rozhodčí pocházejí z různých sociálních prostředí, což bylo v době, ve které hry vznikly, něco nepředstavitelného. Přesto je sociální komunikace mezi mladými lidmi celého světa v rámci této grandiózní události významným prvkem dnešních olympijských her. Můžeme při nich sledovat mistrovské sportovní výkony i setkávání mladých lidí bez ohledu na ideologii, rasu a náboženství. Právě to činí hry mimořádně krásnými a významnými. Autoři výzkumu se snažili podat podrobnější vysvětlení důležitých kulturních aspektů olympijských her a ukázat jejich sociální kontext.

Klíčová slova: hra, kultura, tradice, náboženství, zvyky, olympijské hry.

Ph.D. Zvezdan Savić



University of Niš
Faculty of Sport
and Physical Education
Univerzitski trg. 2
18 000 Niš
Serbia

Education and previous work experience

Professor of the history of sport at the Faculty of Sport and Physical Education, University of Niš; coach in the volleyball club "AS" Niš.

Scientific orientation

Research activities are focused on the history of sport and PE.
