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Endangered Species of the Physical Cultural Landscape: Globalization, Nationalism, and Safeguarding Traditional Folk Games

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in Kinesiology

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Abstract

Folk sports are the countertype of modern sports: invented traditions, bolstered by tangible ritual and intangible myth, played by the common folk in order to express a romantic ethnic identity. Like other cultural forms, traditional sports and games around the world are becoming marginalized in the face of modernization and globalization. In 2003, UNESCO ratified the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in an attempt to counter such trends of cultural homogenization. As elements of intangible cultural heritage, folk sports now fall under the auspices of UNESCO safeguarding policies. As such, the objective of this study was to understand the reactions of UNESCO and national agencies to the folk sport revival movement and, conversely, to understand the effects of supranational safeguarding policies on the marginalization of folk sport.

Through the lens of globalization theory, the primary research methodology employed was a comparative case study analysis of four UNESCO-safeguarded folk sports (Turkish oil wrestling, Brazilian *capoeira*, Kyrgyz *kok boru*, and Irish hurling). The selection of the case studies was based on geography, sport type, safeguarding mechanisms, type of nationalism, and marginality. Henning Eichberg's folk sport modernization outcomes of sportification, pedagogization, and folklorization figured prominently throughout the cases, along with two newly-proposed methods: retraditionalization and nationalization.

Upon examination of the four case studies, it became clear that the nomination of local folk sports to the UNESCO Representative List was dictated by touristic and nationalistic

motivations, rather than cultural safeguarding ones. Although it was not evident that UNESCO heritagization had a direct affect on the practice, status, and meaning of folk sports, there was an affect on the relationship between folk sport preservation and nation-building narratives: External nationalists vie for global recognition through 'UNESCO status'; folk sport (also termed ethnosport) remains a symbol of ethnonational identity; and cultural nationalists seek to bolster national unity through shared cultural traditions, such as the adoption of national folk sports. By mobilizing knowledge across a spectrum of academic disciplines, this study provides a renewed perspective to the notion of intangible cultural heritage and folk sporting traditions in our increasingly homogeneous global village.

Keywords: traditional folk games; cultural homogenization; globalization; UNESCO; intangible cultural heritage; nationalism; oil wrestling; capoeira; kok boru; hurling

Summary for Lay Audiences

Folk sports are local, ethnic, traditional games, such as French *pétanque*, Japanese kendo, or coconut tree climbing races in Polynesia. In the twenty-first century, such games feature very little in our everyday lives. The effects of globalization and modernization have marginalized a vast diversity of games the world over. Today, people are more interested in the spectacle of the Olympic Games and professional sports than in the precursors to the modern sport-entertainment business. The UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, however, is a global instrument that's objectives are to preserve such cultural traditions. Intangible cultural heritage (ICH) can be defined as those aspects of a community's culture intrinsic to its identity and uniqueness, and folk sports fall within this label. As such, for the last decade, over thirty folk sports have been inscribed in the UNESCO ICH Representative List.

The aims of this dissertation are to analyze the effects of UNESCO's universal safeguarding policies on the local contexts at which they are aimed, understand why and how folk games are being marginalized (and whether it even matters), and to study the relationship between folk sport preservation and nationalism. The primary methodology used to frame these objectives is a case study comparison. Four UNESCO-recognized folk sports (Turkish oil wrestling, Brazilian *capoeira*, Kyrgyz *kok boru*, and Irish hurling) were selected based on the following criteria: geography, sport type, safeguarding mechanisms, marginality, and type of nationalism exhibited.

A common theme across all the case studies was that UNESCO nomination was generally motivated by tourism and nationalism, rather than by conservationism. For instance, external nationalists vie for global recognition through 'UNESCO status,' folk sport (also termed ethnosport) remains a symbol of ethnonational identity, and cultural nationalists seek to bolster national unity through shared cultural traditions, such as the adoption of national folk sports. Although it was not evident that UNESCO heritagization had a direct affect on the practice, status, and meaning of folk sports, there was an affect on the relationship between folk sport preservation and the nation-building process.

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Introduction

*We may depend upon it that the great world-game of evolution is not played only by pawns moving straight on, one square before another, but that long-stretching moves of pieces in all directions bring on new situations, not readily foreseen by minds that find it hard to see six moves ahead upon a chessboard.*¹

Like other local cultural forms, folk games around the world are losing the struggle for relevancy in today's increasingly homogeneous global village. The creeping globalization of macro sporting institutions, epitomized by the modern Olympic Movement, mark a significant shift in the recent history of physical culture. Diverse cultural groups are becoming engulfed by this global phenomenon, as nations are capitalizing on the geopolitical and economic value of joining the Olympic 'family' and its tentacles of global sport forms. This process leaves folk sports and other forms of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) by the wayside. An important concept throughout this dissertation, ICH can be defined as "all immaterial elements that are considered by a given community as essential components of its intrinsic identity as well as of its uniqueness and distinctiveness in comparison with all other human groups."² And, as argued by Jorijn Neyrinck, director of the Intangible Heritage Workshop in Flanders, "globalisation and social transformation often create situations in which ICH declines or disappears, given that there is a lack of resistance and means of help that can protect and strengthen ICH in these circumstances."³ There have been few organizations to date that have

¹ E.B. Tylor, "The History of Games," in *The Study of Games*, eds. Elliott M. Avedon and Brian Sutton-Smith (New York: Wiley, 1971), 76.

² Federico Lenzerini, "Intangible Cultural Heritage: The Living Culture of Peoples," *European Journal of International Law* 22, no .1 (2011): 102.

³ Jorijn Neyrinck, "Intangible Cultural Heritage in Times of 'Superdiversity': Exploring Ways of Transformation," *International Journal of Intangible Heritage* 12 (2017): 159.

attempted to curb this tendency towards homogeneity and preserve the practice and cultural heritage aspects of folk sporting traditions. In 2003, however, the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage was adopted by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in an effort to preserve such immaterial cultural icons. About thirty folk sports have appeared on the Convention's Representative List (of over 500 items) in the last decade. The trickle-down effects of the policies devised by this supranational organization have had slow, but sustained, application amongst non-governmental organizations, state sport authorities, local traditional games groups, and the general public. The aim of this dissertation is to analyze the effects of the UNESCO Convention's safeguarding policies on the practice and marginalization of folk sports in order to better understand the relationship between the quest to preserve folk sports and the dynamics of nation-building.

As the central locus of this study, folk sports (or traditional games), require a brief introductory definition. The German *Volk* translates to folk or people, hence the people's games. As defined by Scottish sport historian Grant Jarvie, sporting traditions are sets of social practices "that seek to celebrate and inculcate certain behavioral norms and values, implying continuity with a real or imagined past and usually associated with widely accepted rituals or other forms of symbolic behavior."⁴ Interchangeable with the term *traditional games*, in contrast to modern sports, folk sports are those games that preceded, and continue to abate, the global

⁴ Grant Jarvie and James Thornton, *Sport, Culture and Society: An Introduction*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2012), 59.

hegemony of the modern Olympic sporting system. That is not to say, however, that traditional games have not been modernized – like sumo wrestling, *sepak takraw* in Southeast Asia, or Argentine *pato* – to appeal to the modern sports fan.⁵ In fact, my argumentation throughout this study supposes a marginality based on a de-authentication of meaning, be it via the modernization of traditional games, cultural stagnation or museumification, or assimilation into the dominant culture's sporting pastimes. Nevertheless, folk sports connote a romanticized, timeless, rural past, typically local or regional in nature, and practiced by the few, not the many. Games like *kabaddi* and *dandi biyo*, popular within the Asian subcontinent, date back to some of the first civilized settlements. Other folk pursuits like throwing games, wrestling, and equine sports, are also ancient forms of physical culture. Although they can be institutionalized or develop an international appeal, a certain aura of traditional values remains, such as communitarianism and cultural expression. Additionally, traditional games are grounded in folklore, mythology, and mysticism of the past. From a cultural standpoint, folk games have crucial historical significance as a key to understanding our contemporary obsession with the sports pages, celebrity athletes, and the Olympic televisual spectacle. However, this inherent traditionalism and opposition to modernity over the last two centuries has brought many of them closer to the brink of cultural extinction.

Folk sport revivalists – a small group of interested scholars and practitioners – propose safeguarding traditional games through sportification (modernizing and bureaucratizing),

⁵ Allen Guttman, *From Ritual to Record: The Nature of Modern Sports* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978).

folklorization (preservation and representation), and pedagogization (inclusion in physical education curricula).⁶ Many of their efforts were aimed at UNESCO in the lead-up to the 2003 ICH Convention. This study contextualizes, analyzes, and forecasts the Convention's policies in relation to folk sports. As addressed in the literature review below, there has been limited scholarship on folk sport as intangible cultural heritage, folk sport in the UNESCO apparatus, and the marginalization of folk sporting traditions. The following sections elaborate on this project's research aims, questions, and design, as well as the theoretical framework, literature review, and chapter breakdown. The research methodology employed is a case study analysis and the theoretical framework is informed by globalization theory, "which indicates that interventions of international organizations have in fact been shaping the lives of individuals everywhere in the world."⁷ In general, though, the aim of this introductory chapter is to identify what new knowledge this dissertation brings about, what gaps in the literature it hopes to fill, and what relevancy it has in both heritage and sport studies.

Research Objectives

The core of this dissertation project centers around the marginalization of folk sport. First off, why should the public care? Why, indeed, are folk sports important to preserve? To answer this, one can simply substitute the term *cultural heritage* for *folk sport* to gain a better

⁶ Henning Eichberg, "A Revolution of Body Culture? Traditional Games on the Way from Modernisation to 'Postmodernity,'" in *Les Jeux Populaires: Eclipse et Renaissance*, eds. Jean-Jacques Barreau and Guy Jaouen (Rennes, FR: Institut Culturel de Bretagne, 1991), 189-213.

⁷ Poul Duedahl, "Out of the House: On the Global History of UNESCO, 1945-2015," in *A History of UNESCO: Global Actions and Impacts*, ed. Poul Duedahl (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 8.

understanding of sport's meaning in comprehensive discussions about culture, heritage, and society. For instance, the following depiction of cultural deterioration, provided by former UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage Section Chief Rieks Smeets, can be used instead to reference the marginalization of folk sports: "Elements of intangible cultural heritage [or folk sports] are disappearing or deteriorating at an increasing pace due to a variety of causes, all contributing to such mutually reinforcing effects as impaired intergenerational transmission, low esteem among many communities of their own heritage, and erosion of form and function of intangible cultural heritage."⁸ The fact is, folk sport, global sport, and physical culture as a whole, fall within the cultural heritage of any given group of people. Sport is an important, yet understudied, aspect of modern societies, "a globalized phenomenon, which is part of our ubiquitous and inescapable zeitgeist."⁹ Yet, sport, from a humanities and social sciences perspective, remains a relatively underappreciated topic of study. Given the widespread social, political, economic, ethical, and biological implications of sport adherence (participation, spectatorship, and acceptance) around the world, "to ignore... its importance within our historic and contemporary societies, or to marginalize its many varied functions, is to be blinkered, naïve and selective."¹⁰ Moreover, if ethno-cultural lobbyists and heritage conservationists are scrambling to preserve the dignity and history of other forms of intangible

⁸ Rieks Smeets, "Globalization and the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage," in *Globalization and Intangible Cultural Heritage*, ed. Laura Wong (Paris: UNESCO, 2005), 44.

⁹ Andrei S. Markovits and Lars Rensmann, *Gaming the World: How Sports are Reshaping Global Politics and Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 10.

¹⁰ Mike Cronin, *Sport and Nationalism in Ireland: Gaelic Games, Soccer and Irish Identity since 1884* (Dublin: Four Courts, 1999), 49.

cultural heritage (like dance, cuisine, handicraft, etc.), then folk games, laden with communitarian rituals and historic appeal, also deserve broader attention. In sum, sport as a global phenomenon deserves scholarly attention, and folk sport as an aspect of cultural heritage deserves proper recognition and safeguarding.

As the underlying premise of this dissertation is the marginalization of traditional games, a further definition of the term *marginalization* is required. For our purposes, marginality refers to the systemic exclusion of local traditional games in the public leisure space due to the monopolizing appeal of popular global (Olympic) sporting pastimes.¹¹ As explained in Chapter III, based on folk sport historian Roland Renson's reinterpretation of popular geographer Jared Diamond's reasons for the endangerment of species, I refer to the reasons for folk sport marginality as the Diamond-Renson Model.¹² I propose that marginality can manifest itself in the following four ways: (1) The diffusion of more popular global sports; (2) the urbanization of former rural practitioners of traditional games; (3) social momentum to modernize and, therefore, de-authenticate (lose cultural meaning of) folk sports; or (3) the condescending labels of 'uncivilized,' 'weird,' or 'backwards' applied to non-Western folk sporting traditions. Writing about such phenomena, social anthropologist Thomas Hylland Eriksen noted that "the dominance of football in many parts of the world has led to the relative

¹¹ While other comparisons exist (e.g. NFL, NBA, FIFA, etc.), I have chosen to reference the marginality of traditional games in comparison to the Olympic Movement, the ultimate aim of the modernization of traditional games.

¹² Refer to Chapter III; Roland Renson, "Ludodiversity: Extinction, Survival and Invention of Movement Culture," in *Games of the Past: Sports of the Future?*, ed. Gertrud Pfister (Sankt Augustin, DE: Academia-Verlag, 2004), 17-22; and Jared Diamond, *The Third Chimpanzee: The Evolution and Future of the Human Animal* (New York: HarperCollins, 1992).

marginalization of other... often traditional sports with less transnational appeal, glamour and economic might.”¹³ This is not to say, of course, that local folk games necessitate international attention, but they are affected by globalization nonetheless. Without modernizing to fit global standards, the local norms associated with games like *pétanque* (France), *tejo* (Colombia), or Basotho horse-racing (Lesotho) begin to lose their cultural relevancy. It is rare for sporting occasions like the Highland Games (Scotland, and amongst the Scottish diaspora), *Calcio Storico Fiorentino* (Italy), or Eastertide *lelo* (Georgia) to maintain their authentic traditions and rituals in the context of modern, popular spectatorship. At the national level, marginalized traditional cultures can be characterized as fragile, disappearing, or neglected.¹⁴ Historian George Mosse posited that nationalism rested on the marginalization of countertypes that “reflected, as in a convex mirror, the reverse of the social norm.”¹⁵ In this sense, folk games can be framed as ‘countertypical’ to modern sports. Indeed, if society is progressing towards the modern, then that which is traditional becomes waylaid in the margins.

Subsequently, this next question more intrinsically considers the research objective of this study: What is being done to quell this trend of marginalization? At the local level, folk sport revivalists and physical educators (with a traditional games agenda), in diverse social and

¹³ Thomas Hylland Eriksen, “Steps to an Ecology of Transnational Sports,” in *Globalization and Sport*, eds. Richard Giulianotti and Roland Robertson (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), 48.

¹⁴ Anthony Seeger, “Summary Report on the Regional Seminars,” in *Safeguarding Traditional Cultures: A Global Assessment*, ed. Peter Seitel (Washington, D.C.: Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage, Smithsonian Institution, 2001), 36-41.

¹⁵ George L. Mosse, *The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 56.

political contexts around the world, see the merits in teaching human cultural history through sport. In addition, ethnonationalists play an important role in the politicization and revival of folk sports, which are considered to engender a somatic ethnic identity. At an academic level, revivalists have been organizing (e.g. the European Traditional Sports and Games Association) and translating local concerns into global strategies. This *glocal* theme in folk sport studies has resulted in lobbying for greater awareness (within institutions like UNESCO) and working with national agents to create localized sport policies, like the 2011 *Motion to the European Parliament for a Resolution on the European Dimension of Sport*.¹⁶ At the national level, by adopting folk games, as opposed to introducing global games (like soccer or basketball), as national sports, some governments are raising the profile of marginalized sport forms to the symbolic status of national sport. Such cultural nationalist politicians maintain the symbolic significance of national heritage and tend to “react to globalization processes by wilfully clinging tighter to the mythology, nostalgia, and tradition which underpin [national] identity.”¹⁷ Finally, at the global level, state parties (national member delegates) in the UNESCO framework adopted the 1978 *International Charter of Physical Education, Physical Activity and Sport*, ratified the 2003 Convention, and developed a Physical Education and Sport Programme in order to work with national sport authorities to legislate, transmit, and preserve regional folk sporting traditions

¹⁶ European Parliament, Committee on Culture and Education, “Report on the European Dimension of Sport,” A7-0385/2011 (2011).

¹⁷ Joseph Maguire and Jason Tuck, “Global Sports and Patriot Games: Rugby Union and National Identity in a United Sporting Kingdom since 1945,” in *Sporting Nationalisms: Identity, Ethnicity, Immigration and Assimilation*, eds. Mike Cronin and David Mayal (London: Frank Cass, 1998), 110.

for the engagement of future generations. However, one of the primary criticisms of UNESCO is that it is nearly impossible to untether discussions regarding global concerns from external national interests.¹⁸ Based on the local, national, and global perspectives regarding safeguarding, the key substantiation is the relationship between folk sport preservation and the nation-building process – ethnonationalist cultural resistance, cultural nationalist heritagization, or external nationalist global negotiation.

My primary objective is to understand the reactions of UNESCO and national agencies to the folk sport revival movement and, conversely, to understand the effects of supranational safeguarding policies on the marginalization of folk sport. There are two trends situating folk sport within intangible cultural heritage discourse that this dissertation reviews, analyzes, and critiques. First, the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage has, through its official Representative List, identified certain folk sports in need of safeguarding and promotion. Examples of these ‘representative’ folk sports include *chidaoba* wrestling in Georgia, *taekkyon* martial art in South Korea, *tahteeb* stick fighting in Egypt, and *charrería* rodeo in Mexico. The Convention’s safeguarding measures are aimed at fostering transmission of, ensuring access to, and establishing documentation for intangible cultural heritage. As noted on the UNESCO website, “safeguarding ICH means ensuring its viability

¹⁸ William L. Miller, Stephen White, and Paul Heywood, “External and Internal Nationalism,” in *Values and Political Change in Postcommunist Europe* (London: Macmillan, 1998), 124-39

among today's generations and its continued transmission to tomorrow's."¹⁹ Through educational programmes and inventorying intangible heritage, UNESCO makes efforts to assist state agencies in the safeguarding of folk sports. The second trend has to do with the aforementioned adoption of national sports, an understudied and relatively unknown process of national symbol creation. What is significant about this trend is that roughly 25% of national sports around the world are traditional games, as opposed to global sports.²⁰ Indeed, there is a common theme within these two trends – UNESCO-recognized folk sports and the adoption of national folk sports – one which addresses the systematic marginalization of folk games around the world. In an effort to understand whether the former affects the latter, this study proposes that, in some cases, folk sports are preserved for the purposes of nation-building. Based on the literature and UNESCO archival materials, it seems that the concept of intangible cultural heritage is gaining traction and, in some cases, is ultimately appropriated by state sport departments for the purposes of national unity and symbolism. Therefore, national sport authorities are increasingly identifying and safeguarding folk games in tandem with the growing understanding of the relevance of intangible cultural heritage, the lobbying efforts of folk sport revivalist groups, and the international recognition of these sporting forms by the 2003 UNESCO Convention. In this regard, UNESCO heritagization is simply one factor in the

¹⁹ "Transmission," Intangible Cultural Heritage (website), UNESCO, accessed November 13, 2018, <https://ich.unesco.org/en/transmission-00078>.

²⁰ Refer to Appendix III for a partial list of national sports.

national safeguarding of folk games, situating the motivation and act of preservation, itself, within the purview of nationalist agents.

Research Questions

The primary (thesis) question of this research study is as follows:

Has the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage affected the practice, status, and meaning of folk sports?

As subcomponents of this thesis question, the secondary research questions of this study are:

1. What is the intention behind UNESCO's ICH Convention? What are the political, economic, and cultural implications of state actors or agencies employing UNESCO ICH policy for sport nationalistic purposes?
2. What are the goals and motives behind the preservation of folk sports? What has been the role of folk sport revivalist groups in the application of ICH policy?
3. Why are governments adopting folk games as national sports? Is nationalization consistent with UNESCO's internationalist mandate? What is the relationship between folk sport preservation and nationalism?

Literature Review

There has been limited scholarly examination of the link between the UNESCO ICH Convention and folk sports. In addition, to further distinguish this dissertation from other works, there has been limited scholarship on sport as an aspect of ICH. Lastly, the marginalization of folk sport has received some scholarly attention, but scarcely enough to

compile a formative monograph dedicated to the topic. Based on the research questions and theoretical framework, this project reviews literature on three fronts: (1) The UNESCO-folk sport connection; (2) the marginalization of folk sport; and (3) intangible cultural heritage.

There are few scholars that have broached the subject, even peripherally, of folk sporting cultures. Those that have, including Jean-Jacques Barreau, Henning Eichberg, Guy Jaouen, Pere Lavega Burgués, Pierre Parlebas, Roland Renson, and Brian Sutton-Smith, unequivocally maintain that folk sports are integral to society's cultural heritage.²¹ These traditional games scholars provide unique perspectives into the grassroots folk sport revival movement, but beyond this scholarship there are few sources that review folk sport in relation to the UNESCO institutional framework. In support of the above UNESCO-folk sport nexus, the underlying theme of this dissertation supposes the marginalization of folk sport. The most noteworthy authors in defense of folk sport revival are Roland Renson and Henning Eichberg, who argued that "the issue of traditional games as bound into national or cultural identity in sports is simply restricted to 'marginal' or 'traditional' peoples."²² Through a number of articles and essays, Eichberg has been an influential actor in the rise to prominence of the notion of body culture, based on preeminent French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's concept of *habitus*.²³ Social

²¹ Brian Sutton-Smith, *The Folkgames of Children* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1972); Jean Jacques Barreau and Guy Jaouen, eds., *Les Jeux Populaires: Eclipse et Renaissance [Popular Games: Eclipse and Revival]* (Rennes, FR: Institut Culturel de Bretagne, 1991); Pere Lavega Burgués, ed., *Traditional Games and Society in Europe* (self-pub., ETSGA, 2006); Pierre Parlebas, *Jeux Traditionnels, Sports et Patrimoine Culturel: Cultures et Education* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2016).

²² Eichberg, "Revolution of Body Culture," 137. Other notable works by Eichberg include: "The Body as Identical: Towards an Historical Materialism of the Folk Question," in *On the Fringes of Sport*, ed. Leena Laine (Sankt Augustin, DE: Academia-Verlag, 1993), 58-77; *Questioning Play: What Play Can Tell Us about Social Life* (London: Routledge, 2016).

²³ Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977).

anthropologist Stefan Krist credits Eichberg with linking “sporting techniques with all other activities directly related to the body, such as table manners, sexuality, etc. and thus put[ting] an end to the belief in the isolation of sports, placing them in a wider social context of bodily expressions and movements.”²⁴ Renson, on the other hand, focuses specifically on folk sporting traditions and has authored many articles about his theory of ludodiversity (diversity of sporting forms) in which he dedicates much scholarly inquiry to the revival of folk sports.²⁵ In essence, Renson’s contributions can be taken as the foundations of this study, and, as such, are magnified more thoroughly in Chapter II. Renson’s and Eichberg’s insights are some of the few academic voices that have documented the systematic marginalization of folk sport. In truth, their works have heavily influenced my own perspectives on the subject matter, resulting in my own bias towards folk sport revivalism – which bears noting in this introductory chapter.

The other prominent aspect of my literature review was the concept of intangible cultural heritage. Many authors within the literature of ICH have been involved in the development of the 2003 Convention, and therefore provide greater insight into those processes.²⁶ Furthermore, there are a number of texts that theorize on the uses, preservation,

²⁴ Stefan Krist, “Where Going Back is a Step Forward: The Re-Traditionalising of Sport Games in Post-Soviet Buriatia,” *Sibirica* 4, no. 1 (April 2004): 106.

²⁵ Roland Renson, “The Cultural Dilemma of Traditional Games,” in *Divisions and Divergences in Fields of Play*, eds. Duncan Carlisle, Garry Chick, and Alan Aycock (Greenwich, CT: Ablex, 1998), 51-8; “Ludo-Diversity;” “Safeguarding Ludodiversity: Chances and Challenges in the Promotion and Protection of Traditional Movement Culture,” *East Asian Thoughts* 3 (2013): 139-58.

²⁶ Laurajane Smith and Natsuko Akagawa, eds., *Intangible Heritage* (London: Routledge, 2009).

and commemoration of heritage that will be reviewed in Chapter IV of this study.²⁷ Here, the work of a few have resulted in the overwhelming majority of the literature on intangible cultural heritage. The short history of UNESCO, and its conventions relating to cultural diversity preservation, has also received ample scholarly criticism and analysis. Works by Poul Duedahl, Lynn Meskell, and Regina Bendix *et al.* are significant contributions to the re-evaluation of heritage conservation and the politics of culture and soft power.²⁸ Framing folk sport within the constructs the ICH Convention is a new approach on the politics of intangible cultural heritage and further differentiates this study.

I have reviewed a wide array of scholarship – from folklorists, anthropologists, heritage scholars, historians, political scientists, and sport scholars, to name a few – which provides a concrete breadth and depth to this study by supporting the research questions with ample secondary source materials. This study can add a valuable perspective to the literature on folk sport through the interplay of intangible cultural heritage and sportive nationalism within the UNESCO framework.

²⁷ Marie-Theres Albert, Roland Bernecker, and Britta Rudolff, eds., *Understanding Heritage: Perspectives in Heritage Studies* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013); Laurajane Smith, *Uses of Heritage* (London: Routledge, 2006); Michelle L. Stefano, Peter Davis, and Gerard Corsane, eds., *Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage* (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell, 2012); Hanna M. Szczepanowska, *Conservation of Cultural Heritage: Key Principles and Approaches* (London: Routledge, 2013).

²⁸ Poul Duedahl, ed., *A History of UNESCO: Global Actions and Impacts* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016); Lynn Meskell, *A Future in Ruins: UNESCO, World Heritage, and the Dream of Peace* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018); Regina F. Bendix, Aditya Eggert, and Arnika Peselmann, eds., *Heritage Regimes and the State* (Göttingen, DE: Universitätsverlag Göttingen, 2012).

Statement of Research Method

The secondary sources identified in the above literature review aid in pinpointing what is new and significant about the proposed approaches to UNESCO policy and folk sporting traditions in this dissertation. In addition to the review of these secondary source materials, two other methods were employed. First, an archival research methodology was undertaken, investigating the UNESCO digital archives. The second research method is a case study analysis (the focus of Chapter VI) which bolsters the primary argument by contextualizing the relationship between UNESCO and national sport authorities.

On the archival front, the UNESCO digital collection has been instrumental to this study. The full archives are accessible online and provide in-depth documentation about the ICH Convention processes, origins, and interaction with national stakeholders. Of particular importance to this dissertation is an examination of the UNESCO Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, the body that ultimately decides on the acceptance of ICH nominations to the official list(s). The correspondence between the Intergovernmental Committee and nominating state parties is integral in answering the primary research question. Lastly, an analysis of the UNESCO Physical Education and Sport Programme documents yield a fuller picture of the history of UNESCO involvement in educational programming aimed at fostering peace through the promotion of sport and physical activity.

The second significant method undertaken during this study was a case study analysis approach. A case study is a detailed examination of a particular event, organization, or

situation within its contextual circumstances. Comparing case studies expands our understanding of larger patterns, while at the same time identifies specific factors and forces that weaken general observations. My cases are defined, categorically, as marginalized traditional games, while comparison criteria are based on geography, sport type, marginality, type of nationalism, and safeguarding outcomes. The case studies include Turkish oil wrestling, Brazilian *capoeira*, Kyrgyz *kok boru*, and Irish hurling, all of which are safeguarded on the UNESCO Convention's Representative List. There are a number of conclusions, drawn from each of the individual cases selected, representing differing viewpoints on the overarching narrative of folk sport preservation.

Theoretical Framework

The primary theoretical frame through which this study examines the nexus between the UNESCO ICH Convention and folk sports is *globalization theory*. In the context of this dissertation, globalization can be understood as the global connectivity for the import-export exchange of culture. Sport sociologist Joseph Maguire describes globalization as a balance between “diminishing contrasts and increasing varieties,” a commingling of cultures and “established outsider relations.”²⁹ There has been an increased level of scholarship within the field of globalization studies since the early 1990s. Scholars such as Roland Robertson, Arjun Appadurai, Deane Neubauer, Mike Featherstone, and George Ritzer have built on the

²⁹ Joseph Maguire, *Global Sport: Identities, Societies, Civilizations* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999).

foundations of nationalism theory to posit on inter-national dynamics and global trends.³⁰ More recently, sport sociologists have begun to interpret sport through the lens of globalization theory. Much of the theory articulates the reconciliation of paradoxes, including “the complementary and interpenetrative relations linking homogenization and heterogenization, universalism and particularism, sameness and difference, and the global and the local.”³¹ The primary underlying paradoxical relationship within globalization theory, however, is best described as the “particularization of universalism (the rendering of the world as a single place) and the universalization of particularism (the globalised expectation that societies . . . should have distinct identities).”³² In short, globalizing forces influence the dynamic interplay between universality and diversity. Globalization theory is employed here as a lens through which to compare and contrast the modernizing effects of the Olympic sporting system and the globalizing effects of UNESCO safeguarding policies on local folk sporting cultures.

Sport is a contemporary global phenomenon. Sport sociologist George Sage predicts three possible consequences for sporting cultures as a result of globalization: homogenization, hybridization, and polarization.³³ The first notion, that of homogenization, is a major starting

³⁰ Roland Robertson, *Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture* (London: Sage, 1992); Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996); Mike Featherstone, ed., *Global Culture: Nationalism, Globalization and Modernity* (London: Sage, 1990); George Ritzer, *The Globalization of Nothing* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge, 2004).

³¹ David L. Andrews and George Ritzer, “The Global in the Sporting Glocal” in Giulianotti and Robertson, *Globalization and Sport*, 29.

³² Roland Robertson, “Globalization, Politics and Religion,” in *The Changing Face of Religion*, eds. James A. Beckford and Thomas Luckmann (London: Sage, 1989), 9.

³³ George Sage, *Globalizing Sport: How Organizations, Corporations, Media and Politics Are Changing Sports* (Boulder, CO: Paradigm, 2010).

point and framework for this dissertation. As Robertson put it, “we live in a world of local assertions against globalising trends, a world in which the very idea of locality is sometimes cast as a form of opposition or resistance to the hegemonically global.”³⁴ Within the context of intangible heritage and traditional sport forms, homogenization theory plays a critical role in framing folk sports as alternative or oppositional to hegemonic global sport forms.³⁵ Sage’s notion of hybridization, on the other hand, refers to the sportification process (described in Chapter III), whereby traditional sports are modernized, both through standardized rules and bureaucratic organizations, to fit the mold set out by the successful, commercial, mediatized sport forms. For instance, according to sport geographer John Bale, the traditional sport of Rwandan *gusimbuka-urukiramende* (high jumping) “was transformed by a Western imagination into familiar and reductive cultural forms.”³⁶ The last outcome of globalization, as posited by Sage, is polarization, which is just another term for marginalization. However, the symbolic projections of cultural pluralisms are a constitutive feature of the globalization process and, as such, an important factor in understanding globalizing effects on local cultural traditions. Folk sport can be interpreted as one (of many) symbols of cultural pluralism. In this sense, situating the 2003 UNESCO Convention, sportive nationalism, and the marginalization of folk sports

³⁴ Roland Robertson, “Globalization: Time-Space and Homogeneity-Heterogeneity,” in *Global Modernities*, eds. Mike Featherstone, Scott Lash, and Roland Robertson (London: Sage, 1995), 29.

³⁵ Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975).

³⁶ John Bale, *Imagined Olympians: Body Culture and Colonial Representation in Rwanda* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), 67.

within globalization theory has the breadth to touch on all four research questions by framing folk sport as an intangible cultural heritage of humanity.

Chapter Breakdown

As a means of grasping what ‘folk sport’ entails, the *second chapter* defines the terms ludodiversity, folklore, and ethnosport by elaborating on the relationship between traditional games and ethnocultural identity. First, ludodiversity is defined simply as “the wide diversity in games, sports, physical exercise, dances and acrobatics,” a definition reflecting an effort to include all aspects of physical culture in a single catch-all term.³⁷ A concept theorized and popularized by Roland Renson, a true dedicant to the folk sport revival movement, examining ludodiversity allows for a broader understanding of the significance and heterogeneity of folk sporting traditions around the world. Second, to understand the traditionalism and romanticism associated with folk sports, it is necessary to delve into their folkloric values. Drawing on Hobsbawm and Ranger’s influential *invented traditions*, Johann Gottfried Herder’s folk romanticism poetics, and Roland Barthes theorizations of mythology, the *Volk* in folk sport represents deep meanings for a community’s collective identity. Third, and in accordance with ludodiversity, ethnosport theory “casts light on the connections between popular culture – ethnos, folk, people – on one hand and body culture – sports, dances, play and games, festivities – on the other.”³⁸ This theory connects *Volk* to folk sport, advancing the argument for cultural

³⁷ Renson, “Safeguarding Ludodiversity,” 139.

³⁸ Henning Eichberg, preface to *Ethnosport: The End of Decline*, by Alexey Kylasov (Zurich: Lit Verlag, 2015), 6.

diversity through sport and providing a philosophy to overcome the crisis of marginalization. Through a robust analysis of the concepts of ludodiversity, folklore, and ethnosport this chapter defines the meanings and symbolic value of folk sporting traditions.

To set the project parameters, by analyzing theories of globalization, modernization, and marginalization, the aim of the *third chapter* is to unpack how global phenomena affect local traditional sporting forms. In doing so, this chapter highlights the paradox of globalization endemic to the struggle of traditional games: Sports are “a central aspect of globalization of culture, and of the local resistances to it.”³⁹ First, globalization is reviewed from the perspectives of homogenization, cultural hegemony, and glocalization, processes that are instrumental to the marginalization of local games and to understanding the aims of UNESCO safeguarding measures at the ground level. Then, the consequences of modernity on the marginalization of traditional cultures are explored, primarily with respect to the marginality of folk games, described in a framework which I call the Diamond-Renson Model. Finally, Henning Eichberg’s concepts of sportification, pedagogization, and folklorization are dissected in terms of the de-authentication of folk sport. In this context, as noted by Lenzerini, “the cultural archetypes and interests of dominant societies globalize, to the prejudice of minority cultures, leading to cultural hegemony and uniformity at the local, national, regional, and international level. Such a process will eventually lead to the crystallization of uniform and

³⁹ Jeremy MacClancy, “Sport, Identity and Ethnicity,” in *Sport, Identity and Ethnicity*, ed. Jeremy MacClancy (Oxford: Berg, 1996), 17.

stereotyped cultural models and to the contextual mortification of the value of cultural diversity.”⁴⁰ Thus, Chapter III interprets various viewpoints on globalization, modernization, and marginalization to explain this study’s supposition that the marginalization of folk sports is affected by the modern Olympic system and UNESCO’s global safeguarding mechanisms.

After reviewing both ludodiversity and the globalization paradox, the *fourth chapter* contextualizes the third dimension of this dissertation: heritage. Intangible cultural heritage (ICH), in particular, has received increasing academic scrutiny in the lead-up to and aftermath of the 2003 Convention from diverse perspectives of analysis, including heritage scholars, anthropologists, sociologists, historians, archaeologists, and economists. ICH has practical implications in the tourism sector, in the growing conservation industry, and in nationalist discourse. As such, the chapter provides a background to the history of heritage, its ‘cultural turn’, the recent popularization of ICH, and the meaning-making mechanisms of heritagization. The ‘uses’ of heritage are many, for “heritage-making is never pursued simply for the sake of preserving and safeguarding... Heritage nominations can be mobilized for purposes of economic development and nation-building.”⁴¹ In order to better understand folk sports as heritage within the UNESCO framework, a deeper analysis of the field is necessary. As a last contextual chapter before delving into the UNESCO Convention (Chapter V) and the case

⁴⁰ Lenzerini, “Living Culture,” 103.

⁴¹ Regina F. Bendix, Aditya Eggert, and Arnika Peselmann, “Introduction: Heritage Regimes and the State,” in Bendix, Eggert, and Peselmann, *Heritage Regimes*, 18.

studies (Chapter VI), Chapter IV reviews the ‘ins and outs’ of heritage to provide a more holistic perspective of critical heritage studies.

The *fifth chapter* traces the institutional development of the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. The chapter begins with a brief introduction to the history of UNESCO, its various structures, and the 1972 Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (safeguarding World Heritage Sites) in order to highlight the significance of the local-global, institutional, and stakeholder dimensions of the 2003 Convention. For, as Mary Taylor notes, “the rise to prominence of the language of heritage through the mediation of supranational agencies such as UNESCO can be seen as an instance of the local institutionalization of international norms.”⁴² The second part of this chapter dissects the Convention itself: the political pressures from UNESCO Director-General Kōichirō Matsuura (1999 to 2009), the intentions and outcomes of the Convention, and efforts to balance Global North and South beneficiaries in the UNESCO framework. The last section of this chapter reviews the place of sport within UNESCO history. The UNESCO Physical Education and Sport Programme focuses on themes such as peace and development, women’s participation, and anti-doping. But how do traditional games fit within this agenda? Within the UNESCO *International Charter of Physical Education, Physical Activity and Sport*, traditional games and sports are recognized as markers of cultural diversity and in need

⁴² Mary N. Taylor, “Intangible Heritage Governance, Cultural Diversity, Ethno-Nationalism,” *Focaal* 55 (2009): 43.

of protection and promotion. In sum, this chapter traces the history of UNESCO, analyzes the 2003 Convention, and explains the relationship between UNESCO and folk sports.

The *sixth chapter* of this study comprises a comparative case study analysis to ascertain how an international initiative, like the UNESCO Convention, affects the status, meaning, and practice of a folk sport within a particular national context. The case study selection criteria include geographic representation, sport types, marginality, nationalism exhibited, and safeguarding techniques. An underlying theme of each of the case studies is the instrumentalization of folk sport preservation for cultural nationalistic purposes. The series of four case studies each follow a similar format: (1) history of the sport, (2) overview of the UNESCO nomination process, (3) effects of UNESCO recognition, and (4) conclusions. The four case studies are:

1. *Turkish Oil Wrestling*. One of the first folk sporting traditions to be recognized on the UNESCO Representative List in 2010, the annual Turkish wrestling championship (the *Kirkpınar*) is the oldest continuously sanctioned sporting competition in the world, dating back to 1360.⁴³ However, with the modernization and urbanization of Turkey in recent decades, oil wrestling has become an increasingly marginalized sport form amongst a more globally-minded public. Emblematic of a romantic nationalism, a process of retraditionalization is currently taking place in Turkey and

⁴³ Birgit Krawietz, "The Sportification and Heritagisation of Traditional Turkish Oil Wrestling," *International Journal of the History of Sport* 29, no. 15 (October 2012): 2145-61.

this case study exhibits a 'cult of heritage' that has raised the *Kirkpinar* host city of Edirne to the status of national cultural capital. The heritagization of oil wrestling happens to be a by-product of touristic and nationalistic motives.

2. *Brazilian Capoeira*. The *capoeira* circle was selected because of the wealth of nationalist literature pertaining to its status as an icon of Afro-Brazilian cultural heritage.⁴⁴ In soccer- (and volleyball-) crazed Brazil, this martial art forms paradoxical relationships between street performers, competitive *capoeiristas*, government officials, and diasporic adherents. Although increasingly popular around the world, at home *capoeira* represents resistance and marginality in the face of government intervention. Themes of glocality, class and race relations, and cultural appropriation situate this case study in the midst of a struggle between ethnic and diasporic nationalisms.
3. *Kyrgyz Kok Boru*. Also known as *buzkashi* in Afghanistan or *kokpar* in Kazakhstan, *kok boru* is an equine sport played throughout Central Asia, whereby riders on two teams attempt to steal away a goat carcass and score in the opposing team's giant bowl. This, in fact, is the modernized (sportified) version of the marginalized folk sport, which is generally representative of rural communities in which the sport was developed by sheep herders hundreds of years ago. The case of *kok boru* exemplifies

⁴⁴ Greg Downey, "Domesticating an Urban Menace: Reforming Capoeira as a Brazilian National Sport," *International Journal of the History of Sport* 19, no. 4 (December 2002): 1-32.

the resistance of traditionalism in the heritagization process, as well as the controversial notion of territoriality in heritage ‘ownership’ (neither *buzkashi*, *kokpar*, nor the other similar horse games in Central Asia are represented in the UNESCO inscription). The case study explores the significance of rural romanticism in folk sport revival, accounts for the liberation nationalism inherent to a post-Soviet milieu, and introduces the concept of ‘playful work,’ a term I use to describe games that developed as leisure counterparts to laborious pastimes.

4. *Irish Hurling*. A recent addition to the Representative List (2018), hurling has a rich body of literature in relation to Irish cultural heritage and parochial nationalism.⁴⁵ Although it is a globally acknowledged traditional game, hurling is considered marginal due to its waning relevance in contemporary Irish society. The Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA)-led nomination has provided critical insights into the sport’s marginality and reasons for seeking UNESCO status. As such, this case study provides relevant outcomes of UNESCO heritagization, as well as a simple safeguarding solution: Continued participation is the only remedy to cultural redundancy.

These case studies position me to identify patterns, reasons, and outcomes of the effects of the Convention’s policies on local folk sports. Through this comparative case study analysis

⁴⁵ David Storey, “Heritage, Culture, and Identity: The Case of Gaelic Games,” in *Sport, History, and Heritage: Studies in Public Representation*, eds. Jeffrey Hill, Kevin Moore, and Jason Wood (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell, 2012), 223-34.

format, the motivating factors – nationalist goals, response to lobbyists, cultural heritage preservation, etc. – behind the actions of state authorities can be more clearly identified. For instance, nationalist goals may include national unity objectives (cultural nationalism), ethnic resistance or reconciliation (ethnic nationalism), or international cultural promotion (external nationalism). As the core of this dissertation, Chapter VI incorporates answers to each of the four research questions, by situating folk sports as either marginal cultures or nodes of resistance.

The *seventh, and final, chapter* of this research project focuses on the motivations, processes, and organization of folk sport revival. Topics covered include the issues of heritagization, the folk sport revival movement, and the nationalization of folk sports. The chapter begins with a critique of the UNESCO heritagization process, then delves into a history of folk sport revival associations – like the European Traditional Sports and Games Association (ETSGA), The Association For International Sport for All (TAFISA), or the Ethnosport World Society – as these are the forums through which folk sport scholars gain traction in the policy-making game. Next, I unwrap the trend of adopting folk games as national sports, tying it into the relationship between heritage preservation and cultural nationalism. In essence, this concluding chapter summarizes the cultural history of the previously neglected nexus between folk sport, nationalism, and cultural heritage within and outside of the development and practical applications of the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage.

* * *

For three reasons, this project is academically relevant to the study of physical cultures and local identities. First, to date there has been limited scholarly examination of the marginalization of folk sports, presenting a lacuna in the literature. Second, there has not yet been a generalized study of the effects of the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage on folk sporting practices. Third, as sportive ICH has lacked critical examination in the academic space, the symbolism of sport has garnered narrow attention. This study draws upon a number of dimensions of folk sports – such as ludodiversity, globalization, nationalism, marginality, and heritage – to critically review the national politics that recurrently forge the future of global sporting culture.

Within my graduate studies on the sociocultural history of sports, I was most intrigued by the histories, nationalisms, and social meanings of folk sporting traditions. Traditional games, however, were underrepresented in my coursework, assigned readings, and conference topics. It was not until I was researching the subject of national sports (in early 2017) that I stumbled onto the notion of folk games. Realizing that I had not heard of many of these sports and games before, I started digging deeper and realized that there was a vast ludodiversity in our past. However, in recent times, the effects of globalization and modernization had reduced this diversity greatly, marginalizing local, ethnic, traditional folk sports the world over. My thirst for knowledge in this subject matter led me down various tangential concepts – such as globalization, heritage, nationalism, etc. – which I present in the contextual chapters (II, III, IV, and V) of this dissertation. Once I learned of the 2003 UNESCO Convention’s objectives of

heritage preservation, *and* that there were certain folk games present on its Representative Lists, my ideas began to formulate around a doctoral thesis. I wanted to analyze the effects of these universal safeguarding policies on the local contexts at which they were aimed. I wanted to understand why and how folk games were being marginalized – and whether it even mattered. I wanted to study the relationship between folk sport preservation and nationalism. Through a lengthy comparative case study analysis (chapter VI), I explored why and how folk sports were nominated to the UNESCO Representative Lists and whether the inherent policy objectives of the Convention had any effect in practical terms. What I uncovered was that UNESCO heritagization has limited effect when instrumentalized for touristic purposes (oil wrestling), that most folk games are co-opted by national governments for the purposes of international cultural promotion (*capoeira*), that UNESCO inscription does not always represent the territoriality of a folk sport (*kok boru*), and that the incentive for attaining UNESCO recognition is to garner resources and status domestically (hurling). A common theme across all the case studies was that the impetus behind UNESCO heritagization tends to be economical (tourism) and political (nationalism), rather than cultural (conservationism). As a result of these findings, the direction of my research refocused slightly on situating folk sport preservation within the nation-building narrative (chapter VII) through the adoption of national sports. In sum, this study highlights the various processes and outcomes of safeguarding traditional games, confirms the relevance of folk sporting traditions to cultural nationalist heritage symbolism, and concludes that societal recognition, support, and participation are the only real safeguards to cultural homogenization.

My hope is that folk sporting revivalists may profit from this research when presenting arguments about the marginalization of folk sports. The same hope resides with anthropologists and other scholars in the heritage space who “conceive of world culture outside a reductive center-periphery framework,” and who can utilize this study to further their understandings of sportive perspectives in cultural heritage preservation.⁴⁶ The UNESCO ICH Convention’s safeguarding policies have had limited practical application thus far, yet there are research organizations (e.g. ETSGA) that are interpreting and implementing intangible cultural heritage in multiple ways. Two cases that help highlight the importance of this dissertation include the *Programme of Cultivating Ludodiversity* in Belgium and the case for Nepalese *dandi biyo*. In 2011, Roland Renson successfully bid for the safeguarding of traditional games in Flanders to be registered as a ‘good safeguarding practice’ within the UNESCO ICH Convention.⁴⁷ Although not a specific item (or folk sport) on the Representative List, the programme demonstrates effective safeguarding principles for folk sports. This is the type of policy work – alignment between local organizations and international norms – from which this study benefits. *Dandi biyo*, on the other hand, is a folk sport in need of safeguarding and recognition on the UNESCO list. It is a popular game that *was* considered the national sport of Nepal for many years. However, the folk game was recently replaced with the global sport of volleyball due to its rural, low-class connotations and political manoeuvrings to distance urban

⁴⁶ Aurélie Elisa Gfeller, “Anthropologizing and Indigenizing Heritage: The Origins of the UNESCO Global Strategy for a Representative, Balanced and Credible World Heritage List,” *Journal of Social Archaeology* 15, no. 3 (2015): 368.

⁴⁷ Intergovernmental Committee, “Evaluation of proposals to the 2011 Register of Best Safeguarding Practices,” ITH/11/6.COM/CONF.206/9, Decision 6.COM 9.2 (2011).

elites from the rural masses.⁴⁸ By studying cases like Renson's ludodiversity initiative, and other cases of sportive cultural heritage, folk sports, like *dandi biyo*, can be better understood in their respective social and political milieus and, indeed, preserved through both national and international institutions. In conclusion, by mobilizing knowledge across a spectrum of academic disciplines, this study provides a renewed perspective to the notion of intangible cultural heritage and folk sporting traditions in our increasingly homogeneous global village.

⁴⁸ Andrew Nelson, "From 'Unmodern Sherpas' to Madhesi Cricketers: Towards a History of Nepali Sport," *International Journal of the History of Sport* 26, no. 12 (September 2009): 1823-39.

Pluralism, Folklore, and Ethnicity in the Spectrum of Traditional Games

History shows as change, also in body culture. The concepts of 'renaissance,' 're-emerging' and 'return' are blurring the picture. The 'traditional' is produced here and now – and tomorrow. And so are the folk identities and the new cultural differences they create.¹

The European nations of Belgium, the Netherlands, and Germany share a number of cultural interstices. First, their common borderlands share the West Germanic dialect Limburgish. Second, they share long, interwoven histories, in terms of economics, politics, agriculture, art, intellectuality, and sport. Third, the early sport scholars from these nations have added foundationally to the study of physical culture. Notably, Belgian sport historian Ronald Renson's proposition of a *ludodiversity*, German physical culturalist Henning Eichberg's ideations about folk sport, and Dutch cultural historian Johan Huizinga's theory of play have been influential concepts in the study of traditional games. In particular, Huizinga's field-defining *Homo Ludens* (1938), which analyzes the primacy of play in the construction of human culture, is a formative text in the field of sport history. In it, Huizinga argues that play "adorns life, amplifies it and is to that extent a necessity both for the individual – as a life function – and for society by reason of the meaning it contains, its significance, its expressive value, its spiritual and social associations, in short, as a culture function."² Play, physical culture, and cultural heritage are collectively the basis for folk sporting cultures, which, in turn, is the foundation for

¹ Henning Eichberg, "The Body as Identical: Towards an Historical Materialism of the Folk Question," in *On the Fringes of Sport*, ed. Leena Laine (Sankt Augustin, DE: Academia-Verlag, 1993), 61.

² Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play-Element in Culture* (Boston: Beacon, 1955), 9.

the modern sporting infrastructure. The global, professional sport-media complex is, indeed, a progression from the traditional games of our ancestors. As such, these cultural icons of our past and present are worthy of academic investigation and popular recognition. More of a structuralist scholar in the folk sporting space, French sport sociologist Pierre Parlebas, who attempted to establish a movement praxeology, invoked that “the folk game represents one of the unthinkableables of our culture. It is cited as a reference quite often, of course, but as an anecdote, a pleasant allusion or exotic illustration.”³ Renson and Eichberg have each investigated the underpinnings of an academic inclination towards the study of these ‘exotic’ sport forms.

Roland Renson identifies three major waves of intellectual interest in traditional games. The first is of a “descriptive and encyclopedic character,” led by sixteenth-century humanists interested in play, such as the ‘father of modern psychology’ Juan Luis Vives, Dutch painter Pieter Bruegel the Elder, and controversial French satirist François Rabelais.⁴ Bruegel, who pioneered both landscape painting and folk scenes during the Dutch and Flemish Renaissance, painted the famous 1560 oil painting *Children’s Games*, which depicts over eighty folk games, many of which were still played in the first half of the twentieth century.⁵ Meanwhile, 216

³ Pierre Parlebas, “Réflexions Finales: Un Passé qui Ouvre sur l’Avenir [Final Reflections: A Past that Opens on the Future],” in *Jeux Traditionnels, Sports et Patrimoine Culturel: Cultures et Éducation [Traditional Games, Sports and Cultural Heritage: Cultures and Education]*, ed. Pierre Parlebas (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2016), 293. [My translation]

⁴ Roland Renson, “Games of Science – The Science of Games,” in *Spiele der Welt im Spannungsfeld von Tradition und Moderne [Games of the World between Tradition and Modernity]*, eds. Gertrud Pfister, Toni Niewerth, and Gerd Steins (Sankt Augustin, DE: Academia-Verlag, 1996), 17.

⁵ Amy Orrock, “Homo ludens: Pieter Bruegel’s *Children’s Games* and the Humanist Educators,” *Journal of Historians of Netherlandish Art* 4, no. 2 (Summer 2012): 1-42. See Figure 1.

games are inventoried in Rabelais' 1535 *Gargantua*.⁶ The second wave of interest was marked by a proliferation of children's games in the late nineteenth century, as studied extensively by play theorist Brian Sutton-Smith.⁷ While the third wave was characterized by nascent theoretical reflections on play, games, and sport, beginning in the 1930s with Huizinga and French play theorist Roger Caillois. In this vein of interest, sport anthropologist Alyce Cheska described the study of play from five perspectives: antiquarianism, evolutionism, diffusionism,



Figure 1 - *Children's Games* by Pieter Bruegel the Elder (1560)
(Source: Wikimedia Commons)

⁶ François Rabelais, "Chapter XXII: The Games of Gargantua," in *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, ed. Janet B. Kopito, vol. 1 (Mineola, NY: Dover, 2016), 71-4.

⁷ Brian Sutton-Smith, *The Folkgames of Children* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1972).

functionalisms, and structuralism.⁸ In reference to Renson's timeline, I posit that we are at the tail-end of the third wave, with interest and academic research in folk sport dwindling in our modern zeitgeist of globalization, mega-events, and the ubiquitous sport-media phenomenon. As such, this dissertation is presented as an inter-disciplinary study to reinvigorate the intellectual interest in traditional sports and games.

In parallel to Renson's timeline of academic engagement with traditional games, Henning Eichberg proposed three stages in the development of contemporary folk sports; the 'renaissance' of folk sports, so to speak. The first stage, linked to the folk romantic ideals of German poet Johann Gottfried Herder, who inspired people to reappropriate their folk traditions, emerged in early nineteenth-century Europe. The second stage, beginning around the turn of the twentieth century, was marked by a 'back-to-nature' ethos, propelled by General Robert Baden-Powell's scout movement and pioneering French physical educationist Georges Hébert's nostalgic doctrine of the *natural method*.⁹ The third stage began in the 1970s, based off the momentum of the California-based New Games movement, which was a countercultural reflex to the Vietnam War and to modern, competitive (war-like) sports.¹⁰ These New Games, which fostered a sense of cooperation and trust, also sparked a rediscovery and revival of folk games by both participants and academics. In conjunction with this last phase, a number of

⁸ Alyce Taylor Cheska, "The Study of Play from Five Anthropological Perspectives," in *Play: Anthropological Perspectives*, ed. Michael A. Salter (West Point, NY: Leisure Press, 1978), 17-35.

⁹ Georges Hébert, *L'Éducation Physique, Virile et Morale par la Méthode Naturelle* [*Physical, Virile and Moral Education by the Natural Method*] (Paris: Librairie Vuibert, 1936).

¹⁰ Andrew Fluegelman, ed., *The New Games Book* (Tiburon, CA: Headlands Press, 1976).

national and regional folk sporting festivals were organized in an effort to safeguard folkloric traditions, exemplified by the revival of Flemish *volksport*, circumpolar sport festivals, Central Asian nomadic games, or the Hungarian *táncház* ('dancehouse') movement. A first attempt at exhibiting the folk games of diverse peoples was the 1978 German Games Festival in Essen, organized by TAFISA founder Jürgen Palm.¹¹ Then, in 1992, TAFISA created the "Traditional Sports and Games of the World" festival in Bonn, Germany, followed by successive festivals in Bangkok (1996) and Hanover (2000).¹² Based on this historical trend of revival and rediscovery, it seems that "this orientation towards rustic and primal physical activities, this glorification of traditional games supposedly spontaneous and devoid of technological devices, pleads for a culture which, also, poses as a universal in the search for an ideal."¹³ In a homogenous global village, where modern sport has a standardizing influence, TAFISA and other folk game revivalist groups provide a nostalgic relief for the diversity of traditional sports and games.

Folk sports tend to have a 'backwards' connotation in our society. As traditional games have a particularly diverse, folkish, and ethnic nature to them, the denigration of these sport forms is wrapped up in the global-local identity politics of postmodern nationalism. Each of these characteristics of folk sports are elaborated on in this chapter. First, an analysis of trends, functions, and definitions of folk sports are introduced. Then, the plurality of folk sporting

¹¹ Jürgen Palm, *Sport for All: Approaches from Utopia to Reality* (Schorndorf, DE: Hofmann, 1991).

¹² Subsequent TAFISA World Sport for All Games occurred in Busan, South Korea (2008), Siauliai, Lithuania (2012), and Jakarta (2016), with future Games planned for Lisbon (2021) and Nizhny Novgorod, Russia (2024). More will be extrapolated on TAFISA, and its effects on traditional games, in the concluding chapter.

¹³ Pierre Parlebas, "Le Jeu Fait-Il Partie de la Culture? [Is Play Part of Culture?]," in Parlebas, *Jeux Traditionnels*, 18-19. [My translation]

forms, including various typologies, is reviewed. Next, folk sports are examined in the context of *volkskultur*, invented traditions, and mythologies, borrowing from the ideations of Herder, Hobsbawm and Ranger, and Barthes, respectively. And, finally, an ethnological interpretation of national identity-making mechanisms in folk sporting cultures draws from De Levita's concept of identity, Mauss' theorizations of 'body techniques', and Eichberg's (and Kylasov's) neologism *ethnosport*. This review of theoretical perspectives, typologies, and contextual frameworks is intended to provide a robust understanding of what folk sports are, how they can be understood in relation to contemporary society, and why they are worthy of academic scholarship and cultural safeguarding.

'Traditional Games' or 'Folk Sports'?

During the ideation phase of this dissertation, I was challenged by a colleague to define the terms *folk sport* and *marginalization*. While I could muster the latter (and do so in the next chapter), the former caused me a fair amount of anxiety – exacerbated by my impending deadlines. My quandary lay not solely with defining folk sport, but rather in differentiating it from the term *traditional games*. Is there a difference? Have the definitions changed over time? How have the precepts of modern, global, Olympic sport affected our understanding of these ludic forms? Brief searches for the term 'folk sport' in online repositories yielded few results. Perhaps, nowadays, it is a decidedly non-Western term, and my eastern European heritage influenced my predilections. I was originally operating under the supposition that folk sport was a commonly understood term. However, whenever I would explain the aims of my dissertation to acquaintances or non-sport scholars, blank faces were generally the response to

my ill-defined use of the term. To clarify, then, I would allude to more global examples like Japanese sumo, Irish hurling, or Canadian lacrosse. But were these folk sports? And do folk sports have global appeal? Sumo retains its traditional ritual but has been tactfully updated for modern viewing purposes. Hurling holds a tenuous cultural foothold in many Irish counties and is willfully maintained purely under the auspices of the nationalist bureaucratic institution known as the Gaelic Athletic Association. And lacrosse is traditionally an indigenous sport that was appropriated by a white Montreal dentist and bastardized to suit the nationalistic needs of the colonizing power in nineteenth-century Canada. Additionally, where does indigenous sport fit into the folk-traditional sport complex? A supplementary issue stems from the lack of scholarship in the area. Ancient games (of the Greeks, Romans, etc.) continue to receive attention from classical scholars, individual traditional games are studied sporadically, and the marginalization of traditional games has been mentioned only briefly by a handful of sport scholars. The reality is, there is little interest or momentum to study folk sport. Yet, there is so much to be gained. From a cultural standpoint, there is great historical significance to understanding folk sports, their continued adherence, and their role in the contemporary obsession with modern, global, elite sport. It was Eichberg who noted that “bottom-up terms like ‘popular,’ ‘folk,’ ‘ethnic,’ ‘traditional,’ ‘tribal,’ ‘heritage,’ ‘identity,’ ‘aboriginal,’ and ‘indigenous’ are not harmless. They should not be used naïvely. But they are related to living democracy, to bodily democracy.”¹⁴ As such, in an attempt to revitalise the study of folk sports,

¹⁴ Henning Eichberg, “From Sport Export to Politics of Recognition: Experiences from the Cooperation between Denmark and Tanzania,” *European Journal for Sport and Society* 5, no. 1 (2008): 24.

this section delves into diffusion theory and game typology before, ultimately, defining traditional games, along with its meanings and functions.

Parlebas contends that there are three types of developmental relationships of games: lineage, proximity, and antecedent. The first can be described by a 'play lineage,' chain of transmission, Darwinian evolution, or "genealogy of games."¹⁵ Indeed, the games that survive the evolutionary process are those that have "the most adaptable variables to the changing conditions of their environment ... an innovative selection associated with the survival of the fittest."¹⁶ Proximity, on the other hand, is based less on time and more on space. John Bale wrote the pivotal piece on sports geography, in which he states that "the establishment of a modern sport in a particular place can be interpreted as the adoption of an innovation;" and that "treating sport as an innovation... means that we might expect its diffusion to exhibit evidence of both hierarchical and neighborhood spread."¹⁷ Swedish geographer Torsten Hägerstrand, famed for his humanistic approach, developed cultural diffusion theory, which centered on ideas of innovation diffusion.¹⁸ This diffusion theory defines the adoption cycle of innovations in three stages: (1) a trickle of early adopters; (2) the 'band-wagon' phase of mass adoption; and (3) 'laggard' adopters rounding out the last stage. This theory can be used to understand the diffusion of sport throughout the globe, with sporting pioneers acting as the

¹⁵ Jean Chateau, *Le Jeu de l'Enfant [Child's Game]* (Paris: Vrin, 1967).

¹⁶ Pierre Parlebas, "The Destiny of Games Heritage and Lineage," *Studies in Physical Culture and Tourism* 10, no. 1 (2003): 24.

¹⁷ John Bale, *Sports Geography* (London: Routledge, 2003), 46-7.

¹⁸ Torsten Hägerstrand, *Innovation Diffusion as a Spatial Process* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973).

early adopters, then the popularity spreading contagiously throughout a population. The size of the adopting group dictates the rate of adoption. Sport is generally adopted by more affluent communities first before “the innovation ‘trickles down’ an economic hierarchy.”¹⁹ Distance, also, is a determinant in the diffusion of sport, allowing for a ‘neighborhood effect’ spreading from nation to nation. As Dutch sport sociologist Maarten Van Bottenburg explains, “the closer the ties between countries and the more similar their social history, the more closely their national sporting patterns will resemble one another.”²⁰ Finally, Parlebas’ third relationship, that of antecedents, connotes the first recognized appearance of a game; undoubtedly much easier to pinpoint for ‘newer’ inventions like basketball and volleyball. Although, the theoretical notions of sport forwarded by Parlebas, Bale, and Van Bottenburg are invaluable to our understanding of the spread and adoption of traditional games, the classification or typology of diverse forms of play are necessary to unveil a fuller picture of the folk sporting landscape.

The influence of Roger Caillois on our understanding of the ‘games universe’ – and therefore the sporting landscape, as we know it – through his classification of games, cannot be understated.²¹ One of the early interpreters of sport and society, Caillois’ approach was sociological in method, but his insertion of historical, philosophical, and psychological elements

¹⁹ Bale, *Sports Geography*, 47.

²⁰ Maarten Van Bottenburg, *Global Games*, trans. Beverley Jackson (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001), 99.

²¹ Roger Caillois, *Man, Play and Games*, trans. Meyer Barash (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001).

to the discussion and definition of play are foundational to all these fields of sport studies today. His perspectives on play were summarized by Patrick Biesty, as follows:

- (a) Although play is often coincidental with the development of capacities, play’s proper function is to be an end in itself;
- (b) because games of chance develop no physical or mental capacities because of the passive nature of the player’s role, the nondevelopmental function of play is demonstrated;
- (c) play is a universal expression of a shared human nature that through interaction is socialized into unique cultural expressions;
- (d) although varying in specifics, play takes on four forms in games: vertigo, mimicry, competition, and chance; and
- (e) as an expression of human nature, play should be understood as irreducible impulses that are also present in animals.²²

As can be taken from the above summary, Caillois proposed four types of games: *ilinx* (vertigo), *mimicry* (imagination), *agon* (competition), and *alea* (chance), categorized on a continuum between *paidia* (child’s play) and *ludus* (formalized games).²³ In a reorganization of Caillois’ model, Biesty employs George Herbert Mead’s stages of social life to facilitate an order

Table 1 - Caillois’ Classification of Games
(Source: Caillois, *Man Play and Games*, 36.)

	AGÔN (Competition)	ALEA (Chance)	MIMICRY (Simulation)	ILINX (Vertigo)
PAIDIA	Racing Wrestling Etc. } not regulated Athletics	Counting-out rhymes Heads or tails	Children’s initiations Games of illusion Tag, Arms Masks, Disguises	Children “whirling” Horseback riding Swinging Waltzing
LUDUS	Boxing, Billiards Fencing, Checkers Football, Chess Contests, Sports in general	Betting Roulette Simple, complex, and continuing lotteries*	Theater Spectacles in general	Volador Traveling carnivals Skiing Mountain climbing Tightrope walking

²² Patrick Biesty, “Caillois Revisited: A Developmental Classification of Games,” in *Meaningful Play, Playful Meaning*, ed. Gary Alan Fine (Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics, 1987), 4.

²³ See Table 1.

of development based on the interaction of communication and play.²⁴ This model, however, focuses almost exclusively on the communicative role of *paidia* in an increasingly complex socialization process; *ludus*, however, is both embedded throughout the various play forms and superseded in the presentation. Table 1 is organized with vertigo first, because of its reliance on physiological systems (balance, for one), followed by the symbolic play of imagination, then competition is third due to the inequalities of wins and losses, and finally chance is last based on the inherent universal truths in which it functions. Meanwhile, the rows are classified based on a play-communication nexus, starting with pure play (play for its own sake) in the first row, followed by make-believe play, rule-governed game play, and serious (purposeful) play. As explained by Biesty, “the developmental classification system is in fact a matrix of communication modes within which types of play and games develop and are transformed.”²⁵ In effect, by employing Mead’s stages, Biesty clarified much of the complexities of Caillois’ original model, furthering our understanding of a play-game-sport spectrum.

Caillois, however, was not the only ‘game typologist.’ Brian Sutton-Smith, for instance, distinguished between games based on physical skill, chance, or strategy in an evolutionary approach.²⁶ Guy Jaouen, founding president of the European Association for Traditional Games and Sports (ETSGA), divides physical culture into three aspects: (1) Sport, which follows a market logic and includes elite and mass sport; (2) physical forms, which follow a health logic

²⁴ George Herbert Mead, *Mind, Self, and Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1934).

²⁵ Biesty, “Caillois Revisited,” 14.

²⁶ Brian Sutton-Smith, and John M. Roberts, “The Cross-Cultural and Psychological Study of Games,” in *The Cross-Cultural Analysis of Sport and Games*, ed. Günther Lüschen (Champaign, IL: Stipes, 1970), 100-8.

and include gymnastics and Sport for All; and (3) traditional games, which follow a society logic and include folk games and festivals.²⁷ Meanwhile, French sport philosopher Jacques Ulmann proposed four major stages characteristic of the evolution of games in Western culture: *agon* (Greek), *ludus* (Roman), *jocus* (medieval), and sport (contemporary).²⁸ Finally, combining both development and distinguishable characteristics, Eichberg identified seven characteristics of premodern (traditional), modern, and postmodern physical culture.²⁹ He reviewed aspects such as time and space, values, and interpersonal relations, as well as institutions and objectives. Similarly, pioneering sport sociologist Eric Dunning also examined the structural-functional differentials of folk games and modern sports, in which his proposed thirteen characteristics focused on the simplicity, 'looseness,' violence, communitarianism, and informality of traditional games.³⁰ With these diverse perspectives on the typology of games, their diffusion, and their development, we can now turn specifically to the folkish variety.

Throughout my research, folk sports have been defined in terms of five overarching narratives: diversity, locality, cultural heritage, traditionalism, and ethnicity. First, in the

²⁷ Guy Jaouen, "Jeux Traditionnels d'Adultes et Environnement Institutionnel [Traditional Games of Adults and Institutional Environment]," in Parlebas, *Jeux Traditionnels*, 39-59.

²⁸ Jacques Ulmann, "Agôn, Ludus, Jocus et Sport," *Science et Motricité* (November 1988): 3-7.

²⁹ See Table 2.

³⁰ Eric Dunning, "The Structural-Functional Properties of Folk-Games and Modern Sports: A Sociological Analysis," *Sportwissenschaft* 3, no. 3 (September 1973): 215-32.

Table 2 - *Premodern, Modern, and Postmodern Forms of Physical Culture*
 (Source: Eichberg, "A Revolution of Body Culture?," 145.)

	<i>Traditional games</i>	<i>Modern sport</i>	<i>'Postmodernity'</i>
1. Time	Festivity Rhythmic repetition	Leisure/work time Futurist maximisation	Sport of the unemployed Experience of stress
2. Space	Integration Local identity	Specialisation Standardisation Isolation	Jogging space 'Community sport' Crisis of 'container architecture'
3. Energy	Laughter Music Ritual 'spirituality'	Disappearance of laughter Disappearance of music	New carnivalism Re-musicalisation New religious body cultures
4. Interpersonal relations	Patriarchy/matriarchy? Togetherness of ages Locality/internationality	Dynamic of speed Male dominance Classes of gender age, weight National identification/results	'Sport across the limits' Family sport Social sport Multiplicity of cultural identities
5. Objectives	'The strong man' 'Glory'	Production of results Quantification of records Achievement	Crisis of educational quantification Media circus
6. Values and ideas	Christian/pagan? Traditionalism	Faster, higher, stronger c-g-s rationalisation Olympic ideology	Criticism of sport New Age ideology of sport 'Health' sport
7. Institutions	Local self-determination Age-groups?	Hierarchical system Bureaucratic control	Non-organised sport Commercial sport Alternative body culture

context of physical culture, Eichberg expands on the diversity and plurality of folk sports by including not only "traditional, ethnic, or indigenous sports and games but also new activities that are based on traditional practices. Pub games and bowling, noncompetitive *volkswalks* (folk walks), mass gymnastics, spontaneous sports of the

working classes, and games and sports associated with festivals as well as street games all may be termed 'folk.'³¹ Second, the locality of traditional folk games is another important narrative, as such games "were focused around substantively distinct, place bound, and organically conceived, controlled, and experienced physical cultural practices."³² Third, folk sports are often associated with the embodiment of a cultural milieu, a crystallization of cultural identity and belonging. For instance, as exemplified by social anthropologist Olatz González Abrisketa,

³¹ Eichberg, "Folk Sports," 523.

³² David L. Andrews and George Ritzer, "The Grobal in the Sporting Glocal," in *Globalization and Sport*, eds. Richard Giulianotti and Roland Robertson (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), 30.

pelota is the “principal festival of the Basque” in Spain.³³ Likewise, Mongolian folk wrestling, Chilean rodeo, and Basotho horse-racing are indelible markers of cultural heritage in their respective locales. The fourth narrative of *traditionalism* seems obvious; however I have observed it used in a derogatory sense, espousing notions of anti-modern, uncivilized, primal games. Besnier *et al.* provide a compelling overview of this narrative:

The notion of ‘traditional sport’ in much of the sport studies literature effectively presupposed a temporal distance between the secular, ‘rational,’ contemporary practices of modern sport and the premodern, ‘irrational,’ practices of traditions sport, which were said to be based on superstition, religious belief, and other non-scientific ways of understanding the body, what it means to be human, and humanity’s place in the cosmos. The label ‘traditional sport’ implies that the activity is not ‘civilized,’ not secular, and not scientific. In effect, these are physical activities and embodied practices embedded in a worldview that differs from the modern, regular rationality inherited from Western Enlightenment. Implicit in this perspective is the unilinear evolution and belief in inevitable progress and constant improvement of humanity that so drove the Enlightenment and the concomitant expansion of European power.³⁴

Lastly, the ethnic narrative is part and parcel to the identification of folk sports. These ethnic games are often cultural markers, and “have been variously presented as evidence of the ingenuity and exoticism of those who practice it, as the focus of ethnic and cultural pride, or as contexts for affirmation of intragroup solidarity.”³⁵ Diversity, locality, cultural heritage, traditionalism, and ethnicity are thematic narratives that string together our understanding of folk sports. The folkish, ethnic, and diverse elements of traditional games are what set them apart, upholding community heritage, a sporting past, and a romantic worldview. The

³³ Olatz González Abrisketa, *Basque Pelota: A Ritual, an Aesthetic*, trans. Mariann Vaczi (Reno, NV: Center for Basque Studies, 2012), 25.

³⁴ Niko Besnier, Susan Brownell, and Thomas F. Carter, *The Anthropology of Sport: Bodies, Borders, Biopolitics* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2018), 33.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 108.

primordial nature of folk sports are their intrigue and pride. As noted by French body culture anthropologist Jean Jacques Barreau, “traditional games and sports have not, in effect, ever dismissed social contradictions ... because they were, in a way, an emanation of these social contradictions; and this is a reason why we can almost always interpret them as avenues of rediscovery translating or retranslating the desire to make these inevitable contractions acceptable.”³⁶

Now that we have an idea of *what* folk sports are, it is important to understand *why* they are essential elements of our global physical culture. What are the functions of folk sports in our society? Canadian anthropologist of play Michael Salter posits two functions. First, the utilitarian aspect can be understood through ritual, commerce, politics, and social control. Whether they are medicinal rituals or ceremonies of rites, many folkloric festivities are imbued with customs and practices integral to a traditional community’s social health. Correspondingly, the political and social control practicalities of the utilitarian aspect revolve around normative activities inherent to traditional communities. Commerce, on the other hand, flirts with the modern, capitalist world order, whereby traditional cultures benefit greatly from the tourist gaze (and concomitant economic impact).³⁷ Additionally, Salter construes that “the gambling associated with the game is an important mechanism in the redistribution of

³⁶ Jean Jacques Barreau, “Traditional Festivals, Games Activities and Sporting Events,” in *Les Jeux Populaires: Eclipse et Renaissance [Popular Games: Eclipse and Revival]*, eds. Jean Jacques Barreau and Guy Jaouen (Rennes, FR: Institut Culturel de Bretagne, 1991), 23. [My translation]

³⁷ John Urry, *The Tourist Gaze: Leisure and Travel in Contemporary Societies* (London: Sage, 1990).

resources within and between communities.”³⁸ This is not unlike the conclusions reached by Clifford Geertz’s famed anthropological study of gambling in Balinese cockfighting.³⁹ The second function of traditional games that Salter deduces is educational, specifically the promotion of socialization and enculturation. In this he claims that “perhaps the main value of traditional leisure activities is that they help to preserve traditional values. By connecting the past to the present they provide the participants with a sense of who they are and promote pride in being.”⁴⁰ In many ways, folk sports allow communities the opportunity to uphold their cultural identity, civic pride, and communal folklore.

In support of Salter’s functionalist observations, Eichberg notes three related tendencies in the realm of traditional play and games: (1) Quest for cultural heritage and identity; (2) historical and ethnographic reconstruction; and (3) contribution to the development of welfare and wellness. Moreover, he alludes to the interdisciplinarity of folk games, which can make incursions into other aspects of folk culture, like festivals, music, dance, handicraft, visual art, Sport for All, and tourism.⁴¹ The multifaceted, historically-replete elements of cultural heritage known as folk sports are the antecedents to modern sports and the muses of folk culturalists the world over. Idealized by Renaissance painters, play theorists, and folk revivalists, traditional games are the games of the past, the games of the people (*Volk*), and the games of authentic

³⁸ Michael A. Salter, “Traditional Leisure-Time Activities in Developing Societies: Functional Considerations,” *Journal of Comparative Physical Education and Sport* 19 (1997), 67.

³⁹ Clifford Geertz, “Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight,” *Daedalus* 101, no. 1 (Winter 1972): 1-37.

⁴⁰ Salter, “Functional Considerations,” 69.

⁴¹ Eichberg, “Politics of Recognition,” 12.

play. Classified by the likes of Caillois, Sutton-Smith, and Eichberg, these sportive elements of traditional physical culture range from the play-sphere to organized sport. Quashed by the homogenizing effects of globalization, folk games are marked by a cultural diversity emblematic of folk cultures. All peoples play their games, thus folk games can be considered a ludic 'unity through diversity.'

Ludus Diversitas

In a number of teaching contexts, with much exuberance, I have tasked groups of undergraduate students to categorize sports and games. The major, North American, professional team sports are usually the first up on the board: soccer, football, basketball, baseball, hockey. These are often divided between team ball games (soccer, football, basketball) and stick-and-ball games (hockey, baseball). Soccer and football, along with rugby, stem from the same ludic origins (folk football), so this grouping makes sense. But how does basketball fit in? Should it stand alone? Is it closer to volleyball, considering its shared 'invention' time period and roots in the YMCA? Then, hockey and baseball are soon split up as well, once students come to realize (with some prodding from their instructor) that hitting-ball games (British cricket and rounders, Finnish *pesäpallo*, Nepalese *dandi biyo*, Romanian *oina*, or Russian *lapta*) are different from the family of games that use a bladed stick (field hockey, Irish hurling, Scottish shinty, Russian bandy, golf, or croquet). What about racket sports (tennis, squash, badminton, etc.)? Are they categorized with hitting-ball games, closer to wallball games (Basque *pelota* or Cuban *jai alai*), or do they stand alone? Is lacrosse a racket sport or bladed-stick sport? And we have not even considered water sports (swimming, water polo,

synchronized swimming), equestrian sports, motorsports, shooting or throwing games, fighting sports (martial arts, wrestling, boxing, etc.), all the disciplines of track & field, or gymnastics. There are so many variants and categories that stem mostly from the popular, modern, Olympic sports. And, we have not even considered the plethora of folk sporting forms. Polish sport historian Wojciech Lipónski collected information on approximately eight thousand sports and games from around the world, many of which are folk games, but also including all modern sports (and their variants), extreme sports, and disability sports.⁴² Many other scholars and intergovernmental agencies (e.g. Association of Southeast Asian Nations) have also collected and archived lists and descriptions of diverse, regional, traditional folk sporting forms.⁴³ Like the investigation of dialects of languages (linguistics) or the mapping of floral genus (taxonomy), charting the diversity of contemporary and historic games is an arduous task, for “the forms of games, their players, their spaces, their accessories take on extraordinarily varied aspects: we are in the presence of an exuberant ludodiversity.”⁴⁴

Pluralism is a philosophy that upholds the tenets of diversity (in all its forms) for the sake of political harmony and intercultural communication.⁴⁵ Physical educationist John

⁴² Wojciech Lipónski, *World Sports Encyclopedia* (Beverly, MA: MBI, 2003).

⁴³ For a wide variety of folk sporting examples, refer to the following pieces: Jacques Le Garlantézec, “Jeux Sportifs avec Bâtons et Crosses [Sportive Games with Bats and Crosses],” in Parlebas, *Jeux Traditionnels*, 260-92; Inon Shaharuddin Abdul Rahman, ed., *Inventory of ASEAN Traditional Games* (Jakarta: ASEAN Committee on Culture and Information, 1998); Pere Lavega Burgués, ed., *Traditional Games and Society in Europe* (self-pub., ETSGA, 2006); and Gertrud Pfister, ed., *Games of the Past – Sports for the Future?: Globalisation, Diversification, Transformation* (Sankt Augustin, DE: Academia-Verlag, 2004).

⁴⁴ Parlebas, “Part of Culture?,” 34.

⁴⁵ Ralph Grillo, *Pluralism and the Politics of Difference: State, Culture, and Ethnicity in Comparative Perspective* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998).

Goodger's approach is that the sporting landscape is an ideal lens through which to understand pluralism in modern Western society. He asserts that "the concept of pluralism must incorporate those differences and diversities of practice, knowledge, belief, and sentiment that arise from religious, regional, and other cultural traditions, as well as those that arise from locations in social strata."⁴⁶ But, when it comes to the study of the plurality of folk games, Roland Renson is the expert. An esteemed sport historian, Renson has added immensely to scholarship pertaining to folk traditions. Based on the methodology of Human Relations Area Files in the field of cultural anthropology, Renson tasked his undergraduate students to collect information on the local folk games of Flanders, which resulted in the formative anthropological survey known as the Flemish Folk Games Files, compiling over 1500 folk game reports.⁴⁷ The files led to over fifty postgraduate theses in the field of folk games and – upon the discovery of a *kegelen* (Belgian skittles) pin by one of the students – the foundation of the Sportimonium, a singular folk sport museum with the aims of integration, decentralization, education, and animation of folk sports. As a plea against standardization, Renson developed the notion of *ludodiversity*, which he defines as "the variation among all movement cultures, encompassing the domains of play, physical culture and movement expression and their respective subfields such as: games, sports, physical exercises, dance and acrobatic performances."⁴⁸ Although the term is more generally associated with the term *biodiversity*,

⁴⁶ John M. Goodger, "Pluralism, Transmission, and Change in Sport," *Quest* 38 (1986): 138.

⁴⁷ Roland Renson and Herman Smulders, "Research Methods and Development of the Flemish Folk Games File," *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* 16 (1981): 97-107.

⁴⁸ Roland Renson, "Ludodiversity: Extinction, Survival and Invention of Movement Culture," in Pfister, *Games of the Past*, 10-11.

which was popularized in the 1980s by biologists like Thomas E. Lovejoy and Edward O. Wilson, ludodiversity is a portmanteau, combining the Latin *ludus* (which refers to physical culture: play, game, sport, exercise, etc.) and diversity.⁴⁹

The seeds of a model for ludodiversity were laid at the First European Seminar on Traditional Games, hosted in Vila Real, Portugal, in the Fall of 1988. The conference, which was co-sponsored by the Council of Europe and the History of Physical Education and Sport Association (HISPA), was primarily a brainchild of Portuguese and Flemish folk sport revivalists catering to smaller countries in search of nationally identifiable symbols and folk traditions. Here, it bears noting the instrumentalization of folk culture for the purposes of national identity creation in response to the marginalizing effects of the Olympic system. In any case, at this conference, participants adopted four phases for the collection of information concerning traditional games: (1) collection, (2) description, (3) cataloguing, and (4) evaluation. As a result, during the second seminar, hosted two years later by Renson in Leuven, Belgium, eight categories were recommended in a typology of traditional games.⁵⁰ Based on the Flemish Folk Games Files, the typology was meant to be superimposed on other regions to stimulate ludodiversity and safeguard traditional games within localized sport policies. The following list provides a breakdown of the classification proposed by Renson *et al.*:

1. **Ball games** (interaction between players and a ball)
 - a. Without instruments – Gaelic football, Norman *la soule*, or Florentine *calcio storico*

⁴⁹ E. O. Wilson, ed., *Biodiversity* (Washington, DC: National Academies Press, 1988).

⁵⁰ Roland Renson, Michel Manson, and Erik De Vroede, "Typology for the Classification of Traditional Games in Europe," in *Proceedings of the Second European Seminar on Traditional Games*, eds. Erik De Vroede and Roland Renson (Leuven, BE: Vlaamse Volkssport Centrale, 1991), 69-81.

- i. Hands or upper limbs – *pelota*, handball, Mesoamerican ball game
 - ii. Feet or lower limbs – Japanese *kemari*, Aboriginal Australian *marngrook*, Southeast Asian *sepak takraw*, or folk football
- b. With instruments – rackets (*paume*), sticks (lacrosse), or forearm cover (*jai alai*)
- 2. **Bowl and pin games** (includes both rolling or gliding)
 - a. Bowl games (objective: placement)
 - i. Without instruments – round bowls (French *pétanque* or Italian *bocce*), flat bowls (shuffleboard or Dutch *sjoelen*), marbles, or curling
 - ii. With instruments – billiards, Swiss *hornussen*, or croquet
 - b. Pin games (objective: knock down)
 - i. Bowling – French *quills*, Dutch *kegeln*, or Belgian *pierbol*
 - ii. With sticks – Irish skittles or Karelian pins
- 3. **Throwing games**
 - a. Discs or rings (closeness) – Gotland *varpa*, Portuguese *malha*, or horseshoes
 - b. Sticks or darts (accuracy) – darts, javelin, Limburgish *pagschieten*, Inuit snow snake, or *jeu de billon* in Callais, France
 - c. Weights (distance or height) – Scottish Highland games of hammer-throwing, caber-tossing, or shot-putting
 - d. Amusements⁵¹ – spinning tops, ball-in-cup (*bilboquet*), or whipping tops
 - e. Tossing many objects – knucklebones/jacks, dice, or spillikins (pick-up sticks)
- 4. **Shooting games** – archery, fire arms, blowpipe, slings, etc.
- 5. **Fighting games**
 - a. Without weapons – wrestling or martial arts
 - b. With weapons – fencing, Egyptian stick-fighting, or Japanese *kendo*
 - c. Tug-o-war
- 6. **Animal games**
 - a. With animal – falconry, Arabian camel-racing, Afghan *buzkashi*, Iditarod dog-sled race, or *makepung lampit* (water buffalo drag-racing) in Jembrana, Indonesia
 - b. Against animal – hunting, fishing, or bullfighting
 - c. Between animals – cockfighting, dog-racing, or finch-warbling
- 7. **Locomotion games**
 - a. Self-locomotion – running (Tarahumara long-distance *rarájipari*), swimming, jumping (Rwandan *gusimbuka urukiramende*), climbing (*ta'uma haari* coconut tree climbing), or balance (Sufi whirling)
 - i. With instrument – bicycling, skating (Dutch *Elfstedentocht* race), skiing, sledding, or rowing (*va'a* outrigger canoeing)
 - b. With vehicle – sailing, yachting, or motorsports
- 8. **Acrobatics** – gymnastics, Catalan *castellars*, or Shaolin kung fu

⁵¹ This is the one miscellaneous category of the typology that I took the liberty to rename and consolidate.

Although seven of the categories (excluding animal sports) were widely cited and accepted, Brian Sutton-Smith voiced his concerns in the opening session of the Second Seminar.⁵² His main criticism centered on the fact that Renson *et al.* lacked consistency by mixing categories that refer to game instruments with categories that consider actions. As per his aforementioned classification, Sutton-Smith emphasized actions over instruments. Furthermore, Sutton-Smith pointed out that the use of balls and bowls were not ubiquitous before the turn of the twentieth century, many throwing games were now extinct, and both animal and fighting games were under threat from social reformers for nearly a century.⁵³ These critiques highlighted the typology's contradiction to the very criteria this body had adopted for identifying folk games at the First Seminar, which comprised: (a) games that trace their development to before the advent of modern sports; (b) the precedence of physical (over other) traits; (c) neither organized competition nor coaching is necessary; (d) children's games; (e) either national or local; and (f) primary consideration of games that continue to survive.⁵⁴ Nevertheless, this original typology is of instrumental value for understanding the development of the concept of ludodiversity.

Later, Renson shifted his thinking to a simpler model that emphasized physical or movement culture – a generalized, non-restrictive, pluralistic, non-Western concept. Expanding

⁵² Brian Sutton-Smith, "Tradition from the Perspective of Children's Traditional Games," in De Vroede and Renson, *Second European Seminar*, 15-23.

⁵³ From our Western point of view, many blood sports seem "oppositional," to use a term by Raymond Williams, to the dominant sport forms we have become accustomed to, yet they remain an aspect of national folklore in various parts of the world (e.g. Afghan dog fighting or Honduran cockfighting).

⁵⁴ Roland Renson, "La Pluralité des Jeux [The Plurality of Games]," *Sport* (Wallonia, BE) 2, no. 146 (1994): 82-90. [My translation]

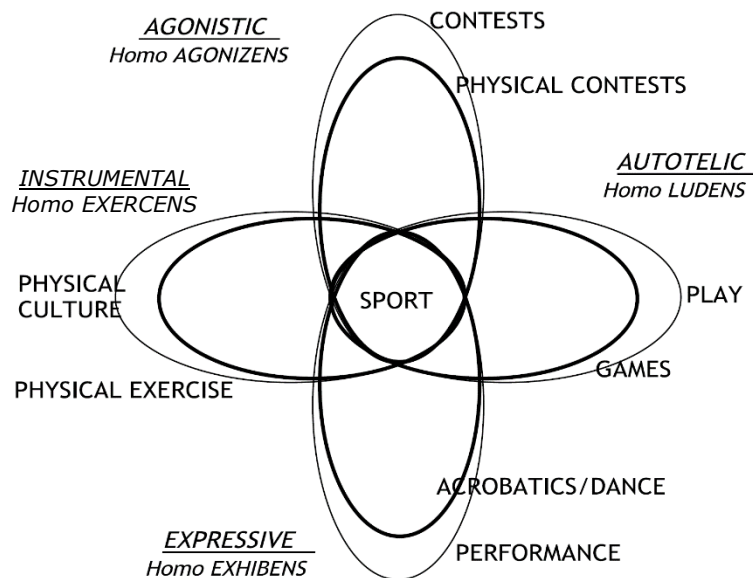
on Huizinga’s idea of *Homo ludens* (“Man the Player”), Renson classified movement culture into four categories:

Physical exercises such as gymnastics, fitness exercises, tai chi etc. are part of the ‘instrumental’ physical culture sphere of *homo exercens*. Physical contest such as track and field athletics, boxing, wushu, judo, taekwondo etc. are part of the ‘competitive’ sphere of *homo agonizens*. Movement games such as ball games, bowls games, throwing games such as darts etc. belong to the ‘ludic’ play sphere of *homo ludens*. Acrobatics such as juggling, tightrope walking etc., and all sorts of dances are part of the ‘expressive’ performance sphere of *homo exhibens*.⁵⁵

As examined in the previous section, the *ludens* category draws from both Huizinga’s play theory and Caillois’ *paidia* to encompass both play and games, the realm of traditional games.

In contrast, Renson differentiates (more so modern) competitive sports in his agonistic category. And, rounding out the physical cultural spectrum are expressive sports (e.g. dance or gymnastics) and exercises or training. For Renson, the term ‘sport’ draws from each one of these elements of movement culture and is figured centrally

Figure 2 - Renson’s Model of Movement Culture
(Source: Renson, “Safeguarding Ludodiversity,” 141.)



⁵⁵ Roland Renson, “Safeguarding Ludodiversity: Chances and Challenges in the Promotion and Protection of Traditional Movement Culture,” *East Asian Sport Thoughts* 3 (2013): 140.

within his Venn diagram of movement or physical culture.⁵⁶ A credit to the field of sport studies, Renson's model of movement culture does not simply categorize traditional games (which are grouped under the *ludens* category), but provides a framework for understanding the convergent and divergent developments of all play, games, and aspects of physical culture in the modern sporting landscape.

Building off the scholarship of historical, folk, and physical culturalists and theorists, like Huizinga, Caillois, Sutton-Smith, and Eichberg, Renson developed one of the most succinct and accepted maps of the physical culture universe. Classifying modern sport forms, traditional folk games, and other aspects of movement culture (e.g. jogging, yoga, ballet, etc.) is a required exercise for anyone that wants to understand the meaning of sport in society. And through this understanding of pluralistic physical activities, the sport fan, scholar, participant, or administrator can better appreciate the roots of physical contests; of our drive, as a human species, to exhilarate our sensations through competition and socialization. Renson's work in the field of sport studies, from his notion of ludodiversity, to his ardent advocacy for folk sport revival, to his universal model of movement culture, is prominent and profound. For, it is through his efforts, and those of his likeminded colleagues, that a critical aspect of sport history is salvaged: the idea that the antecedents to our contemporary sporting world are steeped in a folkloric past, rife with romance, ritual, and myth.

⁵⁶ See Figure 2.

Romantic Physical Rituals: Tradition, Myth, and Folklore

Rationalization, politicization, and modernization were all outcomes of the Age of Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution. However, throughout the nineteenth century, a countercultural movement that endorsed emotional expression, aestheticism, and the rawness of nature was percolating. In reaction to the Enlightenment ideal of scientific rationalism, romanticism glorified nature and the past.⁵⁷ Our romanticizing of history and nature spawns the ritualistic notions of *tradition*, *myth*, and *folklore* in all cultures around the world. Indeed, as observed by French philosopher Roland Barthes, myth “transforms history into nature.”⁵⁸ And sport, as a meaning-making cultural paradigm, falls within the spectrum of the romantic, ritualistic, traditional, mythological, and folkloric. Former UNESCO Director-General René Maheu claimed that “sport, like the theatre, like literature and like the plastic arts, should be a creator of myths.”⁵⁹ The aim of the current section is to understand folk sport’s myth-making dynamic, to understand how it exists as a combination of invented traditions, folk romanticism, and “nostalgic paradigm.”⁶⁰ Explained by Icelandic folklorist Valdimar Hafstein, “this nostalgic idealization of popular culture reinforced the identities of the audiences [of folklore] as modern, progressive, and cultured. Both its study and its spectacularization perform the stories that

⁵⁷ Simon Bainbridge, “At Play in the Mountains: The Development of British Mountaineering in the Romantic Period,” in *Sporting Cultures, 1650-1850*, eds. Daniel O’Quinn and Alexis Tadié (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018), 196-218.

⁵⁸ Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans. Annette Lavers (New York: Hill & Wang, 1972), 129.

⁵⁹ René Maheu, “Sport and Culture,” in *Sport and International Relations*, eds. Benjamin Love, David B. Kanin, and Andrew Strenk (Champaign, IL: Stipes, 1978), 13.

⁶⁰ Roland Robertson, “Glocalization: Time-Space and Homogeneity-Heterogeneity,” in *Global Modernities*, eds. Mike Featherstone, Scott Lash, and Roland Robertson (London: Sage, 1995), 30.

modern societies tell themselves about themselves."⁶¹ These repeated stories become folklore, and if repeated over generations, become the invented traditions that define us. Much of what we claim to be culturally, is as a result of folklore turned tradition. For, as summarized by Sutton-Smith, "traditions are the reflexive selections and transformations of those aspects of past customs which create identity and value for those engaged in the preservation. Tradition is the reflection of how we wish to think about ourselves and to be accepted by others. Tradition is a rhetoric of our own identity."⁶² As such, *traditional* games, as physical embodiments of folk cultures, are integral to the creation of cultural and ethnic identity. By romanticizing such traditional pastimes, we imbue them with communitarian values and a nostalgic heritage.

The first aspect of traditional games in need of dissection is tradition itself. In its simplest form, tradition is a ritual or myth communicated through intergenerational transmission. In the late nineteenth century, tradition was defined by German historians Gustav Droysen and Ernst Bernheim as the "conscious process of preserving something for posterity."⁶³ Welsh political scientist Raymond Williams added that tradition is "powerfully operative in the process of social and cultural definition and identification."⁶⁴ As such, it is a

⁶¹ Valdimar Tr. Hafstein, "Intangible Heritage as a Festival; or, Folklorization Revisited," *Journal of American Folklore* 131, no. 520 (Spring 2018): 138.

⁶² Sutton-Smith, "Children's Traditional Games," 26.

⁶³ Roland Renson, "The Reinvention of Tradition in Sports and Games," *Journal of Comparative Physical Education and Sport* 19 (1997): 46. See also: Johann Gustav Droysen, *Grundriss der Historik [Outline of History]* (Leipzig: Von Veit, 1868); and Ernst Bernheim, *Lehrbuch der Historischen Methode und der Geschichtsphilosophie [Textbook of the Historical Method and the Philosophy of History]* (Leipzig: von Duncker & Humblot, 1889).

⁶⁴ Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 115.

way of saving us from the loss of our histories, meanings, and identities in the global era of modernization, and its concomitant homogeneity. In this sense, traditional games imbue traditional values inherent in the histories, meanings, and identities of those who play them. Sutton-Smith purports that traditional games introduce “the self-consciousness of history to the praxis of custom.”⁶⁵ The social interactions within our contemporary games reinforce our standing in the present, and therefore the ‘traditional’ is always “an aspect of and creation of the present, never of the past.”⁶⁶ We, in the now, create and select our traditions, and so stories turn into myths and games into customs.

In 1983, Marxist historian Eric Hobsbawm and Africanist Terence Ranger edited the influential, oft-quoted, paradigm-shifting book *Invention of Tradition*. In it, they sought to contextualize the contemporary usage of tradition, notably the ingenuity of ritual and myth. As per Hobsbawm’s definition: “Invented tradition is taken to mean a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms or behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past.”⁶⁷ He stressed the importance of repetition, “a process of formalization and ritualization.”⁶⁸ The notion that we ‘imagined’ traditions into reality marked a turn in the conception of history as events that occurred organically, rather than willed into

⁶⁵ Sutton-Smith, “Children’s Traditional Games,” 24.

⁶⁶ Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System I: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century* (New York: Academic Press, 1974), 98.

⁶⁷ Eric Hobsbawm, “Introduction: Inventing Traditions,” in *The Invention of Tradition*, eds. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 1.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 4.

history by recurrence. Primarily for nationalistic purposes, customary practices, like folklore, traditional games, or rituals, were modified and standardized. Examples in the *Invention of Tradition* include Scottish Highland dress (notably clan kilts), British coronation ceremonies, and colonial authority in India and Africa. Furthermore, Hobsbawm identified three overlapping types of invented traditions: “a) those establishing or symbolizing social cohesion or the membership of groups, real or artificial communities, b) those establishing or legitimizing institutions, status or relations of authority, and c) those whose main purpose was socialization, the inculcation of beliefs, value systems and conventions of behaviour.”⁶⁹ Traditional games can be classified in any of these three types. For example, the Highland Games are a marker of Scottishness (type A), *buzkashi* plays an integral role in legitimizing the rural Afghan political system (type B), and *catche fétiche*, a form of Congolese wrestling, reaffirms voodoo spirituality (type C).⁷⁰ The *tradition* inherent to such traditional games stems from its ritualization and folklorization: custom and lore.

The two underlying aspects of tradition are custom and myth. Custom is practice within a tradition that ritualizes said practice. Alternatively termed ritual, festival, rite, ceremony, or custom, it is the tangible aspect of tradition. Huizinga explained ritual as “a matter of shows, representations, dramatic performances, imaginative actualizations of a vicarious nature.”⁷¹ Many traditional games are combined with a diverse array of other cultural activities to

⁶⁹ Ibid., 9.

⁷⁰ Richard Lubembo Kabeke, “Les Fétiches sur le ‘Ring’: Catch, Sport et Rituel Magico-Religieux [Fetish in the Ring: Wrestling, Sport and Magico-Religious Ritual],” *Cahiers Africains* 71 (2005): 259-77.

⁷¹ Huizinga, *Homo Ludens*, 15.

produce ritual through festivals and celebrations. As noted by Russian anthropologist Alexey Kylasov, “ethno-cultural festivals consisted of folklore, music, dance, fairs for masters of folk arts and crafts, and traditional games; thus, the close association between traditional games with traditional holidays.”⁷² Examples include the revival of the Inuit winter festivity of *kivgiq* or the Mongolian *Naadam* national festival, both of which include traditional dance and games in the context of traditional and ethnic pride. Myth, on the other hand, is the intangible aspect of tradition, serving the double function of making us understand something and imposing it upon us at the same time.⁷³ As described by Miller *et al.*:

Myths are not total delusions or utter falsehoods, but partial truths that accentuate some versions of reality and marginalize or omit others. They embody fundamental cultural values and character-types and appeal to deep-seated emotions. Myths depoliticize social relations by ignoring the vested interests surrounding those stories that become ascendant in a given culture. And critically, myths disavow or deny their own conditions of existence: they are forms of speech that derive from specific sites and power relations but are passed off as natural and eternal verities.⁷⁴

Author of the poignant *Mythologies*, Roland Barthes tersely admitted that we “do not have with myth a relationship based on truth but on use,” thereby molding the mythological to uphold our invented traditions. Nationalism, another invented tradition, is an ideal example of the utilization of myth for folk romantic purposes.

An important link between romanticism and folklore is nationalism. As opposed to the liberal nationalism employed during the American (1775-1783) and French (1789-1799)

⁷² Alexey Kylasov, *Ethnosport: The End of Decline* (Zurich: Lit Verlag, 2015), 39.

⁷³ Barthes, *Mythologies*, 117.

⁷⁴ Toby Miller, Geoffrey Lawrence, Jim McKay, and David Rowe, *Globalization and Sport: Playing the World* (London: Sage, 2001), 3.

Revolutions, romantic nationalism percolated in central and eastern Europe around the turn of the nineteenth century. Summarizing the “contradistinction” to liberal nationalism, Mormon folklorist William Wilson noted that “romantic nationalism emphasized passion and instinct instead of reason, national differences instead of common aspirations, and, above all, the building of nations on the traditions and myths of the past – that is, on folklore – instead of on the political realities of the present.”⁷⁵ In this sense, romantic nationalism may be considered *ipso facto* a folkloric renaissance. The founder of this folk romantic movement was German philosopher and poet Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803), who warned against “the Enlightenment, which regarded tradition as a symbol of ignorance and fanaticism,” and the eradication of Prussian cultural values in the popular ideologies of creeping French customs.⁷⁶ For Herder, a renaissance of folk identity was expressed through its nostalgic poems and songs, which he referred to as “the archives of a nationality,” “the imprints of the soul” of a nation, or “the living voice of the nationalities.”⁷⁷ Herder’s writings and ideas proliferated during an era of rebellion and search for meaning, binding localities and ethnicities to their common histories. According to Canadian historian Ian McKay, Herder “was self-consciously turning to the ‘barbaric’ and the ‘primitive’ as a way of countering the stresses of modernity, positioning tradition and custom as almost sacred elements of collective identity, and exalting the German

⁷⁵ William A. Wilson, “Herder, Folklore and Romantic Nationalism,” *Journal of Popular Culture* 6, no. 4 (Spring 1973): 820.

⁷⁶ Giuseppe Cocchiara, *The History of Folklore in Europe*, trans. John N. McDaniel (Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1981), 168.

⁷⁷ Johann Gottfried Herder, *Herders Sämmtliche Werke [Complete Works]*, ed. Bernhard Suphan, 33 vols. (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1877-1913). Reprinted in Wilson, “Herder,” 826.

Volk above all other peoples in the world.”⁷⁸ His influence was far-reaching, birthing an entire genre of folk poetry, to the extent that “by the 1830s, romantic revolutionaries were speaking almost routinely of *le peuple, das Volk, il popolo, narod, or lud* as a kind of regenerative life force in human history.”⁷⁹ In German, the term *Volk* refers both to ethnonational membership as well as the lower classes of the social strata. Additionally, the term *Volkskultur*, as explained by Swiss ethnologist Walter Leimgruber, “is traditionally understood in the sense of rural, pre-industrial, and essentially peasant culture.”⁸⁰ Indeed, *Volkskultur* is the crux of the folkloric renaissance.

The years surrounding the turn of the twentieth century, were “the heyday of folklore.”⁸¹ As explained by Wilson, folklore supported nationalist inclinations:

English-American folklore studies began as the leisure-time activity of scholar-gentlemen intrigued by that quaint body of customs, manners, and oral traditions called popular antiquities- rebaptized folklore in 1846. With the advent of evolutionary anthropology in the second half of the nineteenth century and with its emphasis on folklore items as survivals among the peasants of ancient practices and beliefs, folklore became the object of serious study ... Serious folklore studies ... were from the beginning intimately associated with emergent romantic nationalistic movements in which zealous scholar-patriots searched the folklore record of the past not just to see how people had lived in by-gone days-the principal interest of the antiquarians-but primarily to discover “historical” models on which to reshape the present and build the future.⁸²

As folk games take their name from the *Volk*, packaged in their meaning is the historicity of romantic nationalism, the representation of an *ethnie*. Folk sports are the ‘games of the common

⁷⁸ Ian McKay, *The Quest of the Folk: Antimodernism and Cultural Selection in Twentieth-Century Nova Scotia* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1994), 11.

⁷⁹ James H. Billington, *Fire in the Minds of Men: Origins of the Revolutionary Faith* (New York: Basic Books, 1980), 160.

⁸⁰ Walter Leimgruber, “Switzerland and the UNESCO Convention on Intangible Cultural Heritage,” *Journal of Folklore Research* 47, no. 1-2 (January/August 2010): 171.

⁸¹ Hafstein, “Folklorization Revisited,” 138.

⁸² Wilson, “Herder,” 819.

people,' embodying ethnonationalist identity, expression, and belonging. Folklore enlivens folk sports to retell the narratives of the peoples who play them, adding an ethnocultural flair to a tradition-laden history. Within this mystifying notion of folklore, however, is the ever-present evolutionary threat conceptualized as *folklorization*. Coined by German folklorist Hans Moser, folklorism or folklorization is the preservation of folk culture through its 'freezing,' museumification, or re-enactment.⁸³ Folklorization skews cultural authenticity, isolating expressions of community identity from their social background in order to promote tourism, national identity, and 'living traditions.' Because folk games embody the tangible and performative movement culture of Herder's mythology of the *Volk*, folklorization threatens them with objectification and sterilization. And once objectified, it further threatens these sporting practices with "commodification, exoticizing heritage for consumption by outsiders and alienating it from the practicing community, or at least transforming the community's relation to its practices."⁸⁴ As is discussed in the next chapter, the hegemonic dynamics of global sport are marginalizing folk sports along with their folkloristic iterations (demonstration sports for the tourist gaze). Many folk rituals, games, and dances show "the contradictions between social identity and neo-colonial alienation."⁸⁵ Therein lies the folkloric paradox: Exploiting folklore to dismantle folk culture.

⁸³ Hans Moser, "Vom Folklorismus in Unserer Zeit [Folklorism in Our Time]," *Zeitschrift für Volkskunde* 58, no. 2 (1962): 177-209.

⁸⁴ Hafstein, "Folklorization Revisited," 134.

⁸⁵ Eichberg, "Body as Identical," 66.

One particular aspect of folklorization that is pertinent to the overall themes of this dissertation is the nascent notion of *heritagization*. Although *Volkskultur* could once have been described as an idealistic community of preservation, the notions of the *Volk* and of the ‘traditional’ are under constant scrutiny and demise. Sutton-Smith summarized the shift in our folkloric conceptions in a scathing diatribe about the contemporary field:

It is no surprise that the greatest shift in folklore theory in this century has been away from some form of ‘survivalism’ where the games are seen as containing remnants of times past to varieties of performance theory which examine the way in which the folk materials are presented aesthetically to their audiences. The inherently aesthetic value claimed for tradition by the early Romanticists has now become the focus of how performances create their own aesthetics. In modern folklorist hands tradition has largely become a contemporary and existential pursuit rather than a pursuit of ancient essences preserved into the present. All of which leads up to the position that tradition perhaps formerly was mainly about loss, is now about the *assertion of contemporary* value and the use of selected earlier customs to heighten that value.⁸⁶

In this context, folk games are merely contemporary reinventions of traditional customs and lore. In essence, this sums up the folkloric aspects of traditional games: They are invented traditions, bolstered by tangible ritual and intangible myth, played by the common folk in order to express a romantic ethnic identity. In many ways, folk games can be considered ethnosport.

Ethnosport

As an individual, I identify with a number of different groups. I identify both as a Hungarian (heritage) and as a Canadian (birth nation), as an athlete and a scholar, as a member of my family and of my social community. With so many overlapping identities, the concept of identity is complicated, to say the least. Identity can be defined as the combination of the

⁸⁶ Sutton-Smith, “Children’s Traditional Games,” 26.

distinctions, values and beliefs, and representations that form the self-image of an individual or group. With myriad implications in philosophy, psychology, and anthropology, identity is a profound and dynamic metaphysical construct. Apart from self-identity, many groups define themselves through this collective self-imagination, as exemplified by the acceptance of the concepts of gender identity, national identity, spiritual identity, class identity, and ethnic identity. Although developmental psychologist Erik H. Erikson first delved into the concept of identity in the field of social psychology, David de Levita described 'identials' as the salient components of identity, finding three of central importance: the body, the name, and the life history.⁸⁷ In an essay about the body as an idential, Eichberg remarked that "it is fascinating that this finding transferred to folk identity: History of the people, the name of the people, and body culture are identials of folk."⁸⁸ Indeed, ethnic identity has furthered the relationship between the *Volk* and their games. With traditional games claimed as the body culture of the folk, and a tangible marker of distinct ethnicity, they have thus become "salient emblems of local or ethnic identity."⁸⁹ Delving into the ethnic identity of folk games allows for a better understanding of their role in ethnonationalist resistance and the preservation of cultural praxis in the face of a creeping global "ethnocide."⁹⁰

⁸⁷ David J. de Levita, *The Concept of Identity* (Paris: Mouton, 1965).

⁸⁸ Eichberg, "Body as Idential," 67.

⁸⁹ Renson, "Reinvention," 47.

⁹⁰ David Maybury-Lewis, *Indigenous Peoples, Ethnic Groups, and the State* (Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon, 1997).

The idea of linking ethnic groups to games, of localizing folk sports as customs of a given society, was launched by French sociologist Marcel Mauss' 1934 speech entitled "Techniques of the Body."⁹¹ In it, he purported that body techniques (or specific movements) correspond to a particular *habitus* and are intimately associated with the norms and values exhibited by members of a community. In essence, Mauss predicated movement culture within a wider sociocultural milieu. This is what Parlebas termed *ethnomotricity*, under the assumption that folk sport "originates in the cultural identity of each community, which brings to life original play scenarios, linked to their lifestyle, their beliefs and their passions."⁹² Proceeding one step further along this terminological genealogy, a contingency of Russian folk sport revivalists began to employ the term *ethnosport* as synonymous with traditional games. A protégé of Eichberg's, Alexey Kylasov, founder of the World Ethnosport Society, has exerted extensive scholarly effort in the development of an ethnosport theory, process, and history. Kylasov defines ethnosport as "an important part of the cultural heritage of the people and the form of ethno-cultural identity, rooted in national culture and customs."⁹³ Indeed, traditional sports are still a significant aspect of ethnonational identity creation. In many parts of the world today, "there has been a lot of questions on the role and place of national culture, and the need to return to the authentic form of sports in order to preserve the identity of an ethnic group in the conditions of their cultural environment."⁹⁴ In this sense, traditional games coincide with

⁹¹ Marcel Mauss, "Les Techniques du Corps [Techniques of the Body]," in *Sociologie et Anthropologie* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1966), 363-86.

⁹² Parlebas, "Destiny of Games," 16.

⁹³ Kylasov, *Ethnosport*, 34.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 40-1.

the ethnic nation, and are instrumental in alternative conceptualizations of national identity. In an age of existential anxiety about globalization, homogenization, and ethnocide, ethnosport attempts to broaden intercultural communication. Thus folk games are ethnic markers and symbols of our contemporary societies, representing the resistance to and struggle with modern, global, hegemonic sport forms and their concomitant ethnocidal tendencies.

Roland Barthes wrote that “the basic idea of a perfectible mobile world, produces the inverted image of an unchanging humanity, characterized by an indefinite repetition of its identity.”⁹⁵ In other words, change is inevitable and to resist it is to invent traditions. Here, again, we can relate to Hobsbawm’s revelation that tradition is repetition, but Barthes denotes identity as repetition as well. So, could this mean that identity is tradition, supported by both myth and custom? At its root, traditional folk sports are markers of ethnic identity. As noted by Cheska, “expressive culture, including games and sport, are embedded in the cultural context of an ethnic group; thus these physical activities help make up and reflect important identifiable values and meanings in that particular historic process.”⁹⁶ Folk sport represents the body culture of an *ethnie*, a corporeal experience of tradition, community, and locality. In its varied terms, whether folk sport, traditional games, or ethnosport, they are indelible symbols of ethnic belonging and ethnonationalist struggle.

⁹⁵ Barthes, *Mythologies*, 142.

⁹⁶ Alyce Taylor Cheska, “Revival, Survival, and Revisal: Ethnic Identity Through ‘Traditional Games,’” in *Meaningful Play, Playful Meaning*, ed. Gary Alan Fine (Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics, 1987), 145.

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Traditional games are, commonsensically, 'traditional', in that they are buttressed by the twin ideas of the ritual and the myth. Moreover, by partaking in them, we become "contestants in this 'postmodern game' of making histories and inventing traditions."⁹⁷ However, at their root, traditional games are pluralistic, folkloric, and ethnic. First, they are pluralistic, promoting a heterogeneity of sport forms and a cultural tolerance not often observed through other mediums. Regardless of their classification, by Caillois, Eichberg, or Renson, all peoples have their games and "the extreme diversity of local peculiarities of games paradoxically illustrates trends shared by the whole human species, in other words illustrates the global unity of the culture of humanity."⁹⁸ Second, they are folkloric, adhering to the tenets of folk romanticism and heritagized through a petrifying folklorization. Traditional games are the games of the common peoples, a cultural pathway, a body cultural expression. Third, they are ethnic, representing the collective identities of distinct *ethnie*. Through the geographic diffusion and the import-export of cultural forms, ethnic groups establish "ludocultural areas" with their folk sporting traditions.⁹⁹ For the purposes of nation-building, "ethnic traditions – myths, symbols and values, memories – are present in or 'flow' into all kinds of communities, and can be used by nationalists for what John Hutchinson has termed a 'mythic overlaying.'"¹⁰⁰ These three

⁹⁷ Roland Robertson, *Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture* (London: Sage, 1992), 31.

⁹⁸ Parlebas, "Part of Culture?," 36.

⁹⁹ Parlebas, "Destiny of Games," 23.

¹⁰⁰ Anthony D. Smith, "Epilogue: The Power of Ethnic Traditions in the Modern World," in *Nationalism and Ethnosymbolism: History, Culture and Ethnicity in the Formation of Nations*, eds. Athena S. Leoussi and Steven Grosby (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 330. See also: John Hutchison, "Myth against Myth: The Nation as Ethnic Overlay," *Nations and Nationalism* 10, no. 1-2 (January 2004): 109-23.

characteristics of traditional games – plurality, folklore, and ethnicity – are interwoven to produce a dynamic, philosophical, (almost) poetic definition: Through their pluralism, folk sports belong to all peoples, the diverse *Volkskultur* of the world, and become the romantic body culture of the *ethnie*. By achieving the ideal balance between universality and diversity, traditional games merit preservation as embodiments of humanity's intangible cultural heritage. Not folklorization, but safeguarding; to be played and enjoyed, not labeled in a box. In the words of Roland Renson, if folk sports “are to acquire the status of sporting *traditions*, rather than sporting *relics*, they would thus contribute to the widening of the modern idea of sport into a new postmodern pluralistic and ludic concept.”¹⁰¹ In the age of the ubiquitous, global, modern, mediatic, hegemonic sport forms, more than ever, it is essential to study, practice, and understand the symbolic meanings, rituals, and myths of our folk sporting traditions.

¹⁰¹ Roland Renson, “Local Heroes: Beyond the Stereotype of the Participants in Traditional Games,” *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* 32, no. 1 (1997): 66.

The Globalization Paradox

*But [the Angel of History] is immortal, and our faces are turned towards the obscurity ahead.*¹

In his “Theses on the Philosophy of History,” cultural critic Walter Benjamin referred to Paul Klee’s 1920 monoprint *Angelus Novus* as the ‘Angel of History,’ writing that his “face is turned towards the past,” witnessing the continual wreckage of a single historical narrative.² Drawing on Benjamin’s imagery in the above epigraph, influential political scientist Benedict Anderson muses that although we may continually learn from history, we prefer to look unabashedly ahead. For, as noted by world-systems theorist Immanuel Wallerstein, “modernity as a central universalizing theme gives priority to newness, change, progress.”³ Among the different approaches to the question of modernity, which are dissected below, Jóhann Árnason posits three common denominators of particular significance: globalization, pluralization, and relativization.⁴ In this chapter, we focus on all three denominators: globalization and its effects on local cultural forms; the pluralization or diversity of cultural traditions; and the relative nature of marginality.

The effects of globalization are many. Through the accelerated evolution of technologies and communications, the world is becoming a smaller place. The term *globalization* was popularized in the academy by Roland Robertson in his 1992 book: “The compression of the

¹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 2016), 162.

² Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), 12.

³ Immanuel Wallerstein, “Culture as the Ideological Battleground of the Modern World-System,” in *Global Culture: Nationalism, Globalization and Modernity*, ed. Mike Featherstone (London: Sage, 1990), 47.

⁴ Jóhann P. Árnason, “Nationalism, Globalization and Modernity,” *Theory, Culture and Society* 7 (1990): 207-36.

world and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole.”⁵ Part and parcel to this compression and intensification are the effects of industrialization, mass migration, urbanization, and the inexorable deterioration of our natural environment. Globalization scholar Deane Neubauer posits six dynamics of contemporary globalization, including: (1) The collapse of time and space; (2) migration and urbanization; (3) wealth creation and distribution; (4) the transformation of global media; (5) the primacy of trade and consumption; and (6) the transformation of values.⁶ These dynamics ultimately affect the colloquiality of localized or traditional customs, practices, and processes, rendering the unique less so.

In effect, how globalization affects traditional cultural forms (in our case: sports) is the underlying motivation for this dissertation. Stefano *et al.* summarize this notion by stating that “a great number of cultural expressions, or ‘intangible cultural heritage’ [ICH], are considered to be threatened with extinction as a result of the homogenising forces of globalisation, or the rise of one, mass culture.”⁷ The homogenization of unique cultural practices is at the core of the heritage movement, which could more aptly be termed the ‘heritage conservation movement.’ Although taking a somewhat ominous and critical tone, there is most definitely a concern among folklorists and keepers of traditional customs that the tenets of globalization, through which the contemporary world is further accelerating into the next phase of modernity, leave no

⁵ Roland Robertson, *Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture* (London: Sage, 1992), 8.

⁶ Deane Neubauer, “Modern Sport and Olympic Games: The Problematic Complexities Raised by the Dynamics of Globalization,” *Olympika: The International Journal of Olympic Studies* 17 (2008): 1-40.

⁷ Michelle L. Stefano, Peter Davis, and Gerard Corsane, “Touching the Intangible: An Introduction,” in *Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage*, eds. Michelle L. Stefano, Peter Davis, and Gerard Corsane (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell, 2012), 1.

room for cultural diversity and traditional experiences. As credited to famed cultural anthropologist Margaret Mead, the fear is that we are drifting towards a “blandly amorphous and singularly generic modern culture that ultimately will have no rivals.”⁸ In the realm of sport, it is global sports – along with the international bureaucratic institutions (like the IOC) that uphold them – that are infiltrating every nook and cranny of the sports world. Modern sport is keenly suited to homogenization. As noted by French sport sociologist Pierre Parlebas, “of all cultural practices, sport undoubtedly represents one of those where the standardization of behavior is the most pronounced and where the process of convergence knows its most spectacular illustration.”⁹ The popular draw of global games, with their flashy lights and celebrity appeal, are inundating the plethora of screens, from the Polynesian islands to the Western Sahara, through the ubiquitous sport-media complex. Folk sports are endangered species in the physical cultural landscape. As such, over the past couple of decades folk sports have rebranded as intangible heritage, representing the traditions of their host communities. It is within the confines of UNESCO that sportive intangible heritage, along with other forms of ICH, may supposedly find their salvation. Through the universalist ideals of UNESCO and its heritage agenda, these marginalized folk traditions could be saved (or, at least, preserved) from the homogenizing effects of a globalizing world. Ironically, if it were not for global institutions,

⁸ As quoted in Wade Davis, *Light at the Edge of the World: A journey through the Realm of Vanishing Cultures* (Madeira Park, BC: Douglas & McIntyre, 2001), 198.

⁹ Pierre Parlebas, “Le Jeu Fait-Il Partie de la Culture? [Is Play Part of Culture?],” in *Jeux Traditionnels, Sports et Patrimoine Culturel: Cultures et Éducation [Traditional Games, Sports and Cultural Heritage: Cultures and Education]*, ed. Pierre Parlebas (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2016), 31. [My translation]

like the IOC or UNESCO, local practices would likely not be competing with global ones. It is the globalization paradox of the modern world.

As the theoretical framework of this dissertation, the current chapter examines the concept of globalization from a number of perspectives, followed by the effects it has had on traditional sports around the world. From a theoretical perspective, the first section elucidates on globalization theory, as well as world-systems theory and homogenization theory, in an effort to understand what the term global has come to indicate today. Additionally, the concept of cultural hegemony is analyzed to further understand whether the processes of globalization are unidirectional or dynamic. The next section highlights the ‘spin-off’ concept of *glocalization* and, to a lesser extent, *grobalization*. Whereas the latter encompasses the capitalist onus on *growth* through globalization, the former involves a “twofold process involving the interpenetration of the universalization of particularism and the particularization of universalism.”¹⁰ In short, the global-local nexus. Then, the third section explores the concept of modernization and its concomitant marginalizing tendencies. Finally, the fourth section delves into sportification, pedagogization, and folklorization of folk sport. Examples abound of how sport has globalized, glocalized, modernized, and marginalized, this chapter concludes with the heritagization of traditional sports and games. The marginalization of folk sports in the face of both globalization and modernity is widespread, inevitable, and disheartening. These dual space-time phenomena have, “like a lawnmower, mowed down the cultural diversity of world

¹⁰ Robertson, *Globalization*, 100.

sport into neat and tidy rows."¹¹ For, the antiquarian sporting pursuits of our predecessors are waylaid by the perpetual march towards a globalized modernity and ultimately condemned to the bookshelf of the Angel of History.

Homogenizing Culture?

The study of humanities tends to be a localized education. Growing up in Canada, for instance, we learned about the history, anthropology, and culture of Canadian society, only rarely glimpsing our place in the world. It became a bore to continually review the same mundane material in an era of accelerated change.¹² Frankly, I doubt that I was alone, as more students are becoming exhausted with the study of Western modernity and looking for intellectual stimulation in global contexts. *Globalization* became a popular intellectual, business, and media term in the 1980s, furthered in the academy by a number of historians and sociologists. For instance, modernity theorist Anthony Giddens defines globalization as "the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa."¹³ In more Eliasian terms, sport sociologist Joseph Maguire, who has focused much of his scholarship on sport and the global, understands globalization "as a balance and blend between diminishing contrasts and increasing varieties, a commingling of cultures and attempts by more established

¹¹ Lu Yuanzhen, "Hope Lies in the Revival of Eastern Sport Culture," in *Olympic Studies Reader: A Multidisciplinary and Multicultural Research Guide*, eds. Hai Ren, Lamartine DeCosta, and Ann Miragaya (Beijing: Beijing Sport University Press, 2010), 82.

¹² Thomas Hylland Eriksen, *Overheating: An Anthropology of Accelerated Change* (London: Pluto, 2016).

¹³ Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), 64.

groups to control and regulate access to global flows.”¹⁴ For our purposes, the intriguing notion of “diminishing contrasts and increasing varieties” refers to the homogenization of sport and increasing diversity of sport cultures. Oxymoronic as it may seem, Maguire points to the underlying question of this chapter: Does globalization, and its concomitant temporal parameter (modernization), marginalize or revive the diversity of folk sporting traditions? This section begins the process of informing the answer by reviewing the history of globalization, theories of ‘world culture’ and homogenization, and the validity of cultural hegemony in the equation.

The consideration of distant localities within a global context was documented as early as the ancient Greek historian Polybius’ (c. 200-118 BCE). In his *Histories*, in which he wrote concerning the rise of the Roman Empire in ‘universal’ terms, he states: “Formerly the things which happened in the world had no connection among themselves ... But since then all events are united in a common bundle.”¹⁵ Fast-forwarding by a couple of millennia, eminent globalization scholar Roland Robertson, in his Minimal Phase Model of Globalization, proposes five phases of our contemporary globalization: (1) The *germinal phase* (1400s-1850s), formation of the first nation-states and intellectual ideas about humanity; (2) *incipient phase* (1850s-1870s), thematization of the nationalism-internationalism issue; (3) *take-off phase* (1870s-1920s), formalization of global bureaucracies (e.g. League of Nations or the International Olympic

¹⁴ Joseph Maguire, “Globalization, Sport and National Identities,” *Sport in Society* 14, no. 7/8 (September-October 2011): 987.

¹⁵ Hans Kohn, “Nationalism and Internationalism,” in *History and the Idea of Mankind*, ed. W. Warren Wagner (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1971), 121.

Committee); (4) *struggle-for-hegemony phase* (1920s-1960s), international conflicts (WWII and the subsequent Cold War) and the formation of the United Nations; and (5) *uncertainty phase* (1960s-1990s), widespread decolonization, effects of postcolonialism, and the turn to multiculturalism.¹⁶ In the midst of the so-called *take-off phase*, preeminent social liberalism theorist Leonard Hobhouse noted that “humanity is rapidly becoming, physically speaking, a single society,” suggesting that leading thinkers of the era were very much aware of the ideological milieu in which they found themselves.¹⁷ Adding to this model, a sixth phase (1990s to present), in which most contemporary globalization scholars are represented, could be termed the *acceleration phase*, as the emergence of a global culture is becoming commonly accepted in the contemporary world system.

Sociologist Immanuel Wallerstein is perhaps best known for his four-volume tome developing an approach to globalization known as world-systems theory. He defined a world-system as “a social system, one that had boundaries, structures, member groups, rules of legitimation, and coherence.”¹⁸ Wallerstein was an influential figure in the development of globalization studies, writing a full decade before his peers about such phenomena. A counterpoint to world-systems comes in the notion of a global culture. A global culture could function under a number of guises simultaneously – “as a cornucopia of standardized commodities, as a patchwork of denationalized ethnic or folk motifs, as a series of generalized

¹⁶ Roland Robertson, “Mapping the Global Condition: Globalization as the Central Concept,” in Featherstone, *Global Culture*, 25-8.

¹⁷ L.T. Hobhouse, *Morals in Evolution: A Study in Comparative Ethics*, vol. 1 (New York: Henry Holt, 1906), 331.

¹⁸ Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System I: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century* (New York: Academic Press, 1974), 347.

'human values and interests,' as a uniform 'scientific' discourse of meaning, and finally as the interdependent system of communications which forms the material base for all the other components and levels."¹⁹ As noted by anthropologist Arjun Appadurai, "the central feature of global culture today is the politics of the mutual effort of sameness and difference to cannibalize one another and thereby proclaim their successful hijacking of the twin Enlightenment ideas of the triumphantly universal and the resiliently particular."²⁰ In these theories – of both the world-system and global culture – there is a sense of an increasing interconnection and constellation of the various dynamics that are part and parcel to the notion of globalization. However, it is important to note that globalization is not necessarily homogenization, but rather "globalization involves the use of a variety of instruments of homogenization (armaments, advertising techniques, language hegemonies, and clothing styles) that are absorbed into local political and cultural economies, only to be repatriated as heterogeneous dialogues of national sovereignty, free enterprise, and fundamentalism."²¹ The homogenization of culture, therefore, is an aspect of globalization, but not its primary thrust, so to speak.

In many respects, there is a binary logic to globalization tendencies. In terms of cultures, the concerns expressed in the dualities of homogeneity-heterogeneity, uniformity-diversity, local-global, universal-particular all fall within a diversity-homogeneity axis that juxtaposes the

¹⁹ Anthony D. Smith, "Towards a Global Culture?," in Featherstone, *Global Culture*, 176.

²⁰ Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 43.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 42.

marginalizing effects of global homogenization with local cultural diversity.²² In this sense, cultural homogenization can be understood as the diminishment of cultural pluralism via the popularization of exogenous symbols, traditions, and values. Mike Featherstone suggests that globalization is a process of cultural flows, in part, due to cultural homogeneity and cultural disorder “linking together previously isolated pockets of relatively homogeneous culture which in turn produces more complex images of the other as well as generating identity-reinforcing reactions.”²³ Oftentimes cultural homogenization connotes the domination of Western, capitalist culture, and has been substituted by terms like Westernization, Americanization, McDonaldization, or coca-colonization.²⁴ The sporting equivalent of these terms would be Olympification, whereby much of the global sporting system has become compatible with the Olympic model. Cultural homogenization has also been critiqued as a form of cultural imperialism or neo-colonialism. Media critic Herbert Schiller described cultural imperialism as “the sum of the processes by which a society is brought into the modern world system and how its dominating stratum is attracted, pressured, forced, and sometimes bribed into shaping social institutions to correspond to, or even promote, the values and structures of the dominating center of the system.”²⁵ Moreover, physical culturalist Henning Eichberg, who critiques the Olympic Movement as a neocolonial system, argued that “institutional inequality results in

²² Ian P. Henry, “Concepts of Multiculturalism, Interculturalism, and their Relationship to Sports Policy,” in *Sport Facing the Test of Cultural Diversity: Integration and Intercultural Dialogue in Europe: Analysis and Practical Examples*, eds. William Gasparini and Aurélie Cometti (Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 2010), 59-64.

²³ Mike Featherstone, “Global Culture: An Introduction,” in Featherstone, *Global Culture*, 6.

²⁴ Paul Hopper, *Understanding Cultural Globalization* (Cambridge: Polity, 2007).

²⁵ Herbert I. Schiller, *Communication and Cultural Domination* (White Plains, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1976), 9.

economic dominance and neocolonization by Western capitalism in sport as in other areas.”²⁶

Be it globalization, Westernization, or neocolonialism, cultural homogenization tends to have a decidedly ominous undertone.

One redemptive process within this import-export of cultural intangibles is the concept of *creolization*, whereby “the peripheral culture absorbs the influx of meanings and symbolic forms from the centre and transforms them to make them in some considerable degree their own.”²⁷ Indeed, there are other aspects of globalization theory that do not centre around Western capitalist hegemony. Cultural flows are not always unidirectional. For instance, in the orientalist field of inquiry, Easternization is becoming a more apparent phenomenon in the global consciousness.²⁸ Japanese culture – from anime to electronics to martial arts – has become popularized in diverse contexts around the world. However, this cultural diffusion leads to a transmission of cultural forms in multiple directions, which, in the long-term, would (ultimately) trend towards greater homogenization of global culture. In the end, cultural homogenization claims that the diversity-homogeneity axis trends towards the globalization of Western conceptions of ‘civilization,’ characterized by its infatuation with the idea of ‘the modern,’ achievement orientation, and the “cult of abundance.”²⁹ The tendencies towards mass

²⁶ Henning Eichberg, “Olympic Sport – Neocolonization and Alternatives,” *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* 19, no. 1 (1984): 98.

²⁷ Ulf Hannerz, “Scenarios from Peripheral Cultures,” in *Culture, Globalization, and the World System: Contemporary Conditions for the Representation of Identity*, ed. Anthony D. King (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 127.

²⁸ Colin Campbell, *Easternization of the West: A Thematic Account of Cultural Change in the Modern Era* (Boulder, CO: Paradigm, 2007).

²⁹ Gianpiero Vincenzo, *New Ritual Society: Consumerism and Culture in the Contemporary Era* (Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars, 2018).

consumer culture in globalization flows do, indeed, point towards a homogenization of global cultures and, as such, affect the practice of traditional sport forms in disparate locales. So, can these homogenizing processes be misconstrued as cultural hegemony?

In response to Maguire's Americanization hypothesis, sport historian Alan Guttmann pointed out that "both terms, cultural hegemony and cultural imperialism, imply intentionality," insinuating the existence of a Machiavellian global culture movement.³⁰ When observed through an historical lens, national expansionist notions, like British colonialism or Woodrow Wilson's American self-determination, bolster Guttmann's argument that there is grand intention in cultural takeover. So, too, does the commercialization of the Olympic Movement. Developed by Marxist philosopher Antonio Gramsci, the theory of cultural hegemony states that ruling powers coopt cultural institutions and propagate ideology to maintain authority and the *status quo*.³¹ As noted by Wallerstein, "hegemony depends in many ways on the fact that implicit strength is never challenged," because, at its core, it is an ideological warfare oftentimes in the domain of intangible culture.³² For instance, serious challenges the Olympic system, like extreme sports or e-sports, tend to be incorporated by the IOC to maintain sporting hegemony. This cultural hegemonic 'war' tends to play out in the "global periphery," to use another Wallersteinian term, where the "economically more

³⁰ Allen Guttmann, "Sports Diffusion: A Response to Maguire and the Americanization Commentaries," *Sociology of Sport Journal* 8 (1991): 187.

³¹ Antonio A. Santucci, *Antonio Gramsci*, trans. Graziella Di Mauro and Salvatore Engel-Di Mauro (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2010).

³² Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System IV: Centrist Liberalism Triumphant, 1789–1914* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 129.

powerful group is able to reinforce its position by cultural domination as well."³³ It is in this periphery – also termed developing countries, the ‘Third World’, or the Global South – where the effects of cultural homogenization are most prevalent, as symbols of American corporatism, as well as Western fashion and artforms, are ubiquitous. Therefore, as the supposition goes, traditional sport forms in the global periphery also bear the mark of globalization in the aforementioned subtexts of homogenization, hybridization, and polarization.³⁴

Sport is a pervasive presence in our contemporary *accelerated phase* of globalization. In many ways, it is “probably the most universal aspect of popular culture,” traditional culture, and global culture.³⁵ Due to the popular draw of global, professional, Olympic sports, folk sports within the global periphery become marginal through the diffusion of global sports, urbanization, de-authentication via sportification (modernization), or the ridicules of backwardness. Thus, even within the globalization of sport, hegemonic trends have slowly extinguished symbolic local customs for passing global fancies. Global sport has tentacles in spaces as diverse as basic body physicality, genetic and medical breakthroughs, global bureaucratic media conglomerates, and ancient cultural rituals. In an intriguing article about the *mundialization* (or multidirectional globalization) of sport, Eric Wagner proposed four trends in the globalization of sport: (1) ‘Major’ sports, like basketball and soccer, are globalizing; (2) international multi-sport competitions and world championships are proliferating; (3) the sport-

³³ Wallerstein, *Modern World-System I*, 339.

³⁴ George Sage, *Globalizing Sport: How Organizations, Corporations, Media and Politics Are Changing Sports* (Boulder, CO: Paradigm, 2010).

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 1

media complex is becoming increasingly omnipresent; and (4) there is a growing awareness of the political utility of sport.³⁶ The IOC is at the apex of this system and the hegemonic power behind these trends, in general. The globalization of sport, however, is not a new phenomenon.

Like other cultural flows, sports diffused through various channels. “Sporting cultures traveled by trade and colonization, as well as by conquest and empire;” the exchange of sporting ideas and ideals have been observed in ancient, Medieval, Enlightenment, and modern societies alike.³⁷ Along the same historical lines of Robertson’s Minimal Phase Model, Maguire also outlines five global ‘sportisation’ phases: (1) The emergence of British pastimes (fox hunting, horse racing, cricket, etc.) as modern sports (17th and 18th centuries); (2) the standardization of modern sports, such as soccer, rugby, and track and field (19th century); (3) the development of sportive nationalism and global governance structures (1870-1914) – an indicator of Robertson’s aforementioned *take-off phase*; (4) the Westernization of global sport (1920s to 1960s); and (5) the mediatization of the Olympic movement, along with the comingling of diverse sporting cultures.³⁸ Moreover, Maguire proposes six structured processes that characterise the emergence, diffusion, and globalisation of modern achievement sport: Decline of folk sports; gendering of sport along a binary; scientization; athlete sport ethic; consumerism; and global sport power politics.³⁹ It can be construed that the decline of folk sports can trace its

³⁶ Eric A. Wagner, “Sport in Asia and Africa: Americanization or Mundialization?,” *Sociology of Sport Journal* 7 (1990): 399-402.

³⁷ Donald G. Kyle, *Sport and Spectacle in the Ancient World* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2007), 21.

³⁸ Joseph Maguire, *Global Sport: Identities, Societies, Civilizations* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999).

³⁹ Joseph Maguire, “Body Cultures: Diversity, Sustainability, Globalization,” in *Games of the Past – Sport for the Future?: Globalization, Diversification, Transformation*, ed. Gertrud Pfister (Sankt Augustin, DE: Academia-Verlag, 2004), 22.

roots to Phase 4 of the above model (the Westernization of global sport). In relation to Maguire's fifth phase, Miller *et al.* explore five interconnected processes which characterize the present moment in sport: Globalization, governmentalization, Americanization, televisualization, and commodification.⁴⁰ In various ways, each of these processes can be linked to contemporary Olympic globalism. Through these various timelines, processes, and structures, that have been designed to define and depict global sport, a neoliberalist narrative of progress and universalism is apparent. From a pragmatic viewpoint, the value of sport to the processes of globalization and modernization cannot be denied. For, as argued by Andrews and Ritzer:

With regard to participation and spectatorship, sport mirrored, and helped literally embody, broader globalizing trends pertaining to the hegemony of the nation-state as the organizing structure of modern society. It also proved to be the regulated embodiment, and affirming expression, of the distinctly Western... values of competition, progress, and achievement; modern values which, unsurprisingly, simultaneously underpin the liberal democratic, urban industrialist, and market capitalist societies from whence the modern sport order emerged.⁴¹

George Ritzer's term *globalization*, which emphasizes "the growing worldwide ability of ... capitalistic organizations and modern states to increase their power and reach," has a decidedly homogenizing tendency, in contrast to the *glocalizing* methods employed in efforts to safeguard and revive folk sporting traditions, which we turn to next.⁴²

In conclusion, globalization is the underlying social construct of our modern age. As defined by Anthony Smith, "eclectic, universal, timeless and technical, a global culture is seen

⁴⁰ Miller *et al.*, *Playing the World*.

⁴¹ David L. Andrews and George Ritzer, "The Grobal in the Sporting Glocal" in *Globalization and Sport*, eds. Richard Giulianotti and Roland Robertson (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), 32.

⁴² George Ritzer, *The Globalization of Nothing* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge, 2004), 74.

as pre-eminently a ‘constructed’ culture, the final and most imposing of a whole series of human constructs in the era of human liberation and mastery over nature.”⁴³ Although it was observed and acknowledged prior to the late nineteenth century, it was during the *take-off phase*, from the 1870s to the beginning of the First World War, that the world became organized in terms of the global; no longer merely the national. In the sporting context, as well, many disparate nation-states began to reprise the role of standard-bearer on the playing field, as opposed to the battlefield. Nations sought prestige within the Olympic Movement and hence adopted the modern sports listed on the official Olympic Programme. These decisions – for national, Olympic, and global glory – furthered a ‘cult of sameness’ along the diversity-homogeneity axis, forsaking the cultural pluralism and folkloric customs that differentiated locale from locale. Was the thrust to globalize sport a form of cultural hegemony? Indeed, the Western ideals of Olympism and achievement-oriented sport promulgated modern sport as the hegemonic global norm. Olympic commercialism – and the concomitant modern sporting spectacle – is anathema to the traditionalism inherent in folk sports. Through its many juxtapositions, the contemporary global sporting landscape engenders a dichotomous field of play: David versus Goliath, modern versus traditional, hegemon versus *volk*, global versus local.

Global-Local Nexus

One particular area of globalization studies that is worth delving into further is that of *glocalization*. A portmanteau term, fusing *local* with *globalization*, glocalization refers to the “interpenetration of the global and the local resulting in unique outcomes in different

⁴³ Smith, “Global Culture?,” 177.

geographic areas.”⁴⁴ It is the interplay of global trends and local norms, and best exemplifies the ultimate outcomes of cultural globalization. Starting with a brief overview of the characteristics and assumptions of glocalization, this section outlines local resistance to global cultural hegemony in an effort to provide a basis for a well-rounded discussion on marginalization in the next section. Starting with the processes of Hellenization and the *Pax Britannica* in the ancient world, there has always been a dynamic cultural *mélange* when hegemonic forces upend traditional ways of life.⁴⁵ Glocalization is an indelible aspect of the globalization phenomenon, and as suggested by Roland Robertson, who, in fact, coined the term, “we should now speak in such terms as the global institutionalization of the life-world and the localization of globality.”⁴⁶ For, to be a globally-conscious individual, one must draw from experiences, insights, and perspectives in a local context.

As opposed to expressing the global and the local as polar opposites on a spectrum, the dualism within glocalization instead constructs a symbiotic relationship, wherein the global draws from the local and the local informs the global. However, it is important to note that both locality and globality are relative terms, and ‘local’ is often “expressed in terms of generalized recipes of locality.”⁴⁷ The local, along with its ‘diversity’ and ‘traditionalism’ is, in effect, ‘sold’ to the global as unique and worthwhile heritage. Because, oftentimes, the global is

⁴⁴ Ritzer, *Globalization of Nothing*, 73.

⁴⁵ Axel Michaels, “Cultural Hybridity and Transculturality,” in *Engaging Transculturality: Concepts, Key Terms, Case Studies*, eds. Laila Abu-Er-Rub, Christiane Brosius, Sebastian Meurer, Diamantis Panagiotopoulos and Susan Richter (London: Routledge, 2019), 3-14.

⁴⁶ Robertson, “Mapping the Global,” 19.

⁴⁷ Roland Robertson, “Glocalization: Time-Space and Homogeneity-Heterogeneity,” in *Global Modernities*, eds. Mike Featherstone, Scott Lash, and Roland Robertson (London: Sage, 1995), 26.

regarded as antithetical to the local, asserting distant values on local identity and culture; a threat from the 'world out there.' Understood as oppositional and contradictory, Neubauer laments this experience as "a familiar human story of endogeny being challenged by exogeny."⁴⁸ George Ritzer, on the other hand, argues that "glocalization is more in tune with postmodern social theory and its emphasis on diversity, hybridity, and independence."⁴⁹ He further lists the essential elements of glocalization, as follows: pluralism, individual agency, relationality, and non-coercive commodities and media. In these diverging views, we may, again, refer to the diversity-homogeneity axis, and ask the question: Does glocalization yield greater cultural plurality or is it a threat to heterogeneity? As explained by Ritzer, "in the realm of culture, glocalization can be seen as a form of transnational expansion of common codes and practices (homogeneity) whereas glocalization involves the interaction of many global and local cultural inputs to create a kind of pastiche, or a blend, leading to a variety of cultural hybrids (heterogeneity)."⁵⁰ Thus, Robertson's *glocalization* and Ritzer's *glocalization* are the polarities within globalization, not simply the local and global. Although this may have clarified assertions of divergence within the context of glocalization, further discussion is required to explain the appropriation, transformation, and marginalization of local traditions.

In many ways, processes of glocalization can be read as resistance to the global invader. In these terms, as extrapolated by Parlebas, "at the local level, in original cultural melting pots, the fermentation of playful alchemy often overflows with creativity. Communities secrete a

⁴⁸ Neubauer, "Modern Sports," 11.

⁴⁹ Ritzer, *Globalization of Nothing*, 75.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

counter-acculturation, not often visible but real, which strains to preserve their identity.”⁵¹ In other ways, glocalization is an absorption of global culture within local culture, whereby local peoples creolize global norms to their local contexts, redefining local traditional values in order to adapt to the inevitability of change.⁵² With a plethora of competing local traditions in the global amphitheatre of culture, in an effort to solidify the intergenerational transmission of one’s customs and rituals, it is no wonder that we are witness to, what Featherstone terms, the “global ‘cultural wars’ with little basis for global projects of cultural integration, *lingua francas*, and ecumenical or cosmopolitan ‘unity through diversity’ notions.”⁵³ The utopian notions of a ‘global culture’ are, frankly, unrealisable. It is a dystopia in which we live, where the popularization of universals drowns out the safety of particulars. In Gramscian terms, we live in a world “in which the assertion of ‘locality’ or *Gemeinschaft* is seen as the pitting of subaltern ‘universals’ against the ‘hegemonic universal’ of dominant cultures and/or classes.”⁵⁴ Indeed, even sport, as a widely diffused cultural form, is a ‘contested terrain.’⁵⁵ Nodes of resistance in local sport contexts are apparent in folk wrestling forms, Gaelic and Highland games, localized football and martial arts codes, and Central Asian equine sports. In effect, through their very resistance to global standardized sport, folk sports are labeled traditional, countertypical, and marginal. But there are economic, political, mediatic, and cultural implications to these power

⁵¹ Parlebas, “Is Play Part of Culture?,” 32.

⁵² Barrie Houlihan, “Homogenization, Americanization, and Creolization of Sport: Varieties of Globalization,” *Sociology of Sport Journal* 11 (1994): 356-75.

⁵³ Featherstone, “Global Culture,” 10.

⁵⁴ Robertson, “Glocalization,” 29.

⁵⁵ Peter Donnelly, “Sport as a Site for ‘Popular’ Resistance,” in *Popular Cultures and Political Practices*, ed. Richard Gruneau (Toronto: Garamond, 1988): 69-82.

struggles of the global-local sport nexus. For, as remarked by Wallerstein, “the mark of the modern world is the imagination of its profiteers and the counter-assertiveness of the oppressed.”⁵⁶

Although local sport can be autonomously controlled, as long as it does not threaten hegemonic power structures, there is a fallacy in the ubiquity of globalization.⁵⁷ Because of the ‘stretching,’ to employ a Giddensian term, of cultural relations in the process of globalization – as in, globalization processes are ‘spread too thin’ – there is a reversal of pressures indicative of social momentum for local autonomy and regional cultural identity.⁵⁸ It is important to consider the power of tradition and diversity – as opposed to the Enlightenment ideal of ‘unity in diversity’ – in the folk sporting space.⁵⁹ Folk games represent the embodiment of cultural traditions and can be considered oppositional or alternative to modern sports.⁶⁰ Hence, professional, Olympic, entertainment sports are the global invaders in diverse, tradition-laden locales. For instance, the rural *khalkhi* (folk) of the Republic of Georgia, who once flocked to the town square to participate in the folk football variant known as *lelo burti*, are today drawn to the modern code of rugby union.⁶¹ When prompted by popular sport, they say: ‘Why do it the old way when there is a modern way?’ As a result, some “regionalist sports movements have ...

⁵⁶ Wallerstein, *Modern World-System I*, 357.

⁵⁷ Phillip K. Shinnick, “Sport and Cultural Hegemony,” in *Sport and International Relations*, eds. Benjamin Love, David B. Kanin, and Andrew Strenk (Champaign, IL: Stipes, 1978), 95-107.

⁵⁸ Giddens, *Consequences of Modernity*, 65.

⁵⁹ German mathematician and philosopher Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646-1716) espoused this notion of ‘unity in diversity’ in his definition of harmony.

⁶⁰ Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975).

⁶¹ Susan Grant, *Physical Culture and Sport in Soviet Society: Propaganda, Acculturation, and Transformation in the 1920s and 1930s* (New York: Routledge, 2013).

tended towards a sort of uncoupling, emancipation or separatism, forming their own sportive identities on a smaller scale.”⁶² Although it is an impossibility to ‘shut out’ globalizing forces, the local must glocalize. An acceptance and adaptation to new global norms is a necessity for the long-term viability and survival of traditional cultures. As noted by ethnobotanist and photographer Wade Davis, “cultural survival is not about preservation. Change itself does not destroy a culture, since all societies are constantly evolving. Indeed, a culture survives, as [anthropologist David] Maybury-Lewis has written, when it has enough confidence in its past and enough say in its future to maintain its spirit and essence through all the changes it will inevitably undergo.”⁶³ Folk sport is no different. If its adherents seek to avoid the marginalizing effects of globalization – assigning folk games the fate of other anachronistic pursuits – then they must also play by the rules of hegemony.

The globalization of sport is often misconstrued as its globalization, whereby Western, capitalist, modern sport is taking hold of the sporting landscape. However, as outlined by Richard Giulianotti, “the concept of the duality of glocality captures the complex interplay between the local and the global, convergence and divergence, and the universal and the particular in the socio-cultural dimensions of globalization.”⁶⁴ Indeed, glocalization grounds local sport amidst the homogenizing global environment. The reason why modern sport spread

⁶² Henning Eichberg, “A Revolution of Body Culture? Traditional games on the way from modernisation to ‘postmodernity,’” in Jean-Jacques Barreau & Guy Jaouen (eds.), *Eclipses et Renaissances des Jeux Populaires* (Rennes: Institut Culturel de Bretagne, 1991), 131.

⁶³ Davis, *Edge of the World*, 127.

⁶⁴ Richard Giulianotti, “Sport and Globalization: A Sociological Analysis of the Major Issues,” *Przeład Socjologiczny* 62, no. 3 (2013), 22.

so easily is because of short learning curves, effective marketing, and “an emotional, sensory or intellectual appeal which transcends local concerns.”⁶⁵ It is difficult to compete with the glimmer and glory ascribed to modernity. In conclusion, as it relates to sport, the global-local nexus is a mirror of the modern-traditional dichotomy. Whether folk sports absorb, adapt, or resist global trends, its inherent cultural traditionalism, its authenticity, will change. For, “local cultures are, in Sartre's phrase, condemned to freedom ... [and] at this time ‘freedom’ is manifested particularly in terms of the social construction of identity-and-tradition, by the appropriation of cultural traditions.”⁶⁶

The Modern and the Marginal

Life operates on a continuum; history is our timeline; progress is the name of the game. Although *modern* is a relative concept – any individual’s present is modern as compared to their predecessor’s past – the current world-system model has been formulated around the ethos of this present Industrial Age. Wallerstein opined that the first watershed moment in the history of humanity was the Agricultural Revolution, during the Neolithic Age, while the second great watershed was the development of the modern world.⁶⁷ Progression, advancement, and development are all principles of modernity. It is the forward movement of humanity into the future; away from *what was*, towards *what will be*. And, today, in the Digital Era, we wield yet another meta construct in the notion of the *postmodern* in an attempt to shed the unseemly

⁶⁵ Thomas Hylland Eriksen, “Steps to an Ecology of Transnational Sports,” in Giulianotti and Robertson, *Globalization and Sport*, 47.

⁶⁶ Robertson, “Glocalization,” 39.

⁶⁷ Wallerstein, *Modern World-System I*, 3.

vestiges of the merely modern. It seems that we are in a modern romantic paradox, of sorts:

“Just as a ‘postmodern’ era awaits its liberation from the modern industrial world, so the latter is still weighed down by the burden of pre-modern traditions, myths and boundaries.”⁶⁸

Moving further away from the traditional, the march towards modernity has had a profound effect on the marginalization of folk games. Henning Eichberg, Richard Mandell, and Allen Guttmann have been instrumental in the initiation of reinterpreting the modern development of sport.⁶⁹ Guttmann’s modernization model, for instance, proposes seven characteristics of modern sport on the timeline from ‘ritual to record’: (1) Secularism; (2) equality (as an ideal); (3) specialization of positions; (4) bureaucratization and organization of governance structures; (5) rationalization of a scientific approach; (6) quantification (recording statistics); and (7) the pursuit of records. These characteristics have converged to create a modern, global, hegemonic sporting culture, which usurped the rituals, traditions, and customs of folk sporting cultures. The popularization of the Olympic Movement and professional sport since the turn of the twentieth century are part and parcel to the inherent modernizing effects of globalization and, as such, strips traditional sport of its authenticity and allure. The present section provides an overview of modernization theory, the marginalisation of folk games, and some counterarguments against the debilitating relationship between dynamic modernism and static traditionalism.

⁶⁸ Smith, ‘Global Culture?’, 180.

⁶⁹ Henning Eichberg, *Der Weg des Sports in die industrielle Zivilisation [The Path of Sport into Industrial Civilization]* (Baden-Baden, DE: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, 1973); Allen Guttmann, *From Ritual to Record: The Nature of Modern Sports* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978); Richard D. Mandell, *Sport: A Cultural History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984).

When studying the characteristics and effects of modernization, the works of Anthony Giddens and Arjun Appadurai tend to top most research lists. Giddens frames modernity through four institutional dimensions – capitalism, industrialism, military power, and surveillance – and “behind these institutional clusterings lie the three sources of the dynamism of modernity ... time-space distancing, disembedding, and reflexivity.”⁷⁰ Distancing refers to interactions of people in distant locales, disembedding refers to the ‘elevation’ of social relations from local to global contexts, and reflexivity refers to the continual re-evaluation of social practices based on new information. As can be understood from these sources of dynamic modernity, they are consistent with the phenomenon of globalization. In fact, Robertson claims that “many of the particular themes of modernity – fragmentation of life-worlds, structural differentiation, cognitive and moral relativity, widening of experiential scope, ephemerality – have been exacerbated in the process of globalization.”⁷¹ Appadurai’s addition to the modernity literature were his own dimensions to global cultural flows, including what he called *ethnoscapes* (human movement); *technoscapes* (information flow); *financescapes* (resource transfers); *mediascapes* (imagined worlds); and *ideoscapes* (Enlightenment of democracy). His take of the link between modernity and globalization can be summarized as the “mobile and unforeseeable relationship between mass-mediated events and migratory audiences.”⁷² In many ways, this definition perfectly explains the popularization of modern sport, notably through the Olympic Games (mass-mediated events) and modern sports fans (migratory

⁷⁰ Giddens, *Consequences of Modernity*, 63.

⁷¹ Robertson, *Globalization*, 66.

⁷² Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*, 4.

audiences). In such terms, Olympic globalism is the epitome of modern sport. Drawing from Appadurai's notion of mobilities, and commenting on the historical effects of modernity, Anthony Smith notes that "modernization eroded localism and created huge, mobile and participant societies, whose flexibility and inclusiveness presaged the dissolution of all boundaries and categories of a common humanity."⁷³ The homogenizing effects of modern globalization, therefore, render folk cultures, in the parlance of Friedrich Engels, as 'ethnographic monuments' of the past.⁷⁴

In essence, cultural marginalization refers to collective neglect of cultural traditions in favour of a more global, modern, or popular cultural form. Noteworthy political philosopher Hannah Arendt commented on this problematic societal trend: "Insofar as [present realities] have brought us a global present without a common past [they] threaten to render all traditions and all particular past histories irrelevant."⁷⁵ Therein lies the root of concern about marginalization. It is not merely contemporary irrelevance at stake, or becoming a footnote in the history books, but rather total cultural amnesia. Societies do not want their cultures, languages, or ways of life forgotten by the world, and so they cling to myths, customs, and rituals, even if they are considered anachronistic or 'uncivilized.' In reference to intangible cultural heritage, although it can very easily be applied to folk sports, Noriko Aikawa posits eight globalizing threats to traditional cultures: (1) Loss of language diversity; (2) loss of interest

⁷³ Smith, "Global Culture?," 171.

⁷⁴ Friedrich Engels, "Po und Rhein [Po and Rhine]," in *Werke [Works]*, eds. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels (Berlin: Karl Dietz Verlag, 1971), 267.

⁷⁵ Hannah Arendt, "Karl Jaspers: Citizen of the World," in *The Philosophy of Karl Jaspers*, ed. P.A. Schlipp (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1957), 541.

and respect for local and traditional cultures; (3) decline in intergenerational transmission opportunities; (4) lack of technical and financial capacity for preservation initiatives; (5) overzealous trends of commercialization and commodification; (6) decrease of traditional environment due to urbanization; (7) reduction of resource materials; and (8) conflicts caused by extreme nationalism or ethnocentrism in reaction to globalization.⁷⁶ In an impassioned criticism of this contemporary phenomenon, worthy of Benjamin's Angel of History, Deacon *et al.* proclaim that "globalisation now stands as the 'devil' of the twenty-first century, capable of threatening any 'communities' sense of its own authenticity."⁷⁷ And, frankly, there is not a traditional cultural form that can withstand the onslaught of global information flow.

Traditional crafts, dances, foods, and literature are becoming globalized, Americanized, and McDonaldized. Even sporting traditions, cemented in the public preserve, have "retreated in the face of modernity."⁷⁸

Locally distinct sport forms have been around for thousands of years. For instance, one contemporary folk sport, *dandi biyo* in Nepal, has its roots in the ancient city of Mohenjo-daro, built around 2500 BCE. The sports of wrestling, archery, and horse-racing had a utilitarian purpose in martial training. Most sports, however, were for the purposes of play. And, as stressed by cultural historian Johan Huizinga, whose work is foundational to the study of sport,

⁷⁶ Noriko Aikawa, "Addressing Threats to Intangible Cultural Heritage," in *Globalization and Intangible Cultural Heritage*, ed. Laura Wong (Paris: UNESCO, 2005), 82.

⁷⁷ Harriet Deacon, Luvuyo Dondolo, Mbulelo Mrubata, and Sandra Prosalendis, *The Subtle Power of Intangible Heritage: Legal and Financial Instruments for Safeguarding Intangible Heritage* (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2004), 7.

⁷⁸ Michel Brousse, "Du Samuraï à l'Athlète," *Sport/Histoire* 3 (1989), 13.

when “[play] is transmitted, it becomes tradition.”⁷⁹ But with the emergence of modern, standardized sport about two hundred years ago in the British Isles, the dominant narrative of modernity reflected the inescapable advancement of modern sport from its antiquarian forms. Folk sports, as reflected by Besnier, Brownell, and Carter, were either extinguished, rationalized, or resisted cultural hegemony.⁸⁰ Imperialism, colonialism, and expansionism – all forms of globalization and cultural hegemony – were at the root of this marginalization process. For example, with the introduction of British soccer and cricket to the Solomon Islands in the 1950s, traditional sports there soon became extinct.⁸¹ Eichberg, a notable critic of Olympic cosmopolitanism, takes issue with the stakes of traditional sporting disciplines, asking poignantly: “Identity or alienation in physical culture – what can be the alternatives to the neocolonial tendencies in international sport?”⁸² This bifurcation of options in the ever-forward movement of modernity seems to be an apt diagnosis of the situation.

Folk sport revivalists, Roland Renson chief among them, often spout two types of rhetoric when it comes to the marginalization of traditional games: ‘Endangered species’ of human culture or backwards folkloric ‘survivals.’ In an intriguing essay on his concept of *ludodiversity*, as explained in the previous chapter, Renson compares the extinction of traditional games to the extinction of endangered species, citing four reasons (borrowed from geographer Jared Diamond’s *The Third Chimpanzee*), including: overhunting (or forbidden pastimes);

⁷⁹ Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play-Element in Culture* (Boston: Beacon, 1955), 10.

⁸⁰ Niko Besnier, Susan Brownell, and Thomas F. Carter, *The Anthropology of Sport: Bodies, Borders, Biopolitics* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2018).

⁸¹ Henning Eichberg, “From Sport Export to Politics of Recognition: Experiences from the Cooperation between Denmark and Tanzania,” *European Journal for Sport and Society* 5, no. 1 (2008): 15.

⁸² Eichberg, “Olympic Sport,” 100.

introduction of other species (or newly diffused sports); habitat destruction (urbanization); and the ripple effect (societal momentum).⁸³ For instance, “several [traditional] games perished through ‘overhunting’, that is to say they were forbidden for being either too violent, too dirty, too indecent or too dangerous or simply for being no longer part of the unrestrained ‘progress’ of the post-war (re)construction mania.”⁸⁴ The second theme around the marginalization of folk games stems from a notion of backwardness. In contribution to this theme, anthropologist Alyce Cheska related that “as a hegemonic expression of industrial dominant societies, so-called modern sports have contributed to confusion over the world concerning native populations’ ethnic identity and worth. This powerful sociopolitical association carries the implicit message that modern sports are associated with modernity, economic progress, and internationalism, whereas indigenous ‘folk’ games are attitudinally related to traditionalism, economic regress, and ‘tribalism.’”⁸⁵ I propose substituting the notion of *backwardness* for *forbidden pastimes* in Renson’s causes of endangerment, and I will refer to the four reasons for folk sport marginality as the Diamond-Renson Model. All four causes of folk sport marginality – perceived backwardness, urban pastimes, diffusion of global sports, and social pressure to modernize – can be traced back to the hegemony of Olympic globalism. Such hegemonic forces result in the labeling of traditional games as regressive, ‘uncivilized,’ or endangered cultures.

⁸³ Jared Diamond, *The Third Chimpanzee: The Evolution and Future of the Human Animal* (New York: HarperCollins, 1992).

⁸⁴ Roland Renson, “Ludodiversity: Extinction, Survival and Invention of Movement Culture,” in Pfister, *Games of the Past*, 16.

⁸⁵ Alyce Taylor Cheska, “Revival, Survival, and Revisal: Ethnic Identity Through ‘Traditional Games,’” in *Meaningful Play, Playful Meaning*, ed. Gary Alan Fine (Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics, 1987), 145.

After a thorough literature review of the scholars that have studied the marginalization of folk sports (of which there are not many), similar to Renson, I have concluded that there are four interconnected reasons for these processes within the auspices of modernization theory. First, there is a positive correlation between industrialization and marginalization of local traditional cultures. Jürgen Palm, the former president of The Association For International Sport for All (TAFISA), concluded that “the greater the degree of industrialization and so-called modernization is in developing countries, the more indigenous cultures there, including traditional games and sports, are likely to disappear.”⁸⁶ This hypothesis was confirmed by Polish sport historian Wojciech Lipónski, who found that although folk sports remained common in rural, impoverished, Eastern Europe, industrialization was responsible for subsuming peasant populations and, in turn, marginalizing their folk cultures.⁸⁷ Second, the commodification, commercialization, and marketability of modern, professional, global sports have drawn viewers away from their traditional, amateur, local alternatives. Third, in some respects, folk sport adherents have nary a choice, as the hegemonic flows of transnational, glamorous, and economically dominant sport forms is difficult to compete with for simpler regionalized folk games. In reference to soccer, cultural anthropologist Thomas Hyland Eriksen commented that “football is like the English language or franchised shops, creating a global conversation at the expense of removing diversity.”⁸⁸ In equally pithy fashion, sport sociologist

⁸⁶ Jürgen Palm, “Traditional Sport in Industrialized Countries,” *Journal of Comparative Physical Education and Sport* 19 (1997): 72.

⁸⁷ Wojciech Lipónski, “Sport in the Slavic World before Communism: Cultural Traditions and National Functions,” in *Sport in Europe: Politics, Class, Gender*, ed. J.A. Mangan (London: Frank Cass, 1999), 231.

⁸⁸ Eriksen, “Transnational Sports,” 52.

Barrie Houlihan critiqued that “the playing of western Olympic sports in preference to local sports is, like eating at McDonald's, rarely, if ever, the result of free choice.”⁸⁹ And, as noted by Eichberg, even the “analysis of movement culture was systematically subjected to the pattern of the hegemonial sportive model ... the main strategies being ethnological marginalization, historical archaization and definitional annihilation of popular games.”⁹⁰ The fourth reason for the marginalization of traditional games is the loss of cultural meaning. Along with the influx of flashy, foreign sports, attempts at standardizing or glocalizing folk sports affects the values of the community at a much deeper level. In the end, the globalizing and modernizing effects of industrialization, marketization, and cultural hegemony strip meaning, authenticity, and belonging away from folk sporting traditions; four nails in the coffin of extinction.

Now, there are those, on the other hand, that would like to temper the impassioned pleas of traditionalists, and it is worth situating their counterarguments within a broader discussion of these sociological processes. For instance, Hans d'Orville, former Assistant Director-General for Strategic Planning of UNESCO, notes that “globalization is neither the panacea which will cure mankind of all problems and conflicts, nor is it the ultimate calamity that strikes down the cultures of the world.”⁹¹ While, social anthropologist Ulf Hannerz contends that a global culture “is marked by an organization of diversity rather than by a replication of uniformity;” quite the contrary to homogenization theory, which folk sport

⁸⁹ Houlihan, “Homogenization,” 360.

⁹⁰ Henning Eichberg, “The Body as Identical: Towards an Historical Materialism of the Folk Question,” in *On the Fringes of Sport*, edited by Leena Laine (Sankt Augustin, DE: Academia-Verlag, 1993), 62.

⁹¹ Hans d'Orville, “Globalization and Intangible Cultural Heritage: Opportunities, Threats and Challenges,” in Wong, *Globalization*, 35.

traditionalists and other cultural critics adhere to so vehemently.⁹² Dissenters of the marginalization thesis tend to argue that sport, like any other cultural form, is organic and never static, evolving naturally, without our ‘unnatural’ meddling. For example, play theorist Brian Sutton-Smith, whose scholarship focused primarily on children’s folk games, was critical of folk game revivalists for their idealization of the past, specifically with the misguided notion that traditional games provided some sort of value to wider society. Allen Guttman, on the other hand, adheres to the thesis that cultural traditions organically evolve. Although he admits that “the standardized universality of modern sports does, unquestionably, represent a loss of diversity when contrasted with the bewildering variety of traditional sports,” Guttman reprimands those that refer “to the displacement of older ludic forms as ‘cultural genocide’,” arguing that it is “ideological jargon rather than critical discourse.”⁹³ Furthermore, Guttman repudiates the paternalism intrinsic to the folk revivalists cause: “If it is ethnocentrically arrogant to assume ... that premodern sports are primitive vestiges of culturally inferior modes of social organization, it is no less arrogant for Western critics to insist that non-Western peoples are wrong to prefer modern sports to traditional ones.”⁹⁴ To summarize, Guttman concedes to the marginalization thesis, but attempts to reframe the perspective from one of outcry to one of acceptance. Although Guttman’s thought process is convincing, my issue with the

⁹² Ulf Hannerz, “Cosmopolitans and Locals in World Culture,” in Featherstone, *Global Culture*, 237.

⁹³ Allen Guttman, *Games and Empires: Modern Sports and Cultural Imperialism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 188.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 187.

marginalization of folk sports has less to do with labeling or paternalism, and more to do with the rate and scope at which the marginalization is occurring.

The modernization of sport is a part of the universalizing process of globalization, whereby standardization, homogenization, and Westernization have become global norms transforming local customs. Modernity is a highway through a nature reserve, forsaking the history, meaning, and authenticity of the environment through which it surges. In the context of sport, historian Barbara Keys best sums up the situation: “Modern, rule-bound, competitive sport has spread to nearly every country. Where a rich diversity of traditional games and contests based on varied body cultures once proliferated, modern sport now occupies a hegemonic position. Where traditional games survive, they have typically been marginalized or ‘sportified,’ and the dominant form of the physical culture is shaped by a single, universal standard: rationalized, achievement-oriented sport, governed by oligarchic, Western-led international federations.”⁹⁵ To note, Keys’ synopsis elegantly avoids directly blaming the IOC for the current state of affairs. Of course, there are detractors of this line of thinking. Guttman, for instance, whose sport modernization model is foundational to the field, has attempted to temper and rationalize the fear of loss surrounding the marginalization of traditional games. But he concedes that “while traditional sports have certainly survived, in all parts of the world, there is a powerful tendency for them to become ever less traditional. Nominal continuity masks fundamental change.”⁹⁶ Through ‘adaptation’ processes of sportification or creolization,

⁹⁵ Barbara Keys, *Globalizing Sport: National Rivalry and International Community in the 1930s* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), 6.

⁹⁶ Guttman, “Sports Diffusion,” 188.

the nature and meanings of traditional sports have changed, even if their structural components have not. Be it backwardness, urbanization, diffusion, or social momentum, the marginalizing consequences of modernity are manifold and traditional cultures are often the regrettable targets. Granted, there are tremendous benefits to modernization, such as “democracy, freedom of expression, poverty reduction and affluence,” but there is also a “universal responsibility to protect and transmit the values and traditions of all cultures for future generations.”⁹⁷ Thus the paradox of globalization represents the contrasting effects of the hegemonic modernization of a global monoculture and its simultaneous resistance through the revitalization of marginalized, traditional, local cultures.

Save Our Sports (S.O.S.): Sportification, Pedagogization, Folklorization

As opposed to modernity, and its antithetical positioning to traditionalism, ‘postmodernism’ can sometimes be considered a balancing force in the glocal duality of the universal and particular. Defined by Featherstone, “postmodernism is both a symptom and a powerful cultural image of the swing away from the conceptualization of global culture ... in terms of the diversity, variety and richness of popular and local discourses, codes and practices which resist and play-back systemicity and order.”⁹⁸ A movement which developed in the late twentieth century, postmodernism is characterized by a skepticism of modernity and a departure from the Enlightenment ideals affiliated with the Modern Era. In essence, postmodernism celebrates cultural diversity, turning away from the homogenizing effects of

⁹⁷ Shogo Arai, “Japan and the Preservation of Intangible Cultural Heritage,” in Wong, *Globalization*, 27.

⁹⁸ Featherstone, “Global Culture,” 2.

modernity and industrialism. Rife with identity politics, theoretical deconstruction, and ‘new wave’ internationalist thinking, postmodernism produces a cultural *mélange*. Folk sports represent a cultural and sportive dimension within this “postmodern *mélange*.”⁹⁹ In response to this postmodernist turn in the spectrum of traditional games, Renson purports that “games and other forms of movement culture can be invented or reinvented, revived or revived, adopted or adapted in order to meet our ludic, physical and expressive needs.”¹⁰⁰ This final section in our exploration of the globalization paradox of traditional games elaborates on three key safeguarding mechanisms proposed by Eichberg and Renson, situating them in the broader discourse concerning cultural heritage preservation.

Although the folk sport revival movement has been gaining momentum since the late 1980s, consensus about the way forward has not been reached amongst traditionalists. For instance, Palm advocated for the inclusion of traditional games in the Sport for All movement, while Renson, who founded the Sportimonium folk sport museum, distinguishes between museum preservation (observation in ‘natural habitats’) and practical conservation (application of folk sports in the real world).¹⁰¹ Nonetheless, Renson and Eichberg have proposed the most reasonable, concrete, and accepted options for the revival of folk sports in the postmodern era. Renson calls these options *exteriorization*, *interiorization*, and *mediorientation*. In the first

⁹⁹ Roland Renson, “The Reinvention of Tradition in Sports and Games,” *Journal of Comparative Physical Education and Sport* 19 (1997), 48.

¹⁰⁰ Renson, “Ludodiversity,” 18.

¹⁰¹ Located in Flanders, Belgium, the Sportimonium was established in 2004, after nearly thirty years of lobbying, fundraising, and collecting sporting artefacts. See: Murray G. Phillips, ed., *Representing the Sporting Past in Museums and Halls of Fame* (New York: Routledge, 2012).

(exteriorization), folk games are modernized, thereby losing their original text within a new context. “Interiorization, on the other hand, is characterized by ‘couleur locale’ (localization), differentiation and folklorization, with the aim of preserving the survival of traditional games via cultural isolation.”¹⁰² While, mediorientation refers to the revival of folk sports through grassroots efforts, community engagement, and programming within physical education curricula. These labels are similar to Eichberg’s earlier solutions to marginalization, namely folklorization, pedagogization, and sportification.¹⁰³ In an article about the nationalization of folk games – aptly titled “A Revolution of Body Culture?” – much of Eichberg’s eclectic and eccentric academic research interests culminate, including the green movement, the history of laughter, folklorization, tribalism, ethno-pluralism, and romantic nationalism. Through this article, he has created a noteworthy piece of scholarship in the ‘battle’ for folk games survival. This “body cultural revolution,” which he refers to, takes place from the late eighteenth century onwards, in line with Robertson’s *incipient phase* of globalization, which “did away with the traditional games, replacing them with new configurations: by sport, gymnastics and folklore.”¹⁰⁴ Indeed, Eichberg’s conceptualization of sportification, pedagogization, and folklorization encompasses the generally-accepted triad of folk sport safeguarding mechanisms.

The final stage of the development of traditional games is the establishment of a modern sport. Israeli play theorist Felix Lebed proposes three processes for this

¹⁰² Renson, “Cultural Dilemma,” 56.

¹⁰³ Eichberg, “Revolution of Body Culture.”

¹⁰⁴ Eichberg, “Revolution of Body Culture,” 142.

institutionalization: crystallization, invention, and natural selection.¹⁰⁵ Crystallized traditional games are those that have not changed, while some sports are newly invented, like basketball or volleyball. In terms of ‘natural selection,’ Lebed is referring to those traditional games which are deemed worthy (and marketable) of developing modern sportive characteristics, such as flashy jerseys, formalized organization, and broader viewership appeal. Originally conceptualized by famed sociologist Norbert Elias, *sportification* (or *sportization*) is the modernization and global diffusion of sports, from nascent folk pursuits to entertainment products.¹⁰⁶ I would prefer, however, that sportification was further subdivided into a hierarchy of (1) modernized, (2) internationalized, and (3) ‘Olympified’ (a term I employ to describe the global comeuppance of a given sport form by becoming officially recognized as an ‘Olympic sport’). For, many folk sports modernize to appeal to popular trends in the local or regional sportscape, but few attain international recognition (carried through diasporas or developed through transregional federations), and even fewer are adopted within the official Olympic Programme. Some Olympic sports that we consider to have progressed through this sportification hierarchy – from traditional game to Olympic sport – are archery, canoe racing, curling, cross-country skiing, martial arts (judo, karate, taekwondo), surfing, and wrestling.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ Felix Lebed, “Crystallization, Invention and ‘Natural Selection’: The Institutionalization of Games,” in Pfister, *Games of the Past*, 36.

¹⁰⁶ Norbert Elias, “The Genesis of Sport as a Sociological Problem,” in *Quest for Excitement: Sport and Leisure in the Civilizing Process*, eds. Eric Dunning and Norbert Elias (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), 129.

¹⁰⁷ For a sampling of these Olympified sports, refer to: Edmund H. Burke, *The History of Archery* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1971); Matti Goksøyr, “Taking Ski Tracks to the North. The Invention and Reinvention of Norwegian Polar Skiing: Sportisation, Manliness and National Identities,” *International Journal of the History of Sport* 30, no. 6 (2013): 563-79; or Douglas Booth, *Australian Beach Cultures: The History of Sun, Sand and Surf* (London: Routledge, 2001).

The Japanese martial art of judo, for example, was ‘invented’ in 1882 by Jigorō Kanō, effectively modernizing and sportifying the samurai code of *bushido*, before ascending to the status of Olympic sport in 1964.¹⁰⁸ Shohei Sato proposes four dimensions to the sportification of judo, which were, frankly, out of the control of Kanō: (1) codification; (2) emphasis on competition; (3) spectators and entertainment; and (4) commercialism.¹⁰⁹ Another sport that is currently ascending the sportification hierarchy is the popular Southeast Asian sport of *sepak takraw*, which is currently included in the Asian Games Programme. French sport sociologist Pierre Parlebas referred to sportification as an “insidious trap.”¹¹⁰ Even the Evaluation Body of the UNESCO Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage asserted that “increased visibility [through the ICH Convention] could foster the development of the element as a professional sport, which could in turn endanger its status as a traditional practice.”¹¹¹ Thus, sportification changes the core values of traditional games; international recognition at the cost of cultural identity and uniqueness.

Beyond mere observations of these processes, a number of scholars are quite critical of this continued marginality prompted by sportification. Islamic studies scholar Birgit Krawietz, who has studied Turkish oil wrestling, laments that “the seemingly irreversible process of

¹⁰⁸ Yuko Ueda, “Political Economy and Judo: The Globalization of a Traditional Japanese Sport,” *Sport in Society* 20, no. 12 (2017): 1852-60.

¹⁰⁹ Shohei Sato, “The Sportification of Judo: Global Convergence and Evolution,” *Journal of Global History* 8 (2013): 299-317.

¹¹⁰ Pierre Parlebas, “Réflexions Finales: Un Passé qui Ouvre sur l’Avenir [Final Reflections: A Past that Opens on the Future],” in *Jeux Traditionnels, Sports et Patrimoine Culturel: Cultures et Éducation [Traditional Games, Sports and Cultural Heritage: Cultures and Education]*, edited by Pierre Parlebas (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2016), 301. [My translation]

¹¹¹ Intergovernmental Committee, “Report of the Evaluation Body on its work in 2017,” ITH/17/12.COM/11, para. 32 (2017).

sportification has caused a serious blow to some traditional athletic activities by undermining their popularity or by severely imposing too demanding regulations.”¹¹² Sportification can often be misconstrued as a ‘sell-out’ of traditional values for universal ones. Alexey Kylasov, the ethnosport scholar discussed in the previous chapter, confirms that sportification furthers the “trend to erasure of ethnocultural differences,” thereby adding to the homogenizing effects of globalization.¹¹³ However, it is Roland Renson, again, that most adamantly pontificates against the culture-denying effects of sportification. In a 1992 *UNESCO Courier* article, for instance, Renson argues that sportification tends to “reduce the great variety of past and present forms of play to the narrow category represented by modern competitive sports.”¹¹⁴ Then, in 1998, he wrote that “sportification is depicted as a universal hegemonic trend of standardization and globalization of sport practices, thus affecting and repressing the regional differentiation of traditional games.”¹¹⁵ And, finally, in a 2004 conference on *Games of the Past*, Renson draws on notions of globalization and his own notion of ludodiversity when he states that the sportification process “has the monomaniac tendency to reduce the existing ludodiversity of the world to a movement monoculture.”¹¹⁶ Indeed, Renson, who is at the forefront of the folk sport revivalist movement, has myriad apprehensions about the modernization of traditional games through the auguries of sportification.

¹¹² Birgit Krawietz, “Prelude to Victory in Neo-traditional Turkish Oil Wrestling: Sense Perceptions, Aesthetics and Performance,” *International Journal of the History of Sport* 31, no. 4 (2014): 445.

¹¹³ Alexey Kylasov and Elena Gureeva, “Ethnosport and Ethnic Styled Sport: Comparative Analysis of Social Efficiency,” *International Journal of Ethnosport and Traditional Games* 1, no. 1 (2019): 61.

¹¹⁴ Roland Renson, “Save Our Sports,” *UNESCO Courier* 45, no. 12 (1992): 45.

¹¹⁵ Renson, “Cultural Dilemma,” 53.

¹¹⁶ Renson, “Ludodiversity,” 17.

The second of Eichberg's safeguarding mechanisms is pedagogization, which does not only refer to a sport's integration in physical education curricula, but also to its presence in broader community-level sports programming. Examples here may include community *bocce* tournaments, sport-specific gyms (e.g. *Muay Thai* or kickboxing facilities), or grassroots youth sport programs, like the Boston (Massachusetts) Irish Sports Youth League. Of the three safeguarding types, pedagogization tends to carry with it the communitarian values infused in folk sporting traditions; those meant for the masses, not for elite, modern, professional sport adherents. Generally, though, this form of safeguarding is most effective in an educational setting, treating folk sport as a pedagogical tool (as the name implies). There is a rich history of children's folk games that have been incorporated into physical education curricula, from common playground games (e.g. hopscotch) to the (re-)introduction of *pelota* through the elongated plastic scoops commonly found in North American equipment storage rooms.¹¹⁷ Although, here, too, small adaptations occur to the original sport form in order to accommodate ease of participation and adoption. Even Eichberg, who categorized this outcome of folk sport safeguarding, was skeptical of the ability of pedagogization to maintain authenticity: "Folk sports are regarded as a soft form of educational sport or as tools for expressing regional identity in education. As educational instruments, however, folk sports tend to lose their connection with people's lives and self-organization."¹¹⁸ Similar to sportification,

¹¹⁷ Brian Sutton-Smith, "School Playground as Festival," *Children's Environments Quarterly* 7, no. 2 (1990): 3-7.

¹¹⁸ Henning Eichberg, "Folk Sports," in *Berkshire Encyclopedia of World Sport*, vol. 1, ed. Gertrud Pfister and David Levinson, 3rd ed. (Great Barrington, MA: Berkshire, 2013), 528.

pedagogization may save a folk sport from cultural 'extinction,' but much of the traditional aspects are lost in translation.

Folklorization, the third Eichberg safeguarding mechanism, does little better in the pursuit of authentication of a community's bodily practices, expressions, and identity. Here, Eichberg differentiates between folk sports and *folkloristic sports*, which are demonstration sports, reserved as exhibitions at festivals and 'living museums.' Lamenting that "folklore tends to transform folk sports into a sort of living museum," Eichberg confirms that "this transformation can favor the promotion of tourism but weakens the connection with people's social lives."¹¹⁹ Folklorization can stagnate or 'freeze' cultural practices like folk sports. Icelandic folklorist Valdimar Hafstein defines folklorization as "the infusion of folkloristic knowledge, perspectives, and concepts into the public sphere, where they shape the public's understanding of and relation to expressive culture and social practices, and indeed reform those expressions and practices as part of society's reflexive modernization. In the context of intangible heritage, such reform is referred to as safeguarding."¹²⁰ In this manner, Hafstein is equating safeguarding of ICH, in general, as a process of folklorization. And, as we understand heritagization as a subset of folklorization, we can then infer that safeguarding of ICH can be universally referred to as heritagization. But what, exactly, is this process?

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Valdimar Tr. Hafstein, "Intangible Heritage as a Festival; or, Folklorization Revisited," *Journal of American Folklore* 131, no. 520 (Spring 2018): 143.

The suffix ‘-ization’ signifies the process or result of making something. As such, quite plainly, *heritagization* signifies the process of making heritage.¹²¹ In a study of the Korean martial art of *taekkyeon*, Park *et al.* defined heritagization as follows:

The process whereby various pasts are constructed in the present to address a contemporary need, issue or circumstance. In a general notion, heritagization is the processes by which heritage is constructed. As the activation process of a cultural heritage, heritagization allows for the discussion and perspectives around the forms of protection, conservation and restoration of heritage. Since cultural heritage is the result of a collective choice of what is ‘heritagizable’, which involves discussion, selection, conflict, and compromise, heritagization can be thought as the process of value construction. It is a process that places value upon places, people, things, practices, histories, or ideas as an inheritance from the past.¹²²

From a linguistics perspective, *heritagization* is oxymoronic, for “in the sense of ‘the process of building and updating heritage,’ it simply cannot apply to heritage, which comes from the past.”¹²³ Then, in very practical terms, heritage is made when social groups *claim* something as heritage, imbuing it with specific values and meanings. It is a choice, a tradition, a legitimization of identity. Bendix understands this process through the ‘ethnographic gaze,’ which focuses “first on the actors who generate these processes, exploring their intentions; second, on the specific shape of the value-added mechanism: how the processes are linked to existing forms of everyday life and how new cultural practices are introduced so as to integrate successful cultural-heritage nominations into everyday life.”¹²⁴ She claims that heritagization legitimizes groups through competition and quality control; essentially validating that the heritage formed is a unique identifier of one’s culture. In response to modernity’s alienating

¹²¹ Refer to Chapter IV for more on the definitions, history, and intangibility of heritage.

¹²² Jin-Kyung Park, Hyae-Syn Tae, Gwang Ok, and Sun-Yong Kwon, “The Heritagization and Institutionalization of Taekkyeon: An Intangible Cultural Heritage,” *International Journal of the History of Sport* 35, no. 15-16 (2018): 1558-9.

¹²³ Dormaels, “Behind the Word,” 112.

¹²⁴ Bendix, “Economy and Politics,” 255.

influences, social actors are engaged in a process of meaning-making and identity creation, using folklore and other traditional processes – also known as heritage – to define the individual, the group, and the nation.

In reaction to the creeping global ‘movement monoculture’ the traditional games revivalist movement has keenly positioned folk sports as cultural heritage. This effort coincides with the adoption of the 2003 UNESCO Convention. In fact, former UNESCO Director-General René Maheu (1961-1974) – well before the adoption of the ICH Convention – wrote that “sport is a culture and corresponds in its content to all that a culture is.”¹²⁵ As defined by Wallerstein, “cultures are the ways in which people clothe their politico-economic interests and drives in order to express them, hide them, extend them in space and time, and preserve their memory. Our cultures are our lives, our most inner selves but also our most outer selves, our personal and collective individualities.”¹²⁶ Sport reflects our individual, collective, and cultural identities. If sport is not considered an element of culture, then neither should other social constructions, like art, language, or religion. Even within the culture of sport, however, there is an inherent juxtaposition between the old and the new; the modern and the traditional. For “the very construction of culture becomes a battleground, the key ideological battleground in fact of the opposing interests within this historical system.”¹²⁷ On the one hand, modern sport aficionados advocate for sportification and monoculturalism, while, on the other, traditionalists

¹²⁵ René Maheu, “Sport and Culture,” in Love *et al.*, *Sport and International Relations*, 14.

¹²⁶ Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System II - Mercantilism and the Consolidation of the European World-Economy, 1600-1750* (New York: Academic Press, 1980), 65.

¹²⁷ Wallerstein, “Ideological Battleground,” 39.

espouse the virtues and simplicities of romantic folk pursuits. In the context of this sport-cultural battleground, folk sports “represent something that cannot, and will not, be globalized because they symbolize a cultural identity that is by default associated with a particular place.”¹²⁸ Inasmuch as they represent cultural identity, folk sports are key elements to the intangible cultural heritage of humanity. Considering the ritualistic and performative nature of much of the ICH worldwide, “the body is the principal medium of intangible cultural heritage.”¹²⁹ Folk sports are the bodily expressions of people’s pasts and presents. As explained by Eichberg, “the panorama shows that the revival and modernisation of traditional games and sports is part of a much more extensive societal process, one related to historically established and actually transformed connections between body culture and ethnic (or national) identity.”¹³⁰ In the midst of the sport-media complex that has coopted the global entertainment sport industry, in which ethnic cultural identity is forsaken for supranationalism, folk sport becomes a key element in the ideological battleground that is globalization.

* * *

German sport studies scholar Arnd Krüger recognises games as a cultural phenomenon, offering four theoretical approaches to explain the associations between games and culture (synthesized as physical culture): (1) Evolutionist theories analyze the role of games in the development of the individual and the civilizational processes; (2) diffusionist theories review the development, transformations, and extinction of games; (3) functionalist theories posit the

¹²⁸ Eriksen, “Transnational Sports,” 56.

¹²⁹ D’Orville, “Globalization,” 37.

¹³⁰ Eichberg, “Revolution of Body Culture,” 138.

function of games in society; and (4) structuralist theories examine the structures of games within society.¹³¹ My predilections, admittedly, fall amongst the diffusionist theorists. Others in this 'camp,' include Roland Renson, Henning Eichberg, J.A. Mangan, along with many other sport historians.¹³² As a diffusionist, and as can be inferred from the themes and tone of this dissertation, I adhere to the notion that globalization and modernization have a homogenizing and marginalizing effect on traditional cultural elements. In the folk sport revivalist movement, as well as the broader turn towards cultural heritage preservation, many traditionalists are of the opinion that "bastions of the globalization movement continue to refer to culturally-rich, but offline and unconnected communities as deprived, underserved, and technologically malnourished."¹³³ The cultural hegemony of Western powers in these global flows points to a globalization of culture. Indeed, we can observe concepts like 'global culture' or 'world-system' manifested in the globalizing tentacles of international organizations like UNESCO and the IOC. However, in many senses, the more apt term is that of glocalization. For, oftentimes, in the cultural domain, local cultural practices resist or adapt to the global invader. It is a clash of cultures, ideological battleground, or cultural war, "which underline the polycentric nature of our interdependent world, as each community discovers afresh its 'national essence' in its 'irreplaceable culture values.'"¹³⁴ The postmodern era is marked by a renewed interest in a

¹³¹ Arnd Krüger, "Die vier Gesichter des *Homo Ludens* [The Four Faces of Homo Ludens]" in *Spielbewegung – Bewegungspiel: 100 Jahre Gossler'scher Spielerlass [Game Movement – Movement Game: 100 Years of Gossler's Gamble]*, ed. Gerd Steins (Berlin: Forum für Sportgeschichte, 1982), 9-13.

¹³² For works by J.A. Mangan, refer to Scott A.G.M. Crawford, *Serious Sport: J.A. Mangan's Contribution to the History of Sport* (London: Routledge, 2004).

¹³³ Kiyul Chung, "Mitigating Losses to Intangible Cultural Heritage in a Globalized Society," in Wong, *Globalization*, 100.

¹³⁴ Smith, "Global Culture?," 185.

nostalgic past and a romantic traditionalism. With the contemporary global village accelerating further away from the local village of the past, many find comfort and grounding in a shared heritage. For these reasons, we glorify both the natural and traditional, attempting to revive archaic cultural forms, safeguard residual forms, and adapt emerging forms to contemporary norms.

In the sporting context, there is an irony which “lies in the search for ‘new games’ by discovering something old, or in a breaking away from what have become ‘traditions’ (those of modern sport) by turning towards tradition (the indigenous traditional games).”¹³⁵ The globalization paradox refers to the dual effects of modernization on traditional cultures: Global cultures marginalize local cultures, while, at the same time, modernization offers opportunities for preservation of these same cultures. It is, of course, a double-edged sword, for globalization is the bearer of both homogeneity and heterogeneity; a monoculture that both standardizes and connects, offering traditionalists new forums for revivalist notions. Sportification is one such offering. Modern sports infiltrate traditional markets, and the process of sportification offers revival as opposed to extinction. As summed up by Pierre Parlebas, “the ‘sportification’ of traditional games is somewhat of a Faustian happening. While accepting to melt into the vast domain of sport in order to get more social visibility, traditional games will have to align themselves with the homogenizing constraints of the sport world: by so doing they will abandon their soul for a hypothetical profit. The peculiarities of regional play will be abolished in

¹³⁵ Eichberg, “Revolution of Body Culture,” 136.

the universalism of globalized sport."¹³⁶ The idealization of folk sports in the contemporary sporting monoculture may be a futile pursuit, but how else are we to understand the meanings and symbols of modern sport without knowing their predecessors? The revival of traditional games is a balance between their sportification and their preservation as elements of intangible cultural heritage; metamorphosis or stagnation. It is a delicate and vulgar process to gain recognition from the Angel of History.

¹³⁶ Pierre Parlebas, "The Destiny of Games Heritage and Lineage," *Studies in Physical Culture and Tourism* 10, no. 1 (2003): 25.

Heritage: The Ins and Outs

All at once heritage is everywhere...¹

When visiting family in Europe, from my home in Canada, the history in the cities, throughout the countryside, and within and amongst the people is palpable and, remarkably, 'in use.' You can enjoy a charming watering hole, complete with its original bar stools and old-timey barkeep, that is older than post-Confederation Canada; or sit on a park bench where revolutionary thinkers once pondered the ways of the world; or walk along cobblestoned avenues that have hosted the feet of history's heroes, villains, and common folk. When speaking to locals, old lineages are remembered, historic moments are recounted, and oral histories are passed down. Although, like in Canada, many historic sites have been *museumified*, with ticketed access and a preserve-as-found ethos, there is such an abundance of historical items throughout the 'old world' that you can experience history without all its touristic fanfare. In areas of southern Turkey, for instance, there are so many ancient Hellenic ruins and artefacts that much of it has become commonplace, incorporated into everyday life. Due to the Euro-Western-centric nature of our education system (notably 'world' history classes), we Canadians want for such historic items and experiences. However, the problem is that many of these 'historic experiences' are not history at all. The contemporary use of historical buildings, sites, and landscapes is, in fact, heritage; "the complicated business of the

¹ David Lowenthal, *The Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), xiii.

past-in-the-present.”² As geographer David Lowenthal, one of the founders of the field of heritage studies, differentiated: “History explores and explains pasts grown ever more opaque over time; heritage clarifies pasts so as to infuse them with present purposes.”³ This distinction is significant and requires more unravelling before diving into the meanings of heritage to proponents of folk sports. As such, this chapter focuses on the definitions, history, study, and processes of heritage.

What is Heritage?

Since the 1980s, various scholars have defined the term ‘heritage,’ thus marking a cultural turn in our understanding of heritage as promoted through the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). ‘Heritage,’ as a term, really gained momentum after the 1972 World Heritage Convention, which expounded the value of tangible heritage sites now well-known around the world. More is elaborated on UNESCO history and heritage conservation in the next chapter. For our purposes, here, the term ‘heritage’ evolved from the Latin *heres* (heir), etymologically related to inheritance and heredity. As such, heritage can be understood as something to be transmitted intergenerationally; that which we pass on. In reality, as per the epigram at the beginning of this chapter, heritage is everywhere. Professor of heritage studies Rodney Harrison provides some context for this assertion:

It might be used to describe anything from the solid — such as buildings, monuments and memorials, to the ethereal — songs, festivals and languages. It often appears as a positive

² Jo Littler, “Intangible Roles: Theory, Policy, Practice and Intangible Cultural Heritage,” *Ethnologies* 36, no. 1 (2014): 100.

³ Lowenthal, *Crusade*, xv.

term, and in this guise might be found in use in selling everything from houses ('period features,' 'historic neighbourhood,' 'Grade II listed') to food (for example through the European Union's legal system of Protected Geographical Status) and bars of soap ('classic glycerine and triple-milled heritage blend'). Finally, the term encompasses a range of things from large to small, grandiose to humble, 'natural' to constructed. It can be used to describe everything from whole landscapes to tiny fragments of bone, stone and charcoal in archaeological sites; grand palaces to ordinary dwelling places; wilderness areas to modern city landscapes.⁴

Be it monuments, works of art, traditional customs, or natural wonders, "the world rejoices in a newly popular faith: the cult of heritage."⁵ In contemporary heritage discourse, it is imperative to note two distinct types of heritage: tangible and intangible. As noted by Deacon *et al.*, "we need to move beyond the old dichotomy between 'civilised' Western (tangible) heritage and 'primitive' non-Western (intangible) heritage."⁶ Indeed, it is the tension between these two concepts that is expanded upon in the current and the next chapter. Although the *tangible* carries with it a history of Western exceptionalism, *intangible* has recently emerged as a more globally unifying and culturally diverse alternative, better engendering the title of 'cultural heritage of humanity.' Historian Robert Peckham elaborates on these two types in his definition of the term:

For most people today 'heritage' carries two related sets of meanings. On the one hand, it is associated with tourism and with sites of historical interest that have been preserved for the nation. Heritage designates those institutions involved in the celebration, management and maintenance of material objects, landscapes, monuments and buildings that reflect the nation's past. On the other hand, it is used to describe a set of shared values and collective memories; it betokens inherited customs and a sense of accumulated communal experiences

⁴ Rodney Harrison, *Heritage: Critical Approaches* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 5.

⁵ Lowenthal, *Crusade*, 1.

⁶ Harriet Deacon, Luvuyo Dondolo, Mbulelo Mrubata, and Sandra Prosalendis, *The Subtle Power of Intangible Heritage: Legal and Financial Instruments for Safeguarding Intangible Heritage* (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2004), 12.

that are construed as a 'birthright' and are expressed in distinct languages and through other cultural performances.⁷

In this definition, Peckham elucidates on core concepts within heritage studies, including nationalism, tourism, monumentalism, geography, traditional customs, and cultural performances. Others, like archaeologist Laurajane Smith, who have taken up the immaterial creed, focus on symbolism or the symbolic value which society imbues on heritage sites. In her influential *Uses of Heritage*, Smith explains that "what makes [monuments] 'heritage,' or what makes the collection of rocks in a field 'Stonehenge' – are the present-day cultural processes... that identify them as physically symbolic of particular cultural and social events, and thus gives them value and meaning."⁸ Much like contemporary sport stadia (e.g. Madison Square Garden in New York City or Anfield in Liverpool) are given symbolic meaning because of the cultural processes (i.e. sports championships and the rituals therein) that have taken place there over time, heritage sites derive meaning from social actors. As a result, it has been argued that all heritage, including monumental, is intangible, drawing on a collective nostalgia.

Beyond the mere dualistic approach of tangible-intangible, heritage can be interpreted through a number of other lenses, including as a form of metacultural production, as a social construct, and as an ocular experience. For example, an interesting element of contemporary heritage is museology, or the study of exhibition, which performance and Judaic studies scholar Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett has established within the field of heritage studies. In her book

⁷ Robert Shannan Peckham, "Introduction: The Politics of Heritage and Public Culture," in *Rethinking Heritage: Cultures and Politics in Europe*, ed. Robert Shaman Peckham (London: I.B. Tauris, 2003), 1.

⁸ Laurajane Smith, *Uses of Heritage* (London: Routledge, 2006) 3.

Destination Culture, Kirshenblatt-Gimblett expands on the economic struggle between museums and tourism to hone the representation of the past in the modern heritage industry. She defines heritage as a metacultural process, “a mode of cultural production that gives the endangered or outmoded a second life as an exhibition of itself.”⁹ In somewhat similar terms, urban studies and tourism scholar Mathieu Dormaels views heritage as a social construct linked to identity creation, and “as a social construct, heritage can never be considered objectively, as it does not exist prior to being discovered.”¹⁰ Tersely, heritage is what we identify as such. And, finally, a third sociological concept of heritage is that of the ocular experience. Once again, Laurajane Smith explains that “heritage is, in a sense, a gaze or way of seeing,” invoking the notion of ‘gaze,’ developed by French philosophers like Jean-Paul Sartre, Michel Foucault, and Jacques Derrida to describe the social dynamics of being seen.¹¹ All three of these renditions of heritage – as exhibition, identity, or gaze – point to the abstract notions surrounding the term. Heritage, therefore, has many faces and can vary in meaning across contexts. The most enduring and simple definition, however, is that it is our past as experienced through our present. Some of the major thinkers in the field would generally concur with this concise assessment. Cultural historian Robert Hewison wrote that his objection to heritage is that it is “gradually effacing history, by substituting an image of the past for its reality.”¹² Archaeologist Kevin Walsh concurred that “heritage successfully mediates all our pasts as ephemeral snapshots exploited

⁹ Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, “Intangible Heritage as Metacultural Production,” *Museum*, 56.1-2 (2004): 56.

¹⁰ Mathieu Dormaels, “The Concept Behind the Word: Translation Issues in Definitions of Heritage,” in *Understanding Heritage*, eds. Marie-Theres Albert, Roland Bernecker, and Britta Rudolff (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2013), 108.

¹¹ Smith, *Uses of Heritage*, 52.

¹² Robert Hewison, “Heritage: An Interpretation,” in *Heritage Interpretation: The Natural and Built Environment*, ed. David L. Uzzell (London: Belhaven, 1989), 21.

in the present.”¹³ And Lowenthal noted that “prejudiced pride in the past is not a sorry consequence of heritage; it is its essential purpose.”¹⁴ These definitions assume that we create our heritage in lieu of meaningful histories. To return to the initial differentiation proposed by Lowenthal, history unearths causes while heritage gives causes present meanings. In a sense, heritage (re)presents history. The representation occurs in museums, on tourist excursions, through the media, and throughout a variety of cultural contexts. As cultural geographer David Crouch asserted: “Heritage becomes signified; produced and constituted in cultural contexts; communicated in cultural mediation; consumed, further reified, and ‘held onto’ as a sense of belonging. Heritage is, by such means, ritualized in cultural practise inscribing a particular world view that is circulated in mediated popular culture.”¹⁵ Whether it is the past-as-present, a metacultural production, or a transmitter of what was, heritage has become “history that matters” in the early twenty-first century.¹⁶

As a logical next question, then: Why does heritage matter? Heritage matters because it transmits social values, notably group identification, intergenerationally. Swiss ethnologist Regina Bendix agrees that “cultural heritage is considered to have high social value and to be endowed with the capacity to foster positive identification within groups or entire polities.”¹⁷

¹³ Kevin Walsh, *The Representation of the Past: Museums and Heritage in the Post-Modern World* (London: Routledge, 1992), 149.

¹⁴ Lowenthal, *Crusade*, 122.

¹⁵ David Crouch, “The Perpetual Performance and Emergence of Heritage,” in *Culture, Heritage and Representation: Perspectives on Visuality and the Past*, eds. Emma Waterton and Steve Watson (Surrey, UK: Ashgate, 2010), 57-8.

¹⁶ Lynn Meskell, “Introduction: Globalizing Heritage,” in *Global Heritage: A Reader*, ed. Lynn Meskell (London: Wiley Blackwell, 2015), 1.

¹⁷ Regina Bendix, “Heritage Between Economy and Politics: An Assessment from the Perspective of Cultural Anthropology,” in *Intangible Heritage*, eds. Laurajane Smith and Natsuko Akagawa (London: Routledge, 2009), 258.

Graham *et al.* expand on this by stating that “heritage provides meaning to human existence by conveying the ideas of timeless values and unbroken lineages that underpin identity.”¹⁸ So not only does heritage transmit social values, but timeless values integral to identity creation.

Heritage studies scholar Susie West adds that “heritage matters because it is an active element of living communities who need the freedom and the means to be able to access and express their sense of how their past informs their present”¹⁹ In this sense, heritage is a means to express cultural uniqueness to the rest of the world. In the current heritage culture, within the auspices of UNESCO, heritage is used as a tool in international diplomacy to bolster national pride, identity, and recognition. Like the internationalization of national sport activities in a competitive framework of rivalry and hierarchy, proclaimed heritage is a means by which “a people is made visible to itself and its virtues celebrated in a way which put them in competition with other nations.”²⁰ The tangibility of the nation becomes much more real through its heritage symbols. In fact, it is nationalism and the nation-state which propels the heritage frenzy forward into the international sector. Although globalization is the root cause for the need to identify, conserve, and safeguard heritage, globalization may also be its salvation, by providing an international platform for identifying, supporting, and sharing heritage; the globalization paradox invoked once again.

¹⁸ Brian Graham, Gregory John Ashworth, and J.E. Tunbridge, *A Geography of Heritage: Power, Culture and Economy* (London: Arnold, 2000), 41.

¹⁹ Susie West, “Introduction,” in *Understanding Heritage in Practice*, ed. Susie West (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010), 1-2.

²⁰ Tony Bennett, “Cultural Policy: Issues of Culture and Governance,” in *Culture, Society, Market*, ed. Folke Snickars (Stockholm: Swedish National Council for Cultural Affairs, 2001), 16.

The History of Heritage: From Antiquarians to Living Cultures

Like other modern phenomena, the history of heritage can be broken down into three stages associated with key politico-historical moments: (1) The Age of Enlightenment; (2) the dawn of nationalism; and (3) modern globalization. At the risk of oversimplifying a complex history, early heritage revolved around collecting historical relics, followed by increased inquiry during the Enlightenment and concurrent feelings of nostalgia in the wake of the Industrial Revolution, the use of national heritage in the legitimation of the nation, and the eventual ‘heritage boom’ of the mid-twentieth century that led to the creation of global bureaucracies, critical studies, and tourist attractions. Along the way, there were reflections on notions of the past-in-present, the battle of the superlatives (‘best’ versus the rest), the ‘conserve-as-found’ ethos, and the universalization of culture. The history of heritage is rife with politics, power, authenticity, ownership, and expression. Today, the ‘cult of heritage’ in which we live is the culmination of over three hundred years of defining and appropriating history. The ebb and flow of time has altered the meaning of heritage, from the tangible to the intangible, while matters of group identification, cultural expression, and conservationism have come to the fore in recent decades.

It was not until the eighteenth-century, during the Age of Enlightenment, with its onus on scientific inquiry and scholarly research, that the first phase of heritage began. Antiquarians were considered the first enthusiasts of heritage. These early collectors of historical memorabilia housed their relics of the past in ‘cabinets of curiosities’ and recorded everything from coins in ledgers to ancient ruins on a map. The privileging of tangible works, material culture, and monumentalism came to fruition during this time. Superlatives like ‘oldest’ or

'grandest' ruled the day, while those components of heritage that were most associated with power and timelessness (e.g. the Great Pyramid of Giza) were quickly appropriated by elite patrons. This first phase of heritage was also "associated with the emergence of the notion of the public sphere and a response to processes of industrialisation, in which objects from the past could be preserved for the future by being held in trust for public edification and benefit."²¹ Heritage was classified, valorized, and exhibited through new public and private institutions. For instance, the British Museum was established as the first national museum, opening in 1759, acting as a three-dimensional encyclopedia of the riches of the empire. This museumification process was coupled with the assumption that places (be they buildings, monuments, ruins, etc.) need to be conserved and held in trust by governments. As such, in 1830, a French government commission (*Commission des Monuments Historique*) was set up to survey the nation's inventory of historic buildings. It still exists today. French architect Eugène Viollet-Le-Duc and British art critic John Ruskin rose to prominence during the mid to late 1800s as critical thinkers in early heritage work. They are considered the founding fathers of the modern conservation movement. Our enduring devotion to monuments and sites is partly influenced by the ideas of Ruskin, who, commenting on the need to preserve historical architecture during the Industrial Revolution, wrote that: "We have no right whatsoever to touch them. They are not ours. They belong partly to those who built them, and partly to all generations of mankind who are to follow."²² It is noteworthy that this early phase of heritage coincided with the Age of

²¹ Harrison, *Critical Approaches*, 114.

²² John Ruskin, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (Orpington, UK: George Allen, 1880), 197.

Nationalism as well, during which “a powerful motive for investigating the past came from a desire to write authoritative national histories to account for the origins of a nation and its inhabitants.”²³ This ‘nationalizing’ activity carried into the second phase of heritage – from the mid-nineteenth to mid-twentieth centuries – during which heritage came under the control of the state as part of the nation-building process. The creation of new nations requires national symbols, including flags, anthems, and markers of a communal heritage. The selection and promotion of such markers was a political act, designating heritage as another tool in the diplomatic arsenal.

The third phase of heritage coincided with the post-war peace movement and has adapted to the effects of globalization in our current post-industrial society. The early part of this third phase is known as the ‘heritage boom,’ which can be distinguished by the ‘cult of memory’ in response to the destruction of heritage during WWII, the promotion of universal values through global institutions, and political rhetoric surrounding localism and ‘history from below.’²⁴ Gentry and Smith provide a succinct summary of this post-1945 heritage boom:

The core narrative being that it was a response to the scale of heritage destruction and loss that occurred as a result of the Second World War and post-war urban renewal, coupled with the growing pace of change and demise of traditional notions of certainty associated with the rise of post-industrial modernity. Philosophically, the argument goes, at the heart of this was the decline of religious authority, coupled with the post-Enlightenment establishment of meta-narratives of progress and rationality, in which change and the forward march of history had increasingly given rise to a sense of rupture, displacement, and wider crises in notions of

²³ Susie West and Jacqueline Ansell, “A History of Heritage,” in West, *Understanding Heritage*, 9.

²⁴ E.P. Thompson, “History from Below,” *Times Literary Supplement*, April 7, 1966.

identity, place and 'past'. The net result was an over-investment in the perceived 'redemptive' aspect of heritage.²⁵

It was in this context that UNESCO was founded in 1945. Although the history of UNESCO is further elucidated in the next chapter, for our purposes, here, there are four themes that are important to understand: management, universalism, Eurocentrism, and tangibility. Each theme framed the history of heritage policymaking within the global "heritagescape" of the mid-1940s to 1970s.²⁶

As an international organization, born of the need to cultivate world peace in the immediate post-war period, early UNESCO heritage policies focused on heritage management, specifically safeguarding heritage sites, denoted as 'preservation' in North America and 'conservation' in the United Kingdom and Europe. In reality, the idea of safeguarding grew organically within UNESCO in those early years, essentially becoming entangled in the expanding bureaucratic processes. Laurajane Smith referred to these policies, which focused exclusively on material culture, as part of the "conserve as found ethos."²⁷ Following an art historical canon of categorization and valuation of artefacts and monuments, UNESCO "place[d] considerable faith... in the power of valorization to effect revitalization."²⁸ Whether, it be termed revitalization, representation, safeguarding, conservation, or preservation, early UNESCO work had to do with heritage management and coordinating policymakers, national

²⁵ Kynan Gentry and Laurajane Smith, "Critical Heritage Studies and the Legacies of the Late-Twentieth Century Heritage Canon," *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 25, no. 11 (2019): 2-3.

²⁶ Michael A. Di Giovine, *The Heritage-Scape: UNESCO, World Heritage, and Tourism* (Lanham, MD: Rowan & Littlefield, 2009).

²⁷ Smith, *Uses of Heritage*, 54.

²⁸ Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "Metacultural Production," 57.

delegates, and on-the-ground field workers. The globalization and standardization of these processes and policies ultimately led to a universalization of heritage management.

‘Universal values’ is a pompous term on a number of fronts. First, it supersedes ‘global,’ by assuming that the entire metaphysical universe has a set of values. Second, it assumes that all populations adhere to said values. And third, it is used by members of the ‘international community’ – career diplomats and heads of global bureaucratic institutions – to dictate a global order. In the late nineteenth century and straight through the Cold War, such ‘universal values’ were promulgated by a number of international organizations, from the International Olympic Committee (IOC) to UNESCO.²⁹ As such, during the 1960s and 1970s, “various global organisations put forward the notion that some natural and cultural places had value that was ‘universal,’ and that their preservation was in the interest of the international community.”³⁰ Other cultural organizations were also founded during these decades to represent dissonant views and the breadth of perspectives on universal heritage values. For instance, the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO) was founded in 1979 with fifty-four member nations, followed in 1988 by the Aga Khan Trust for Culture, an agency of the Aga Khan Development Network which opened the Aga Khan Museum for Islamic art and culture in Toronto in 2014. Although European heritage management arose as a result of the World Wars and heritage in the United States can be traced to the National Parks movement of the 1970s, “turning our attention to organisations in other parts of the world reveals how they have

²⁹ Glenda Sluga and Patricia Clavin, eds., *Internationalisms: A Twentieth-Century History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

³⁰ Harrison, *Critical Approaches*, 95.

been concerned with very different issues, such as the links between culture and national sovereignty, discourses of civilisation vis à vis post-colonial identities, or the manifold challenges associated with development and ‘modernisation.’”³¹ The ‘universal’ cultural values promoted predominantly by UNESCO had a certain Eurocentric flair. This is yet another concern with the universalist narrative: ‘universalism’ has often been associated with a distinctly European or Western ideology.³² As can be gleaned from this historical account of heritage thus far, a dominant theme is the privileging of Europe. Professor of critical heritage studies Tim Winter notes that “in order to gain traction in an environment that privileged rational, positivist models of security and socio-economic development, discourses of heritage conservation sought their legitimacy on the international stage via scientific rational enquiry; a language which... enabled European ideas to maintain their authority at the global level.”³³ A majority of these understandings of heritage bore the distinct mark (or trademark) of the UNESCO World Heritage List.

In 1972, in response to a growing debate about the preservation of national cultural properties, UNESCO adopted its distinctive World Heritage Convention. Through this convention, state parties (national member delegates) agreed to uphold the standards of maintenance for heritage sites as dictated by the International Council on Monuments and Sites

³¹ Tim Winter, “Heritage Studies and the Privileging of Theory,” *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 20, no. 5 (2014): 568.

³² Chad Tallman, “The Threat of Western Universalism,” *International Letters of Social and Humanistic Sciences* 10 (2013): 8-14.

³³ Tim Winter, “Clarifying the Critical in Critical Heritage Studies,” *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 19, no. 6 (2013): 538.

(ICOMOS). The World Heritage List, for which UNESCO is commonly known, currently accounts for over one thousand 'properties' worldwide, with an 80-20 split of cultural sites to natural sites. The Convention privileges the tangible, the monumental, and the antique over continuous living traditions. Upon its adoption, it was clear that the Convention was inherently biased, including "a geographical bias towards Europe; a typological bias towards historic towns and religious buildings in preference to other forms of historic property; a religious bias in the overrepresentation of Christianity in relation to other religions; a chronological bias in the emphasis on historic periods over prehistory and the twentieth century; and a class bias towards 'elitist' forms of architecture in relation to vernacular forms. Perhaps most significantly, it noted the gaps in recognition of living cultures."³⁴ The inherent biases within the World Heritage Convention ultimately led to a backlash in the 1980s – from the domain of academia – as a result of the "Disneyfication" of the past, the economic exploitation of patrimonial museums, and a watershed moment at the 1986 World Archaeological Congress.³⁵

As noted earlier, during the third phase of the history of heritage, particularly up to the 1980s, heritage was characterized by conservation, universality, Eurocentrism, and tangibility. However, "the emergence of heritage should not just be considered as a characteristic of a climate of decline, but... it should also be seen as part of a wider service-class culture which expanded during the 1980s."³⁶ Referring to government (civil servants), private business, and

³⁴ Harrison, *Critical Approaches*, 128.

³⁵ See chapter on "Disneyfication" (pp. 51-6) in David Harris, *Key Concepts in Leisure Studies* (London: Sage Publications, 2005).

³⁶ Walsh, *Representation of the Past*, 4.

social services employees, the service-class culture of heritage was noteworthy in the expansion of the heritage industry. It began with the unregulated proliferation of community heritage in lieu of the traditional nation-building museums of before. This transition was initially distinctive of the British heritage management system, but grew to include other nations, as “this diversification of the museum was often characterised simply as offering economic panaceas to de-industrialised and other economically and politically marginalised communities, with this in turn giving rise to growing academic attention to the increasing use of heritage and patrimony in underpinning Conservative social and cultural policies.”³⁷ Three early British scholars who opined on the heritage environment of the 1980s were David Lowenthal, Patrick Wright, and Robert Hewison, who referred to museums as “bogus history.”³⁸ This British “heritage canon’ was groundbreaking as an early critique of heritage, and went a long way in problematising and politicising the assumed neutrality of culture and heritage that had dominated the 1970s, yet their dominant representations of heritage as false, anaemic, and ultimately bound up with the maintenance of capitalism, was heavily circumscribed.”³⁹ The other significant moment during this 1980s critique of heritage occurred during the inaugural World Archaeological Congress (WAC), held in 1986 in Southampton, England. In the midst of initial scholarship into the heritage discourse, the first WAC was a catalyst in the ‘cultural turn’ of anthropology that ultimately affected archeological notions of the past. The 1986 WAC agenda “focused on critical awareness of the treatment of the past in the present, concern with

³⁷ Gentry and Smith, “Heritage Canon,” 4.

³⁸ Robert Hewison, *The Heritage Industry: Britain in a Climate of Decline* (London: Methuen, 1987).

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 5.

stakeholder empowerment and social justice, and related political and theoretically linked matters.”⁴⁰ For an organization composed of scholars and professionals dedicated to material remains of former cultures, this was a veritable watershed moment in the social construction of meaning and importance attributed to intangible heritage.

The criticisms of museums, of the heritage industry, and of archaeological practices in the 1980s opened the door to new actors and initiatives in the heritagescape of the 1990s. Career diplomats, representing state parties, took over from conservation specialists in international organizations. Themes of national memory, living heritage, and Indigenous reconciliation were prevalent in ‘politics of the past,’ leading up to the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. By renaming monument sites as ‘places of cultural significance,’ there was an “emphasis from ‘stones and bones,’ material culture, towards the meanings of places, the significance that humans attribute to material culture.”⁴¹ The 2003 Convention, another topic which is further reviewed in the next chapter, was a result of decades of debate within UNESCO about the viability and meaning of heritage outside the traditional Western models of heritage. With a decidedly more ‘universal’ tone, and inspired by east Asian (notably Japanese) notions of ‘living human treasures,’ “one of the political motivations for creating a second heritage convention in UNESCO was to counterbalance the Eurocentric, monumentalist, and materialist bias of the World Heritage Convention with an

⁴⁰ Helaine Silverman, “Contested Cultural Heritage: A Selective Historiography,” in *Contested Cultural Heritage: Religion, Nationalism, Erasure, and Exclusion in a Global World*, ed. Helaine Silverman (New York: Springer, 2011), 3.

⁴¹ West and Ansell, “History of Heritage,” 39.

alternative conception of cultural heritage, valorizing other ways of relating past to present.”⁴²

The 2003 Convention was the culmination of years of lobbying from non-Western nations to UNESCO, the political manoeuvrings of the Japanese Director-General Koïchiro Matsuura (from 1999 to 2009), and the scholarship of the aforementioned critical British academics of the 1980s. Of course, these major changes on the world stage do not occur in a cultural, nor political, vacuum. The 1990s were marked by a number of politically-progressive, technological, and economic developments. Take the tourism sector, for instance, which has seen an accelerated growth since the 1970s, due in large part to concerted heritage management efforts. Anthropologist Mary Taylor argues that “the heightened role of culture and the concomitant rise of intangible heritage governance are therefore related to characteristics of late capitalism associated with the ‘postmodern’ and neoliberal turns.”⁴³ Whatever the conditions may have been, the 2003 Convention marks a decided turn, or at least balance, between the monumental and the living.

Game-Changer: Critical Heritage Studies

In the years preceding, and immediately after, the 2003 Convention, academics who studied heritage were no longer referred to simply as heritage studies scholars, but rather *critical* heritage studies scholars. This redefinition of the field was associated with the redefinition of heritage, now recognizing the intangible, the need for more critical scholarship, and the diverse cultural experiences of local populations. Gentry and Smith explain that critical

⁴² Valdimar Tr. Hafstein, “Intangible Heritage as a Festival; or, Folklorization Revisited,” *Journal of American Folklore* 131, no. 520 (Spring 2018): 133.

⁴³ Mary N. Taylor, “Intangible Heritage Governance, Cultural Diversity, Ethno-Nationalism,” *Focaal* 55 (2009): 51.

heritage studies (CHS) seek “to move beyond the traditional focus of heritage studies on technical issues of management and practice, to one emphasising cultural heritage as a political, cultural, and social phenomenon”⁴⁴ Moreover, anthropologist Helaine Silverman defines the redefined field in the following manner: “CHS recognizes the different and often contradictory understandings of the nature, ownership, value, meaning, and significance of heritage that are held by official interlocutors and unofficial sectors of the population... CHS is very interested in institutional and vernacular decision-making as this reveals and enacts relations of power and domains of knowledge. CHS interrogates unofficial expressions of heritage and different (including non-Western) practices of heritage preservation, management, and promotion, including how these, at the local level, challenge official prescriptions and representations. Thus, CHS eschews authoritative positionality.”⁴⁵ Essentially, CHS scholars and practitioners advocate for critiques of the *status quo*, including monumentalism, tangibility, Eurocentrism, and the ‘politics of the past.’ However, Tim Winter argues that the new field is not sufficiently expanding beyond the comforts of criticizing practices and organizations, most usually UNESCO and its bureaucratic processes. He proposes three recommendations for the field: (1) addressing contemporary global issues; (2) engaging with those directly in the professional conservation sector; and (3) recognizing that safeguarding and preservation techniques are not inherently beneficial. In sum, Winter maintains “that at its most significant level [CHS] means better understanding the various ways in which heritage now has a stake in, and can act as a

⁴⁴ Gentry and Smith, “Heritage Canon,” 2.

⁴⁵ Helaine Silverman, “Heritage Theory,” in *Encyclopedia of Global Archaeology*, ed. Claire Smith (New York: Springer, 2014), 3332.

positive enabler for, the complex, multi-vector challenges that face us today, such as cultural and environmental sustainability, economic inequalities, conflict resolution, social cohesion and the future of cities, to name a few.”⁴⁶ Cultural sociologist Jo Littler furthers this critique of CHS, as it is currently organized, by contending that “its engagement with non-Western marginalised forms of heritage can arguably tend to smuggle ethnocentric criteria through the back door rather than genuinely expanding the heritage field and divesting it more thoroughly from perpetuating such hierarchies.”⁴⁷ Indeed, if it is not Eurocentrism, it is ethnocentrism that marks the contemporary heritagescape. Granted, Littler’s criticism is not unwarranted, as has been proven throughout the history of heritage when selective heritages are identified, appropriated, and promoted by certain ethnic groups or nationalities. For all the (re)definitions and criticisms of critical heritage studies, it is worth, briefly, to digress and review how the field developed into the multidisciplinary study of a social phenomenon.

Although diplomats had replaced conservationists on UNESCO committees, academics were now involved in the ‘heritage game.’ Critical heritage scholarship developed within “a broad framework that reads the heritage cult, boom or obsession as a manifestation of the sociocultural changes associated with post-industrial, post-modern life and contemporary globalisation.”⁴⁸ With the creation of UNESCO, heritage became a globalizing mission in the modern, industrialized world. In some respects, the birth of a critical heritage canon was counter to this globalizing mission, counter to the effects of modernity, and counter to the

⁴⁶ Winter, “Clarifying the Critical,” 533.

⁴⁷ Littler, “Intangible Roles,” 101.

⁴⁸ Winter, “Privileging Theory,” 558.

accelerated trajectory of industrialization. In tandem with postcolonialism, the cultural turn in anthropology, and the propagation of alternative histories (such as social history), the ascendancy of heritage studies during the 1980s began in the United Kingdom. Once again, we return to the three ‘founders’ of heritage studies – Lowenthal, Hewison, and Wright – who “treat ‘heritage’ as the field of popularisation of the past and which is therefore primarily concerned with the issue of representation, particularly in its rather narrow sense of public presentation through museums and heritage centres.”⁴⁹ They were responding to the museumification of heritage in the quest for ‘inventing traditions’ in the nationalizing process. Of the three, Hewison was the most critical, “giving name to a particular critique that saw heritage as a right-wing trend that had managed to dupe a gullible public... as a polemic on the impoverishment of the sanitised nostalgic view of the past that supposedly lay at the heart of populist heritage.”⁵⁰ Lowenthal, on the other hand, was less critical, providing a prosaic commentary of the heritage environment as he saw it. Silverman summarized Lowenthal’s early contribution to the field, by noting that he “illuminated how history, memory, and the physical remains of the past are employed to reveal the past and also how they enable creation of a past of our own liking—thus, a malleable past.”⁵¹ The 1980s British heritage canon sought to comment on the pervasiveness of the heritage industry, thereby enabling the widespread criticism of heritage in subsequent decades.

⁴⁹ John Carman and Marie Louise Stig Sørensen, “Heritage Studies: An Outline,” in *Heritage Studies: Methods and Approaches*, eds. Marie Louise Stig Sørensen and John Carman (London: Routledge, 2009), 18.

⁵⁰ Gentry and Smith, “Heritage Canon,” 4.

⁵¹ Silverman, “Contested Cultural Heritage,” 2.

Rodney Harrison, Lynn Meskell, Regina Bendix, Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Valdimar Hafstein, and Laurajane Smith are just a few of the notable scholars who have added significantly to the advancement of critical heritage studies in the 1990s and 2000s. It was during these decades that “a continuous stream of publications... consolidated the Kuhnian paradigm shift toward a socially engaged, politically aware study of the past that regards heritage as contested, recognizes the role of power in the construction of history, focuses on the production of identity, emphasizes representation and performance, and preferentially analyzes formerly colonial states and societies and their subaltern populations.”⁵² The representation and safeguarding of the past was no longer in the hands of diplomats and bureaucrats. The study of the past in the present had proliferated into a robust subject area with its attendant journals and academic associations. Starting in 1994, geographer Peter Howard established the *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, which is still the preeminent peer-reviewed publication in the field. This was followed by the *Journal of Cultural Heritage* in 2000, and a string of journals as a result of the 2003 UNESCO Convention (the *International Journal of Intangible Heritage* and *Journal of Heritage Tourism* in 2006; and *Heritage & Society* in 2008). This proliferation of academic organization, led to the formation of the Association of Critical Heritage Studies in 2012, whose founding president was Laurajane Smith. Truly, Smith has been a foundational presence in the ascendancy of critical heritage studies, a niche subject area developed by a few dedicated adherents, scholars who, for the most part, are also engaged in heritage policy work. Rodney Harrison, another giant in the field, praised her activity, by writing that: “Smith’s work

⁵² Ibid., 5.

has been very important in drawing attention to the knowledge/power effects of heritage, and the concrete ways in which power is caught up and exercised through the exhibition and management of museums and heritage sites, an area of concern that has become central to the emerging interdisciplinary field of critical heritage studies.”⁵³

In 2012, on the fortieth anniversary of the 1972 World Heritage Convention, a group of diplomats, UNESCO experts, and researchers convened at an international summer academy at Cottbus University, a campus of Brandenburg University of Technology in Germany. There they developed a declaration (the Cottbus Declaration) on heritage studies, imploring the need for a holistic understanding of heritage. The assembled participants declared the need for both tangible and intangible assessments of heritage within interdisciplinary contexts. It was a call to arms for scholars from diverse backgrounds to collaborate in order to combat the negative effects of globalization on local forms of cultural heritage. In some ways, the declaration was effective, as can be seen in the current trends within heritage studies. The field today is decidedly interdisciplinary, with researchers situated in history, sociology, archaeology, anthropology, ethnography, museum studies, tourism studies, and (now) sport studies, among others. Indeed, environmental psychologist David Uzzell describes heritage studies as “the lovechild of a multitude of relationships between academics in many disciplines, and then nurtured by practitioners and institutions.”⁵⁴ The interdisciplinarity of the field is both its greatest asset and most glaring deficit. On the one hand, collaboration across multiple

⁵³ Harrison, *Critical Approaches*, 112.

⁵⁴ David Uzzell, “Where is the Discipline in Heritage Studies? A View from Environmental Psychology,” in Sørensen and Carman, *Heritage Studies*, 326.

disciplines, along with diverse methodologies and analysis, has provided CHS with a robust set of tools to dissect the meanings of the 'past-in-present' in collective identities, memories, and traditions. On the other hand, CHS (or heritage studies, in general) is still a niche academic discipline with nary a home on university campuses. Like sport studies, heritage studies scholars are still in search of permanent residences in humanities faculties to more critically engage with the scholarship needed to advance the field beyond criticisms of global institutions and practices. Nevertheless, the study of heritage over the last three decades has ranged across a variety of disciplines and methodological approaches, "from descriptive to theoretical, local to worldwide in scale, focused on developing and developed societies, and directed at deep prehistory through to the present day."⁵⁵

Intangibility: The New Kid on the Heritage Block

As evidenced through its history, heritage has evolved through its appropriation by different cultural groups, ethnic enclaves, national governments, and global bureaucracies. In the beginning it was collecting artefacts, then it was preserving buildings and monuments, followed by identifying heritage sites or heritagescapes, and finally it was lived experience. Since the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, there has been a new perspective in the heritage industry. A romantic cultural turn within heritage conservation, buoyed by the redefined field of critical heritage studies, stressed a shift in heritage management from record-keeping and archiving to "an emphasis on the lived

⁵⁵ Silverman, "Heritage Theory," 3332.

experiential moment itself; on facilitating embodied practice."⁵⁶ Heritage was no longer under the purview of Western, bourgeois aesthetes. A new canon, one that preached the intangible values of tangible sites, rose to represent the previously invisible, immaterial, incorporeal, and disconnected.⁵⁷ The pretentious notion of the 'West versus the rest' (or, more bluntly, the 'best versus the rest') was beginning to realize balance within global heritage discourse. Intangible cultural heritage was finally a viable heritage platform for the representation of cultural expressions, collective memories, and traditional rituals.

In November 2001, the United Nations resolved that 2002 would be the United Nations Year for Cultural Heritage. Following the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, adopted by UNESCO not three weeks prior to the UN resolution, the Year for Cultural Heritage had the threefold objectives of: (1) intensifying national and world cultural heritage programmes; (2) promoting education and public awareness; and (3) encouraging monetary contributions to fund such programmes.⁵⁸ Promoting diversity, dialogue, and responsibility, this celebration of cultural heritage highlighted twenty 'riches' that were to be intensified, promoted, and (potentially) funded. These twenty listed items of cultural heritage included:

⁵⁶ Littler, "Intangible Roles," 95.

⁵⁷ Amanda Kearney, "Intangible Cultural Heritage: Global Awareness and Local Interest," in Smith and Akagawa *Intangible Heritage*, 210.

⁵⁸ UNESCO, *United Nations Year for Cultural Heritage* (Paris: UNESCO, 2002), 5.

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|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1) Cultural heritage sites | 11) Oral traditions |
| 2) Historic cities | 12) Languages |
| 3) Cultural landscapes | 13) Festive events |
| 4) Natural sacred sites | 14) Rites and beliefs |
| 5) Underwater cultural heritage | 15) Music and song |
| 6) Museums | 16) The performing arts |
| 7) Movable cultural heritage | 17) Traditional medicine |
| 8) Handicrafts | 18) Literature |
| 9) Documentary and digital heritage | 19) Culinary traditions |
| 10) Cinematographic heritage | 20) Traditional sports and games |

The majority of the listed riches are rather self-explanatory. To note, ‘movable cultural heritage’ (#7) refers to artefacts or relics; ‘documentary and digital heritage’ (#9) refers to libraries and archives; while ‘cinematographic heritage’ (#10) refers to all genres of films. Interestingly, this is one of the first mentions of folk sports (here ‘traditional sports and game’) within UNESCO cultural heritage documents. In the short abstract afforded each of the twenty riches, the description of traditional sports begins as follows:

Sports and games have ever played a key role in human society. Associated as they were with magic and religious rituals in the beginning, they broke away little by little while retaining a pronounced ritualistic character. Whether they involve games of skill or chance, or corporeal expression, show of force or intelligence, they may sometimes take the form of opposition to reigning norms or of a restrained theatricalization of the forces at work in society. Games give the community an opportunity to demonstrate its interpretation of life and the world. A society’s games and sports are revealing in that they throw light on the relations between the sexes and generations, on individuals or groups, on physical or mental strength, and on conceptions of nature, the universe, life and death.¹

Traditional sports are seen as intangible in nature. In fact, only the first seven riches are considered tangible or material, while the others fall within the category of intangible, in the literal sense of the term. Intangible cultural heritage items are epistemologies, ways of being,

¹ Ibid., 43.

community activities. Moreover, the meaning derived from material (tangible) heritage also falls within the spectrum of ICH. This tangible-intangible dualism, within the broader heritage discourse, is not as straight forward as material-immaterial and, thus, requires further exploration to understand how members of the heritage field define the dynamic relationship.

The tangible-intangible spectrum within the field of heritage has, at various points, been referred to as material-living, monumental-experiential, and official-unofficial. Susie West first introduces us to the concepts of official and unofficial heritage in *Understanding Heritage in Practice*. Official heritage is associated with bureaucratic structures, wherein administrative needs of recording and archiving are paramount and heritage items are “selected for their adherence to canonical criteria, such as aesthetic excellence, relevance to national identity or scientific significance.”² Historically, this type of heritage tends to privilege the monumental, the natural, the tangible. Based on the 1972 World Heritage Convention – which is officially entitled the Convention Concerning the Protection of World Cultural and Natural Heritage – Kirshenblatt-Gimblett draws a distinction between the tangible and the natural. She defines ‘tangible heritage’ as “a monument, group of buildings or site of historical, aesthetic, archaeological, scientific, ethnological or anthropological value,” while ‘natural heritage’ is defined as “outstanding physical, biological, and geological features; habitats of threatened plants or animal species and areas of value on scientific or aesthetic grounds or from the point of view of conservation.”³ Unofficial heritage, on the other hand, tends to reside outside these

² West, “Introduction,” 1.

³ Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, “Metacultural Production,” 52, 53.

bureaucratic formalities, under-represented within the canonical criteria. Harrison emphasizes the 'everydayness' of unofficial heritage in reference to customs and traditions as "a set of repetitive, entrenched, sometimes ritualised practices that link the values, beliefs and memories of communities in the present with those of the past... the everyday practices that can be understood to generate 'culture.'"⁴ In this sense, many items of intangible heritage fall within unofficial heritage, further perpetuating the superiority of tangible heritage as official.

As can be understood from the official-unofficial labeling, heritage is inherently political. It is also inherently dissonant. First of all, due to the Eurocentric, Western, monumentalist narrative within the global heritagescape, an 'authorized heritage discourse' (AHD) is promulgated through official heritage channels. Coined by Laurajane Smith, the AHD "works to naturalize a range of assumptions about the nature and meaning of heritage... Embedded in this discourse are a range of assumptions about the innate and immutable cultural values of heritage that are linked to and defined by the concepts of monumentality and aesthetics."⁵ The AHD assumes that monuments represent the epitome of culture, with all else falling secondarily to such grandiose feats of humanity. But, as is argued by a number of heritage scholars, intangible cultural heritage helps to validate cultural experiences and traditions, and thus is an essential element in the broader heritage phenomenon. Its definition as a living heritage, its relationship with modernity, and its utilization for personal, political, and economic purposes suggests that ICH manifests itself as a plethora of "immaterial elements that influence

⁴ Harrison, *Critical Approaches*, 18.

⁵ Smith, *Uses of Heritage*, 4.

and surround all human activity.”⁶ These three themes – living culture, heritage as modernity, and utility – are prevalent in heritage literature, bring focus to the importance of intangible cultural heritage, and therefore require further scrutiny.

Culture is a collective term, referring to the artistic, social, physical, and intellectual expressions of a given peoples. It evokes a way of life. As such, cultural heritage is the continuous legacy of a group of people, a realization of the past through the present way of life. Of course, both tangible and intangible elements are present in cultural heritage, as both are essential to such legacies. Yet it is the latter which transmits the former; the intangible carries the tangible into the future. Without the intangible meanings of tangible heritage, monuments, historic sites, and ancient artefacts would be nought but objects of deteriorating significance. Living cultures are undeniably integral to the transmission of all cultural heritage, “people are responsible for its transformations over time and thus its vitality.”⁷ Intangible heritage expert Marilena Alivizatou notes that ICH “universalises and turns into practice a key anthropological idea: the belief that peoples around the world, despite their cultural, religious and racial differences, share a common humanity expressed in embodied practices of intergenerational cultural transmission.”⁸ In sum, the living aspect of ICH can be understood as the transmission

⁶ Michelle L. Stefano, Peter Davis, and Gerard Corsane, “Touching the Intangible: An Introduction,” in *Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage*, eds. Michelle L. Stefano, Peter Davis, and Gerard Corsane (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell Press, 2012), 1.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁸ Marilena Alivizatou, “The Paradoxes of Intangible Heritage,” in Stefano, Davis, and Corsane, *Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage*, 9.

of a way of life from one generation to the next. It is the new universalism in the heritage industry.

As extrapolated in Chapter III, globalization and modernity are two phenomena that developed in tandem throughout post-industrial societies. As noted by sociologist Anthony Giddens, “modernity is inherently globalising,” thus the two concepts go hand-in-hand.⁹ The universality of modernity is imperative to our understanding of heritage as an agent of change. Yet the relationship between heritage and modernity is a complex balance, teetering on the edge of progress and obsolescence. For, although “heritage is that which remains from the constant march of progress, it is also threatened by the very conditions that produce it.”¹⁰ Heritage can be a safe cove from the disruptive battery of modernization, but “having a heritage [also] makes us modern,” for without a history from which to draw our heritage, from a temporal standpoint, there is no modern.¹¹

The last major theme of intangible cultural heritage is its utility. As noted by Regina Bendix “if ennobling a cultural practice up to the status of heritage is a process of canonisation, any such process is also ultimately accompanied by an interest in utilisation.”¹² Although there are a number of ‘uses’ of heritage, there are three that we focus on here: social, economic, and political. In her aptly named *Uses of Heritage*, Laurajane Smith elucidates on these utilizations. As a social construction, notably, “heritage can give temporal and material authority to the

⁹ Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), 63.

¹⁰ Harrison, *Critical Approaches*, 26.

¹¹ Hafstein, “Folklorization Revisited,” 138.

¹² Bendix, “Economy and Politics,” 260.

construction of identities.”¹³ Smith argues that heritage legitimizes identity creation, cultural experiences, and social status of all groups in a society, and that this heritage need not be predicated on the authorized heritage discourse. From an economic standpoint, ICH is utilized as a touristic mechanism. Throughout its history, “heritage had changed from being a good to a product and finally to a commodity.”¹⁴ More so than the ascendancy of the museum, which relied heavily on the tangible, heritage tourism is increasingly drawing upon ICH as a selling feature for smaller, local, indigenous cultural groups. Intangible cultural heritage is based on an outsider’s romanticized perspective – a tourist gaze. This exotic touristic experience does not always include the viewpoints of those actually practicing the heritage being safeguarded, thereby furthering its original association with a traditional way of life towards a commodity of attraction. Finally, from a political standpoint, heritage is used as a form of soft power. A term coined by political scientist Joseph Nye, soft power refers to the influential power of culture and economics in international diplomacy – as opposed to hard power, which is characterized by military might and coercive techniques of manipulation. As can be imagined, the ability to “[represent] the past and the way of life of populations is an expression and a source of power.”¹⁵ Promoting one’s national heritage to the world is often an expression of those attributes of history that manipulate and trivialize the past by showcasing the nation in a positive light. Specifically, in the nation-building process, heritage as soft power aids in

¹³ Smith, *Uses of Heritage*, 50.

¹⁴ Marie-Theres Albert, “Heritage Studies – Paradigmatic Reflections,” in Albert, Bernecker, and Rudolff, *Understanding Heritage*, 12.

¹⁵ Silverman, “Contested Cultural Heritage,” 3.

curating a past that validates the present. When nations engage in invented traditions, heritage is most certainly utilized as the nationalizing yardstick.

* * *

The cult of heritage is all around us. Just in my small town of approximately 4,500 residents (Antigonish, Nova Scotia), there is a heritage museum, the Antigonish Country Courthouse is a National Historic Site, and the annual Highland Games are celebrated as the oldest in Canada, dating back to the 1860s.¹⁶ Heritage can be interpreted as an exhibition, seeking the tourist gaze, while also integral to ethnocultural identity creation. It is the past in the present; heritage is employed to re-present history. As such, heritage is inherently political. It can be used by a variety of stakeholders, each with their respective aims. For instance, community groups attempt to maintain cultural practices so as not to lose their most hallowed traditions, while nationalist politicians employ heritage for national unity purposes. For most of the twentieth century, heritage was considered tangible and the authorized heritage discourse assumed that monuments and buildings were the epitome of culture. Although this narrative preached universality, it privileged the Global North, where ruins of castles and cathedrals were of the utmost concern to the field of heritage management. Indeed, early UNESCO heritage policymaking had a decidedly Eurocentric bent. However, as noted by Brian Graham, “worth attributed to these artefacts rests less in their intrinsic merit than in a complex array of contemporary values, demands and even moralities.”¹⁷ The birth of critical heritage studies

¹⁶ Grant Jarvie, “Sport, the Émigré, and the Dance Called America,” *Sport History Review* 31 (2000): 40.

¹⁷ Brian Graham, “Heritage as Knowledge: Capital or Culture?,” *Urban Studies* 39 (2002): 1006.

sought to exploit this cultural turn in the heritage field: Tangible heritage was only as valued as the intangible meanings people projected onto it. Intangible cultural heritage, thus, emerged as a more inclusive, 'everyday,' and dynamic form of heritage. Included in this new category were elements as varied as epic poems, religious rites, traditional handicraft, ethnic cuisine, and folk sports. Intangible cultural heritage was meant to be more globally-representative (inclusive of the Global South) and culturally diverse (many more types), and thus a better channel for the universalist notion of 'cultural heritage of humanity.' In summary, the key themes to the concept of ICH are that it represents 'living cultures,' makes us modern by certifying our histories, and serves many uses. As observed by Littler, "hardwired into its very terminology is a sense of the importance of transmission, of heritage as something living, transversal and in use."¹⁸ To these ends, the social, economic, and political 'uses' of intangible cultural heritage come to fruition through the standardizing and 'heritagizing' influence of the global arbiter of heritage, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization.

¹⁸ Littler, "Intangible Roles," 103.

The Global Arbiter of Heritage

The convention on humanity's intangible heritage ... seeks to create a safe haven under UNESCO's global patronage where local practices can be kept safe from the homogenizing bulldozer of cultural globalization.¹

The manifestation of heritage in the global consciousness coincided with the rise of the nation-state. As elaborated in the previous chapter, heritage was a salient tool with which nascent nations could cultivate stories about themselves. Invented traditions, national symbols, and origin myths were all employed in the weaving of a national narrative to differentiate 'our' imagined community from 'your' imagined community.² Heritage, and the national histories it represented in the present, thus became a key component of international politics. Within the realm of the international, nation-states employ heritage as a form of soft power diplomacy, promulgating ideas of the nation to win over cultural converts. What could be termed an 'Age of Internationalism' (1870-1945) defined "a world connecting" through a proliferation of international organizations, solidifying the bond between nations and the romantic ideals of cosmopolitanism.³ As explained by Swiss historian Madeleine Herren, the nineteenth-century concept of internationalism "served as an umbrella term that enumerated and linked different transnational [ideological] movements."⁴ The Esperanto (1887), Olympic (1894), and Scouting

¹ Valdimar T. Hafstein, "The Making of Intangible Cultural Heritage: Tradition and Authenticity, Community and Humanity" (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2004), 200.

² For influential works on invented traditions, national symbols, and origin myths, refer to: Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 2016); or Eric Helleiner, *The Making of National Money: Territorial Currencies in Historical Perspective* (Cornell University Press, 2003).

³ Emily S. Rosenberg, ed., *A World Connecting, 1870-1945: A History of the World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012).

⁴ Madeleine Herren, "International Organizations, 1865-1945," in *The Oxford Handbook of International Organizations*, eds. Jacob Katz Cogan, Ian Hurd, and Ian Johnstone (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 93.

(1908) movements were exemplars of this turn-of-the-century internationalism, having “all benefitted from benign myths of origin rooted in reverential attitudes toward the personal qualities of their respective founding fathers and the salvational doctrines they created.”⁵ This amplified national consciousness in an increasingly international landscape ultimately led to the First World War and the subsequent intergovernmental peace organization, the League of Nations. Indeed, it is on this organization, and its internationalist tenets of ‘one-worldism,’ humanism, and intellectuality, that the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization is fundamentally based. As with many specialist international organizations established during this period, UNESCO became a “universalizing project” with a peace-promoting mission.⁶

The objective of this chapter is to provide an overview of the history and purpose of UNESCO, chronicle the development of the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, identify the key tensions between the preservation of diversity and promotion of universal ideals, and situate folk sport within this overarching framework. In our case, we are interested in understanding how UNESCO was allowed to “consolidate its influence in the heritage field” and how tensions around intangible cultural heritage will inevitably affect the safeguarding of folk sports.⁷ The UNESCO heritage regime needs to be interpreted in the context of broader notions of international norm-setting. As a dynamic,

⁵ John Hoberman, “Toward a Theory of Olympic Internationalism,” *Journal of Sport History* 22, no. 1 (Spring 1995): 3.

⁶ Laurajane Smith, *Uses of Heritage* (London: Routledge, 2006), 111.

⁷ Aurélie Élisabeth Gfeller and Jaci Eisenberg, “UNESCO and the Shaping of Global Heritage,” in *A History of UNESCO: Global Actions and Impacts*, ed. Poul Duedahl (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 285.

multi-layered, policy-making organization, UNESCO seeks to impart global norms upon local contexts. As an arbiter of world heritage, UNESCO creates policies for its nation-state constituents that are intended for the benefit of all. However, what this chapter establishes is that individual, on-the-ground, community buy-in is required for its policy work to be impactful. And that level of consensus is difficult to predict and manage.

Human touchpoints within our heritage contexts are imperative to our sense of grounding within our increasingly globalized world. Moroccan social anthropologist Ahmed Skounti commented that “it is when everything or almost everything collapses around them that people cast around, in their panic, for reference points or markers that will enable them to steady destinies caught up in the storm.”⁸ Collective, universal, world heritage marks a shift in the history of humanity, a juncture in the emergence of local traditional forms (and their appropriation) by state agencies and global institutional bureaucracies. World heritage is a “vehicle for envisioning and constituting a global polity within the conceptual space of a global cultural commons.”⁹ It is promoted as the cure for the marginalizing effects of globalization, but also made possible through the interconnected nature of globalization. World heritage is traditional and universal, lived and listed, diverse and relative. These and other tensions are further untangled throughout this chapter. Starting with some contextual details of the agency, followed by a history of UNESCO and the key moments in the ratification of the 2003

⁸ Ahmed Skounti, “The Authentic Illusion: Humanity’s Intangible Cultural Heritage, the Moroccan Experience,” in *Intangible Heritage*, eds. Laurajane Smith and Natsuko Akagawa (London: Routledge, 2009), 74.

⁹ Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, “World Heritage and Cultural Economics,” in *Museum Frictions: Public Cultures/Global Transformations*, eds. Ivan Karp, Corinne A. Kratz, Lynn Szwaja, and Tomás Ybarra-Frausto (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006), 161.

Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, this chapter also elaborates on the detriments of safeguarding heritage, and the role of sport within the UNESCO infrastructure. In short, we will examine the background to the 2003 Convention and how traditional cultures (including sport) became enmeshed in this norm-setting mechanism.

The Details: Politics, Budgets, Bureaucrats

According to Danish historian Poul Duedahl, “international organizations are obvious objects of analysis in order to achieve a deeper understanding of some of the more prominent and organized transnational issues characterizing the 20th century because they are specific places... where people meet beyond national borders and exchange knowledge.”¹⁰ The headquarters of UNESCO, in Paris, are one such place. UNESCO was founded on November 16, 1945, in response to the devastations of the Second World War. In fact, the first declaration of the nascent organization’s inaugural Constitution stated that: “Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defenses of peace must be constructed.”¹¹ UNESCO was established as a pacifist-oriented civil society, with the aims of promoting peace and fostering transnational knowledge exchange through the advancement of educational, cultural, and scientific means. It was modeled on, and ultimately succeeded, the International Institute for Intellectual Cooperation (IIIC), created in 1922 by the League of Nations. The universalist and modernist ideals of progress, diplomacy, and development envisioned by the League of

¹⁰ Poul Duedahl, “Out of the House: On the Global History of UNESCO, 1945-2015,” in Duedahl, *A History of UNESCO*, 3.

¹¹ Constitution of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, preamble (1945).

Nations were inherited by UNESCO upon the former organization's demise in 1946.¹²

Moreover, the Conference of the Allied Ministers of Education (CAME), which first convened in 1942 in order to coordinate intergovernmental education efforts after the war, was also considered an instrumental moment in the lead-up to UNESCO's establishment. Thus, when forty-four governments sent delegations to London for a United Nations conference regarding the formation of an educational and cultural organization (ECO/CONF) in November 1945, the framework for a peace-seeking, humanitarian, intercultural organization were already in place.¹³ The initiative was spearheaded by British Minister of Education Richard Butler, who, along with the first Director-General, British biologist Julian Huxley, held great influence over the organization's one-world ideals. Upon its establishment, UNESCO idealized the cosmopolitan notions of 'one worldism,' whereby "world citizenship was celebrated as the adjunct of an antichauvinist *raison d'être* and as a cultural manifestation of the Enlightenment premise that humanity was evolving socially, politically, technologically, and even psychologically toward a 'World Community.'"¹⁴

To operate a global governing body, no matter how small or how 'harmless,' is inherently political. An *international* organization is comprised of *national* members, each of whom exert national biases in efforts to progress national agendas. As noted by Leftist

¹² Jo-Anne Pemberton, "The Changing Shape of Intellectual Cooperation: From the League of Nations to UNESCO," *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 58, no. 1 (March 2012): 34-50.

¹³ Charles Dorn, "'The World's Schoolmaster': Educational Reconstruction, Grayson Kefauver, and the Founding of UNESCO, 1942-46," *History of Education* 35, no. 3 (May 2006): 297-320.

¹⁴ Glenda Sluga, "UNESCO and the (One) World of Julian Huxley," *Journal of World History* 21, no. 3 (September 2010): 393.

nationalism scholar Tom Nairn, “a nationalist ... by definition speaks from somewhere; the internationalist speaks (or claims to speak) from nowhere in particular.”¹⁵ Indeed, with almost two hundred state parties, hundreds of advisory nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), about two thousand staff spread between the Parisian headquarters and fifty-three field offices, and National Commissions, UNESCO is a nexus between international relations organization, global humanist society, and “academic-bureaucratic heritage industrial complex.”¹⁶ At a granular level, UNESCO also supports various project proposals, including “documentation, both the preservation of archives and the recording of oral traditions; the creation of research institutes and organization of scientific expeditions; conferences, publications and audiovisual productions; educational programmes; cultural tourism, including the development of museums and exhibitions, restoration of sites, and creation of tourist routes; and artistic activities such as festivals and films.”¹⁷ As can be gleaned from this list of activities, UNESCO’s mandate as the intellectual and philosophical branch of the United Nations is eclectic in its pursuits, but focused on the objective of building a culture of peace through education, the sciences, and intercultural dialogue.

Structurally, UNESCO is composed of three constitutional bodies: General Conference, Executive Board, and Secretariat. The General Conference, consisting of representatives from each state party, select observers, and NGOs, meets every two years, votes on programming

¹⁵ Tom Nairn, “Internationalism and the Second Coming,” *Daedalus* 122, no. 3 (Summer 1993): 156.

¹⁶ Michael Dylan Foster, “UNESCO on the Ground,” in *UNESCO on the Ground: Local Perspectives on Intangible Cultural Heritage*, eds. Michael Dylan Foster and Lisa Gilman (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015), 4.

¹⁷ Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, “Intangible Heritage as Metacultural Production,” *Museum* 56, no. 1-2 (2004): 57.

and budgets (with each nation receiving one vote), and elects the Executive Board. The Executive Board is comprised of fifty-eight state parties elected for four-year terms, meets every six months, and sets the conference agenda. Lastly, the Secretariat entails the elected Director-General and the staff members. Of the seventeen organizations and specialized agencies of the United Nations, UNESCO is the only one with affiliated national organizations (also referred to as state parties).¹⁸ For instance, the Canadian Commission for UNESCO is responsible for working with the Government of Canada to implement UNESCO policies locally. By the end of 1950, there were 53 state parties; 117 by the end of the 1960s; 156 by 1990; and 193 today. Some state parties (e.g. United Kingdom) have included a separate National Organizing Committee for their dependent territories (e.g. Bermuda), while eleven dependencies have associate member status. Interestingly, there are three UNESCO state parties that are not, in fact, members of the United Nations: Cook Islands, Niue, and Palestine.¹⁹ With so many diverse nation-state members, representing independent national agendas and often speaking on behalf of a wide array of ethnic groups, scientific societies, and cosmopolitan idealists, “all roads lead to politics at UNESCO.”²⁰

¹⁸ Refer to Appendix I for United Nations agencies.

¹⁹ The formal inclusion of the latter, as well as the inscription of the Hebron (Palestine) Old Town as a World Heritage Site in 2017, led to the withdrawal of both the United States and Israel from UNESCO, citing anti-Israel bias. This was the second time the United States withdrew from UNESCO, initially doing so in 1985 because of the organization’s support of the New World Information and Communication Order, which sought to democratize the media and access to information. See Colleen Roach, “The U.S. Position on the New World Information and Communication Order,” *Journal of Communication* 37, no. 4 (Autumn 1987): 36-51.

²⁰ J.P. Singh, *United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO): Creating Norms for a Complex World* (London: Routledge, 2011), 91.

Although the organization's acronym points to three areas of focus – education, science, and culture – UNESCO actually has five branches (referred to as themes or programs, officially): culture, education, natural sciences, social sciences and humanities, and communications and information. The 2018-2019 programme budget (in USD) is divided amongst these five branches, as follows:²¹

▪ Culture	\$118,173,700 (14.6%)
▪ Education	\$396,815,900 (48.9%)
▪ Natural Sciences	\$172,766,100 (21.3%)
▪ Social and Human Sciences	\$68,622,000 (8.5%)
▪ Communication and Information	\$55,580,800 (6.8%)
▪ Net Total Budget	\$811,958,500

Before its departure from UNESCO, in 2017, the United States represented about 22% of the annual budget. Along with Japan (15%), Germany (8%), and France (6%), these four countries made up almost half of the entire organizational budget.²² A majority of the budget is spent on organizing meetings, transportation to meetings, and writing-up policy documentation as a result of meetings. As a global bureaucratic institution, the outcome of this assortment of Executive Board discussions, General Conferences, committee (and subcommittee) meetings, intergovernmental working groups, regional roundtables, and staff seminars is a convoluted matrix of policy documents, known as legal instruments.

²¹ These figures presented are the totals of the individual Major Programme budgets and do not include programme-related services, minor programmes, corporate services, capital expenses, or anticipated costs. (Source: UNESCO General Conference, Approved Programme and Budget 2018-2019: First Biennium of the 2018-2021 Quadrennium, 39 C/5 (2018).)

²² Anthony Seeger, "Understanding UNESCO: A Complex Organization with Many Parts and Many Actors," in Foster and Gilman, *UNESCO on the Ground*, 132.

The tedium associated with large-scale, global institutions is often a result of the sweeping agreements, recommendations, resolutions, and provisions that bog down the various layers within the bureaucratic hierarchy. In this sense, as outlined by museologist Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, “UNESCO’s role is to provide leadership and guidance, to create international agreement and co-operation by convening national representatives and experts, and to lend its moral authority to the consensus they build in the course of an elaborate and extended process of deliberation, compromise, and reporting.”²³ This process produces UNESCO’s three overarching legal instruments: Declarations, Recommendations, and Conventions.²⁴ A declaration, or charter, can be understood as a formal statement outlining ethical priorities relating to an important issue, which are not officially ratified, but state parties are expected to acknowledge them. There are fourteen UNESCO declarations, including the *Declaration of Principles of International Cultural Co-operation* (1966), the *International Charter of Physical Education, Physical Activity and Sport* (1978), and the *UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity* (2001). Recommendations, on the other hand, are informal solicitations to state parties to enact change within their domestic legal systems. Of the thirty-four UNESCO recommendations, nineteen are related to the cultural branch, including the *Recommendation on the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore* (1989), which is reviewed below. Finally, as legally-binding treaties, conventions differ from recommendations on the basis that those state parties who fail to uphold the policies of a convention are in breach of international law.

²³ Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, “Metacultural Production,” 55.

²⁴ Refer to Appendix II for a list of UNESCO legal instruments.

Forwarded by the Executive Board, after a formal study is issued, and requiring a two-thirds majority vote at the General Conference, the Secretariat prefers the implementation of conventions because they are the most effective norm-setting instrument within the UNESCO framework. The Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003) is one of twenty-seven UNESCO conventions. Although they have consumed an enormous amount of time and effort of various UNESCO stakeholders since the 1940s, these over-arching legal instruments represent the historical output, budgetary emphasis, and internal politicking that form the internationalist ethos of UNESCO.

The power politics, limited resources, and legal instrumentation that have evolved within the UNESCO apparatus have, regrettably, rendered the organization an ideological forum for bureaucratic entreaties. As lamented by social anthropologist Christoph Brumann, as “much as UNESCO is striving to live up to the ideal of a focused organisation, it is far from attaining it ... [UNESCO’s] striving for consistency is likewise constrained by organisational complexity, the supreme authority of self-serving nation states, path dependencies of very early decisions (such as the absence of numerical inscription quotas or the possibility for Committee state parties to vote on their own national sites), and the persistent lack of funds.”²⁵ But these types of concerns have been present since the organization’s inception. As noted by international policy scholar J.P. Singh, “UNESCO continues to embody a humanism borne of the Enlightenment in a twenty-first century intellectual milieu uneasy with grand narratives.”²⁶

²⁵ Christoph Brumann, “Heritage Agnosticism: A Third Path for the Study of Cultural Heritage,” *Social Anthropology* 22, no. 2 (2014): 183.

²⁶ Singh, *Creating Norms*, 1.

With an overwhelming responsibility of unifying global educational, cultural, and scientific efforts, UNESCO is spread thin, to say the least. Consequently, a subtle shift in organizational priorities drew most internal efforts towards the cultural branch, eventually branding the entire agency as the global arbiter of heritage.

From Monumental to Anthropological

While the narratives of this postwar internationalist organization espoused the notions of a one-world cosmopolitanism, many of the early edicts and actions of the intellectual behemoth revolved around hegemonic Western cultural norms. Although the international cultural movement is often associated with UNESCO, it began with its predecessor. The IIC founded the International Museums Office (IMO) in 1922, which organized an international congress in 1931 for “architects and technicians of historic monuments,” in an effort to standardize heritage protection measures (known as the Athens Charter).²⁷ The IMO was replaced by the International Council of Museums (ICOM) in 1946, becoming the first international organization dedicated exclusively to heritage. Two years later, in reaction to the wartime destruction of significant cultural properties, UNESCO’s General Conference requisitioned a study to assess the effectiveness of an expert committee to strategize reconstruction efforts. As a result of this need, as well as the developing symbiotic relationship with ICOM, the UNESCO International Committee on Monuments, Artistic and Historical Sites and Archaeological Excavations was struck, eventually leading to the establishment, in 1959, of

²⁷ Cristina Iamandi, “The Charters of Athens of 1931 and 1933: Coincidence, Controversy and Convergence,” *Conservation and Management of Archaeological Sites* 2, no. 1 (1997): 17-28.

the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM) in Rome. The 1950s marked the beginning of UNESCO's concerted efforts to universalize heritage management. These early forays into cultural committee work were ultimately tested with the Nubia Campaign, launched in 1960. Following the Egyptian Revolution (1952), in an effort to industrialize the nation, the Egyptian government sought to construct the Aswan High Dam at the cost of flooding the ancient Abu Simbel temples in lower Nubia.²⁸ UNESCO led the salvaging effort to relocate twenty-two monuments and buildings, heralding a significant shift in the global perception of heritage as both universal and collective. Drawing on the international implications of the Nubia Campaign, and modeled after the Athens Charter, the 1964 Venice Charter provided a framework for the conservation and restoration of monuments and historic sites; a critical moment in the subsequent ascension of UNESCO as the global arbiter of heritage.

In a final effort to standardize best practices in architectural conservation, the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) was established in 1965. In contrast to ICOM and ICCROM, ICOMOS focused predominantly on tangible heritage and, as a result, it was designated an advisory body to the landmark World Heritage Convention, adopted by the General Conference in 1972. Capitalizing on the achievement of the Nubia Campaign – and the subsequent cultural turn within UNESCO – the World Heritage Convention advocated for the shared ownership of tangible heritage. With near universal ratification, the 1972 Convention

²⁸ Fekri A. Hassan, "The Aswan High Dam and the International Rescue Nubia Campaign," *African Archaeological Review* 24 (2007): 73-94.

“created a set of obligations to protect the past for future generations, an aspiration for a shared sense of belonging, and an ideal of global solidarity.”²⁹ Although hailed as a ground-breaking moment for archaeology and conservation, the edification of select historic sites became problematic almost as soon as the legal instrument was unveiled. Tunbridge and Ashworth describe it in the following terms: “all heritage is someone’s heritage and therefore, logically not someone else’s: the original meaning of an inheritance implies the existence of disinheritance and by extension any creation of heritage from the past disinherits someone completely or partially, actively or potentially. This disinheritance may be unintentional, temporary, of trivial importance, limited in its effects and concealed; or it may be long-term, widespread, intentional, important and obvious.”³⁰ The World Heritage Committee, advised by ICOMOS, ICCROM, and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), introduced the World Heritage List in 1978, with twelve original sites that would serve as the foundations of the organization’s hallmark brand of World Heritage Sites.³¹ World heritage became a cosmopolitan status symbol, providing the “added values of enhanced protection, increased political prestige and public awareness, and economic development through international aid and tourism expenditures.”³² Yet, within this global cultural turn, there was a growing concern

²⁹ Lynn Meskell and Christoph Brumann, “UNESCO and New World Orders,” in *Global Heritage: A Reader*, ed. Lynn Meskell (London: Wiley Blackwell, 2015), 25.

³⁰ J.E. Tunbridge and G.J. Ashworth, *Dissonant Heritage: The Management of the Past as a Resource in Conflict* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 1996), 21

³¹ The original twelve sites included: Aachen Cathedral (Germany), City of Quito (Ecuador), Galápagos Islands (Ecuador), Historic Centre of Kraków (Poland), Island of Gorée (Senegal), L’Anse aux Meadows National Historic Site (Canada), Mesa Verde National Park (USA), Nahanni National Park (Canada), Rock-Hewn Churches, Lalibela (Ethiopia), Simien National Park (Ethiopia), Wieliczka and Bochnia Royal Salt Mines (Poland), and Yellowstone National Park (USA).

³² Aurélie Elisa Gfeller, “Anthropologizing and Indigenizing Heritage: The Origins of the UNESCO Global Strategy for a Representative, Balanced and Credible World Heritage List,” *Journal of Social Archaeology* 15, no. 3 (2015): 367.

that the monumental ranked as more prestigious than the anthropological; by its universalizing of heritage, “the Convention text represents itself as a totalising discourse representing a global hierarchy of value.”³³

The decidedly more anthropological (‘living’), intangible cultural heritage, as explained in the previous chapter, comprises elements of oral traditions, folklore, cultural practices, and the meanings and symbols bestowed upon tangible cultural heritage. Even the ‘human museums’ of former World’s Fairs counted as a part of this intangible spectrum. The tangible-intangible conflict within UNESCO structures and policies, however, were present well before the 1972 World Heritage Convention. For instance, the 1952 Universal Copyright Convention could be considered a first stab at ICH safeguarding, as many initial theoretical debates about the concept centered around the protection of folklore in consideration of copyright laws. Then, as a result of the Nubia Campaign and concerns about the pillaging of ancient artefacts for private and national museum collections, the *Recommendation on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Export, Import, and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property* was adopted in 1964. This Recommendation points to the intangible cultural meanings and ownership of tangible artefacts and monuments. It was during the 1970s – somewhat in opposition to the Western, monumentalist ethos of the World Heritage Convention – that ICH advocacy truly proliferated. Traditionally accepted as the springboard for ICH concerns, a 1973 letter from the Bolivian Ministry of External and Religious Affairs to the UNESCO Director-General lamented

³³ Rodney Harrison, *Heritage: Critical Approaches* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 64.

“a process of commercially oriented transculturation destructive of the traditional cultures.”³⁴

In essence, the concern, as elucidated in Chapter III, was that of the effects of globalization, modernity, and commercialism on local traditional customs: marginalization or modernization. Additionally, a romantic attitude towards traditional cultures was taking root in many newly independent nations.³⁵ The process of nation-building necessitated the adoption of national symbols, whereby nations “reinvented and revived local traditions, constructing national sentiment and identity, and also increasing the commercial utilization of folklore.”³⁶ Caught up in this context of nationalist zeal, UNESCO launched the Comprehensive Program on the Intangible Cultural Heritage (1976), to promote the respect of local cultural forms, followed by the 1982 World Conference on Cultural Policies (referred to as Mondiacult). Janet Blake explains that Mondiacult “articulated for the first time on the international stage a view of culture as a broad notion that went beyond the material culture of archaeological remains or high, artistic cultural productions to one that embraced ways of life, social organization and value/belief systems.”³⁷ Quite plainly, Mondiacult represented one of the first iterations of ICH safeguarding concerns. Subsequent developments in the intangible domain, including the establishment of the Committee of Governmental Experts on the Safeguarding of Folklore

³⁴ Mario R. Gutiérrez to René Maheu, April, 24 1973, UNESCO Archives, Ref. No. DG 01/1006-79.

³⁵ During the 1960s and 1970s, a total of 75 nations achieved sovereignty (42 in Africa, 11 in Oceania, 11 in the Caribbean Sea, 9 in Asia, and 2 in Europe).

³⁶ Samantha Sherkin, “A Historical Study on the Preparation of the 1989 Recommendation on the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore,” in *Safeguarding Traditional Cultures: A Global Assessment*, ed. Peter Seitel (Washington, DC: Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage, Smithsonian Institution, 2001), 44.

³⁷ Janet Blake, “Development of UNESCO’s 2003 Convention: Creating a New Heritage Protection Paradigm?,” in *The Routledge Companion to Intangible Cultural Heritage*, eds. Michelle L. Stefano and Peter Davis (London: Routledge, 2017), 12.

(1982), led to decisive steps in the development of an international safeguarding mechanism.

Through its first forty years, UNESCO had “emerged as the most prominent structural avenue to the global governance and promotion of cultural heritage.”³⁸ On the basis of this tangible-to-intangible narrative, and primed in the context of postcolonial politics, the bureaucratic mechanisms of UNESCO were set for the establishment of concrete legal instruments to finally include the intangible traditions of disparate non-Western cultures in the global heritagescape.

The Mondiacult Effect: Recommendation to Proclamation to Convention

Attended by 960 participants, representing 80% (126/158) of the state parties, Mondiacult was a watershed moment for the promotion of intangible heritage within the UNESCO framework, catalyzing two decades of policy work in an effort to establish practical safeguarding measures. In many ways, one of the main achievements of the conference was the redefinition of culture to include the previously-overshadowed notion of community, everyday, intangible heritage. Riding on the momentum of the resultant Mexico City Declaration on Cultural Policies, which expressed the inimitable value of cultural identity, diversity, and pluralism, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed a World Decade for Cultural Development (1987-1997). Capitalizing on the success of Mondiacult and support from the UN, in 1989, UNESCO adopted, with unanimous consent, the *Recommendation on the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore*, the first legal instrument for the safeguarding of ICH. The Recommendation encouraged state parties to establish national inventories, archives, and museums, train and create jobs for folklore specialists, organize cultural events, and introduce

³⁸ Meskell and Brumann, “New World Orders,” 24.

folklore into the curricula.³⁹ Although it was hailed as a milestone decision, as mentioned previously, recommendations are non-binding. As critiqued by the former director of the Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage at the Smithsonian Institute, Richard Kurin, the 1989 Recommendation was “a somewhat ill-construed, ‘top-down’, state oriented, ‘soft’ international instrument that defined traditional culture in essentialist, tangible, archival terms, and had little impact around the globe upon cultural communities and practitioners.”⁴⁰ With regard to the primary research question of this dissertation – whether UNESCO policies can affect the safeguarding of folk sports – the unsuccessful implementation of the 1989 Recommendation highlights the deficiencies of UNESCO heritage work in the intangible sector. Albeit the adoption of this initial legal instrument opened the floodgates for further development in the heritagescape, and the 1990s, in particular, marked a shift in approach from the Western archival method to an east Asian onus on ‘living cultures.’

Through its progressive domestic policies on intangible cultural heritage, Japan, and other east Asian nations, challenged Western cultural hegemony in UNESCO, characterized by the “precepts of conservation that are grounded in materialism and a relationship to the past mediated through stone monuments.”⁴¹ In 1950, Japan’s *Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties* came into action, replacing the 1929 *National Treasures Protection Act*. In 1954, the law was amended to include intangible cultural properties. South Korea based their 1963 *Cultural*

³⁹ Recommendation on the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore, 25 C/137, 25th Session of the General Conference, UNESCO (1989).

⁴⁰ Richard Kurin, “Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage in the 2003 UNESCO Convention: A Critical Appraisal,” *Museum International* 56, no. 1-2 (May 2004): 68.

⁴¹ Hafstein, “The Making of Intangible Cultural Heritage,” 20.

Property Preservation Law on this model. In 1955, the Japanese *Living Human Treasures* project was initiated in an effort to support ‘holders’ of intangible heritage in its reproduction and intergenerational transmission. South Korea initiated a similar initiative in 1964, while the Philippines and Thailand did so in the 1980s. UNESCO officials, disappointed in the reaction to the 1989 Recommendation’s emphasis on documentation, called an international consultation in 1993, funded by the Japanese government, who then established a UNESCO trust fund for the preservation and promotion of intangible cultural heritage. In addition to the *UNESCO Living Human Treasures* programme, the *UNESCO Red Book of Languages in Danger of Disappearing* was also launched in 1993, followed by the 1996 UN report *Our Creative Diversity*, which accounted for four issues in the safeguarding of ICH: authentication (or replication), expropriation, compensation (of ‘holders’), and commodification.⁴² A year later, the UNESCO Director-General launched the programme of the *Proclamation of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity*, divided into six categories: cultural spaces, traditional knowledge, oral traditions, performing arts, traditional music, and rituals and festivals. The Proclamation proposed an inventory of ‘masterpieces,’ of which there were ninety inscribed between 2001 and 2005, as well as a plan of action to safeguard the proclaimed ICH elements. However, as argued by folklorist Valdimar Hafstein, the Proclamation was also “a relatively weak program established on a slight foundation (the unsuccessful Recommendation), with questionable authority (a jury appointed by the Director-General rather than an intergovernmental

⁴² Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, *Our Creative Diversity: Report of the World Commission on Culture and Development* (Paris: UNESCO, 1996).

committee elected by state parties), and with limited and unreliable resources at its disposal.”⁴³ Once again, UNESCO’s ability to manage and safeguard localized intangible cultural heritage (such as folk sports) is called into question through the critiques of their legal instrumentation. In effect, a standard-setting legal instrument was required, one that mandated concrete national policies for proper safeguarding techniques, as suggested by the 1998 Intergovernmental Conference on Cultural Policies for Development (Stockholm Conference). The 2000 UNESCO *World Culture Report* noted that fifty-seven nations had ICH policies and programmes, while another eighty provided economic support to ICH ‘holders.’⁴⁴ Then, in 2002, coincidentally proclaimed the United Nations Year of Cultural Heritage, the Third Roundtable on Intangible Heritage and Cultural Diversity recommended an international convention (Istanbul Declaration) that would ensure effective measures, at all levels, to safeguard intangible cultural heritage.

One of the strongest proponents of the development of a standard-setting ICH programme was Director-General Kōichirō Matsuura (1999-2009). A career diplomat and former chairperson of the World Heritage Committee, Matsuura was vital in prioritizing ICH policy and supporting the development of an official Convention. As such, under the supervision of Matsuura, the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage was finally adopted on October 17, 2003, with 120 votes in favour, eight abstentions,

⁴³ Hafstein, “Making of Intangible Cultural Heritage,” 24.

⁴⁴ Lourdes Arizpe, *World Culture Report, 2000: Cultural Diversity, Conflict and Pluralism* (Paris: UNESCO, 2000).

and no votes against.⁴⁵ Notably, among those who abstained were the United States (which rejoined UNESCO in 2003, after its 1985 departure), Canada, New Zealand, and Australia, due to concerns about how the Convention might affect historically complex relationships with Indigenous peoples, many of whom were the ‘holders’ of intangible cultural heritage in their respective territories. Although, as to the reason the USA has yet to ratify the Convention, Kurin speculates that “the American people largely see culture as a matter of individual freedom rather than government responsibility or something subject to legal regulation. The US is hesitant to ‘officialize’ culture.”⁴⁶ However, in reaction to the modernization and marginalization of local traditions, as brought to light by the 1973 Bolivian ministerial letter or the Japanese *Living Human Treasures* programme, the Convention was developed by and predominantly geared towards members of the Global South, who had been notably excluded in the 1972 Convention, which catered to the materialist ideologies of the Global North.

Those state parties that have adopted the 2003 Convention are legally bound to support the documentation, preservation, and transmission of intangible cultural heritage. One of the primary mechanisms encouraged by the Convention is for state parties to develop national inventories of ICH. Similar to the World Heritage Convention, the 2003 Convention is also dependent on a system in which state parties submit ICH elements for inscription to a representative list. In fact, there are three lists: the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural

⁴⁵ To date, there are only 15 state parties that have not yet ratified the Convention, including: Angola, Australia, Canada, Guyana, Liberia, Libya, the Maldives, New Zealand, Niue, Russia, San Marino, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, and the United Kingdom.

⁴⁶ Michelle F. Stefano, “A Conversation with Richard Kurin,” in Stefano and Davis, *Routledge Companion*, 41.

Heritage of Humanity (Representative List); the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding (Urgent List); and the Register of Good Safeguarding Practices (Practices Register). The first elements inscribed into the Representative List in 2008 were the ninety masterpieces included in the Proclamation. Today, there are a total of 549 elements (473 representative elements; 54 urgent elements; 22 safeguarding practices) corresponding to 127 nations.⁴⁷ The criteria for a successful nomination to the Representative List includes: A description of how inscription will augment the ICH's visibility and, in turn, cultural diversity; an explanation of safeguarding measures; the participation and free, prior, and informed consent of the community holders; and previous inscription within a national inventory. Nomination files are processed by the Secretariat, assessed by the Evaluation Body, which consists of six ICH experts and six NGO representatives, and reviewed by the

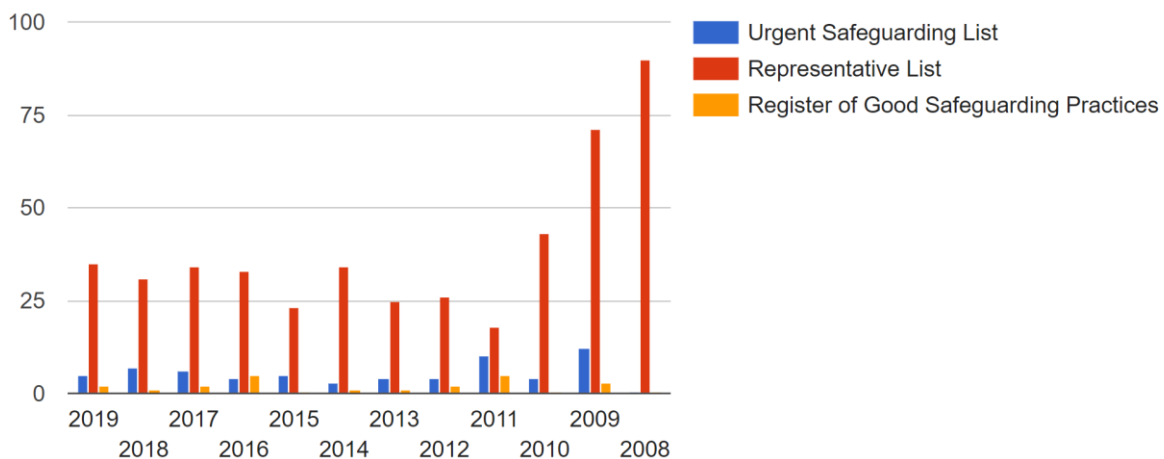


Figure 3 Elements of Intangible Cultural Heritage Inscribed to the 2003 Convention
(Source: <https://ich.unesco.org/en/lists?multinational=3&display1=inscriptionID&display=stats#tabs>)

⁴⁷ The Urgent List and Practices Register were officially added in 2009. Refer to Figure 2.

Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage before an ultimate decision about its inscription on one of the three lists.⁴⁸

Based on the periodic reports of state parties to the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage, about 75% of the reports indicated that state parties established some form of new policy on intangible cultural heritage preservation.⁴⁹ The main awareness-raising priorities of state parties when it comes to implementing ICH policies include: educational programming; national inventory development; the creation of heritage days, weeks, or thematic years; ICH festivals and competitions; public recognition of heritage bearers, including Living Human Treasures; and engagement with local, regional, and national media outlets (e.g. traditional music radio stations).⁵⁰ The objectives and outcomes of said policies, based on a study of the aforementioned periodic reports, have been diverse, targeting many aspects of cultural development. Policy objectives included: inter-agency initiatives; regional devolution of responsibilities; economic growth and sustainable development; private sector collaboration; integration of education and culture; community involvement; sustainable and rural development; Indigenous reconciliation; resource management; social cohesion; intercultural dialogue; ethnic and cultural diversity; and conflict resolution.⁵¹ As can be gleaned from these myriad objectives and outcomes, intangible heritage policy is not a one-size-fits-all

⁴⁸ Prior to 2014, a Subsidiary Body, made up of six member-state representatives, evaluated the nominations, inciting questions of credibility and independent assessment.

⁴⁹ Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, "Examination of the Reports of States Parties on the Implementation of the Convention and on the Current Status of Elements Inscribed on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity," ITH/16/11.COM/9.a, para. 21 (2016). [Study of integration in cultural policies in periodic reports]

⁵⁰ Ibid., ITH/18/13.COM/7.a, para. 37 (2018). [Study of awareness measures in periodic reports]

⁵¹ Ibid., ITH/16/11.COM/9.a (2016). [Study of integration in cultural policies in periodic reports]

proposition, but rather a translation, interpretation, and customization of international norms on local practices, via nation-state bureaucratic processes.

The 2003 Convention was a watershed moment in cultural representation, diversity, and identity. In the convening years, ICH has become a metonym for grassroots expressive culture, while UNESCO has reaffirmed its role as global arbiter of heritage. One of the foremost achievements of the Convention is a cosmopolitanism organized around a common heritage, for “through a multiplicity of particular representations, juxtaposing local practices from all over the globe, it creates a montage onto which we are invited to project an imagined global community.”⁵² This newfound cultural representation maintained UNESCO’s universalizing mission by giving credence to the notion of “‘community’ as a rising, alternative holder and centre of power to the state, particularly in a post-modern era of decreasing nationalism and increasing trans-national ties and relationships.”⁵³ In many ways, the Convention has redefined global, national, regional, local, and individual understandings of traditional cultures. Through its diverse representation of local cultural forms, the Convention has achieved a glocalization of intangible heritage at the price of “accepting the insinuation of ‘governmentality’ into vernacular forms of everyday culture: a government of habitus in the name of heritage.”⁵⁴

What is the intention behind UNESCO’s ICH Convention? The 2003 Convention strives to ensure the safeguarding of living cultural heritage in the face of a creeping globalization that

⁵² Hafstein, “Making of Intangible Cultural Heritage,” 206.

⁵³ Richard Kurin, “Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage: Key Factors in Implementing the 2003 Convention,” *International Journal of Intangible Heritage* 2 (2007): 15.

⁵⁴ Hafstein, “Making of Intangible Cultural Heritage,” 32.

tends to commoditize, marginalize, or homogenize local cultural forms. As per the Convention text, safeguarding measures are “aimed at ensuring the viability of the intangible cultural heritage, including the identification, documentation, research, preservation, protection, promotion, enhancement, transmission, particularly through formal and non-formal education, as well as the revitalization of the various aspects of such heritage.”⁵⁵ The scope of the instrument was to include oral traditions, languages, performing arts and festivals, social rituals and practices, knowledge systems, and nature-based beliefs.⁵⁶ Commenting on the objectives of the Convention, Zimbabwean heritage expert Dawson Munjeri explains that “the ICHC was meant to usher in the era in which intangible heritage would be recognized as integral to cultural identity, cultural diversity, human creativity, human rights and sustainable development. The Convention provides a series of safeguards against grave threats of deterioration, disappearance and destruction of the intangible cultural heritage; those threats include the process of globalization and social transformation.”⁵⁷ At a deeper level, the 2003 Convention was also meant to alleviate a number of internal tensions through negotiation, policy work, and a ‘one-size-fits-all’ standardization of heritage elements. These tensions include local versus global ideals, tangible versus intangible heritage, and national versus cosmopolitan motives. In essence, the idealism of the Convention fell into the trap of the globalization paradox. Like the hegemonic position of the International Olympic Committee,

⁵⁵ Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, MISC/2003/CLT/CH/14, 32nd Session of the General Conference, UNESCO (2003).

⁵⁶ Noriko Aikawa-Faure, “From Proclamation of Masterpieces to the Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage,” in Smith and Akagawa, *Intangible Heritage*, 32.

⁵⁷ Dawson Munjeri, “Following the Length and Breadth of the Roots: Some Dimensions of Intangible Heritage,” in Smith and Akagawa, *Intangible Heritage*, 131.

UNESCO's ICH Convention positioned itself atop a universal hierarchy of heritage. In an effort to remedy previous miscalculations (lack of accountability in the Proclamation) and maintain its operational guidelines (and lofty ideals), this standard-setting legal instrument had lofty expectations (unity in diversity) with a homogenizing influence (universality masks diversity).

The Politics of List-Making: Convention Critiques

The one-world ethos of 'common heritage' ingrained within the 2003 Convention has been hailed as a cultural triumph for UNESCO cosmopolitans. Yet, the local-level interpretation and implementation of global bureaucratic processes have also left the Convention mired in the "clash between universalism and cultural relativism."⁵⁸ It is worth noting two issues with the international-to-national transmission of patrimonial policies. The first crux of UNESCO's internationally-binding legal instruments is that state parties must translate them into national policies. To do this, state parties are obliged to "define legal parameters and create responsible governmental authorities and bureaucratic institutions."⁵⁹ As of 2020, 178 state parties have ratified the 2003 Convention, meaning the heritage policies therein have been interpreted into 178 diverse national bureaucratic contexts. Unfortunately, an aspect of the bureaucratization of heritage is its sluggishness. As noted by anthropologist Markus Tauschek, "whereas traditional culture – or folklore – is dynamic, vibrant, creative, and, through its performative character, constantly remade, heritage bureaucracies can be

⁵⁸ William S. Logan, "Closing Pandora's Box: Human Rights Conundrums in Cultural Rights Protection," in *Cultural Heritage and Human Rights*, eds. Helaine Silverman and D. Fairchild Ruggles (New York: Springer, 2007), 39.

⁵⁹ Markus Tauschek, "The Bureaucratic Texture of National Patrimonial Policies," in *Heritage Regimes and the State*, eds. Regina F. Bendix, Aditya Eggert, and Arnika Peselmann (Göttingen, DE: Universitätsverlag Göttingen, 2012), 197.

circumscribed as persistent, slow or unidimensional.”⁶⁰ Unlike its tangible (monuments and buildings) counterparts, however, intangible heritage does not have the luxury to wait for safeguarding processes to run their course, as the rapid shifts in cultural dynamics can have irremediable effects on the marginalization of folk practices. A second shortfall of the UNESCO-to-national policy transmission is the question of who, on the ground, actually ‘owns’ the heritage. Within the political milieu of the UNESCO bureaucracy, the nominations are often driven by states, not communities, “the methods used to select nominations and the actions taken to ‘safeguard’ them are decided at different levels (national, provincial, or local) in different countries, each with its own history, government, and cultural policies.”⁶¹ Therefore, the agendas of nation-states are prioritised over those of minority, regional, and Indigenous groups, whose cultures are diluted within broader nationalist discourse.⁶² In fact, in its planning stages, state parties expressed reluctance in the use of the term *communities* in the text of the Convention, for fear of emboldening secessionist groups to employ ICH in ethnonationalist movements. In recent years, however, “a shift away from a purely state-driven concept of ‘national’ heritage towards a more inclusive approach, which accords more closely with the requirement for participation of cultural communities,” has been observed.⁶³ In most situations, a dual-track practice proves most effective, whereby state parties maintain international activities and localized safeguarding activities fall within the purview of

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Seeger, “Understanding UNESCO,” 131.

⁶² Harrison, *Critical Approaches*, 136.

⁶³ Janet Blake, “The Impact of UNESCO’s 2003 Convention on National Policy-Making,” in *The Routledge Companion to Intangible Cultural Heritage*, eds. Michelle L. Stefano and Peter Davis (London: Routledge, 2017), 70.

community groups. Once these two hurdles – (1) translation to national policy, and (2) community involvement – are cleared, the implementation and management of safeguarding practices may begin.

Furthermore, a number of critical heritage scholars, as alluded to in the previous chapter, have scrutinized the Convention on several important points since its adoption. Among them, Richard Kurin was quoted as saying that “the treaty has spawned bureaucracies, unending list making and a system of government prestige mongering.”⁶⁴ While even the Assistant Director-General of UNESCO, Hans D’Orville, cautioned against “logocentrism, egocentrism and ethnocentrism” in the safeguarding process.⁶⁵ In truth, the Convention has not fulfilled its dictum in three interrelated ways. First, the preservation of authenticity, as “all heritage interventions – like the globalizing pressures they are trying to counteract – change the relationship of people to what they do.”⁶⁶ This is the globalization paradox to which Chapter III was dedicated. Second, the politics of a global inventory (lists), which “risks interpretation (or manipulation) as a political tool of exclusion, privilege, or control.”⁶⁷ Moreover, by itemizing all heritage elements on a list, heritage administrators are simply partaking in a different form of archiving, which does little for on-the-ground change. Third, the ethnonationalist power struggle, which confirms that “by presenting the nation as an ethnic community that gathers around its heritage, States seek to appropriate a practice by associating it to the nation as a

⁶⁴ Stefano, “A Conversation,” 40.

⁶⁵ Hans d’Orville, “Globalization and Intangible Cultural Heritage: Opportunities, Threats and Challenges,” in *International Conference: Globalization and Intangible Cultural Heritage*, ed. Laura Wong (Paris: UNESCO, 2005), 38.

⁶⁶ Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, “Cultural Economics,” 180.

⁶⁷ Foster, “UNESCO on the Ground,” 5.

whole.”⁶⁸ This form of soft power diplomacy, both domestically (quashing ethnic diversity) and abroad (promoting a unified culture), utilizes heritage for nationalistic purposes, rendering it a political tool. Although the concerns about authenticity, list-making, and nationalism once again called into question UNESCO’s ability to effectively design practical legal instruments, it bears noting that the organization is immersed in bureaucratic processes that simultaneously reinforce the dynamics of nationalism and globalization that threaten local heritage while also attempting to uphold the ideals of universalism set out in its mandate.

Concerns around authenticity are threefold: Cultural stagnation; organic transmission; and community consent. Much of this critique has evolved from Kirshenblatt-Gimblett’s query: “Once habitus becomes heritage, to whom does it belong?”⁶⁹ For, although safeguarding preserves the process of ICH creation, it does not focus on the ICH itself or the community which bears it. Thus, intangible legal instruments cannot, in essence, safeguard intangible culture, if this culture is living and evolving. In terms of cultural stagnation, “there emerges a sense that, by definition, the registration of these events as ‘heritage’ would instigate management practices laden with the burden of preservation and thus cultural expression would be stifled.”⁷⁰ This, of course, raises the second concern with authenticity, organic intergenerational transmission, which becomes disrupted if the original agents of the ICH are no longer practicing it in its traditional contexts. As for consent, state parties are required to

⁶⁸ Chiara Bortolotto, “Placing Intangible Cultural Heritage, Owning a Tradition, Affirming Sovereignty: The Role of Spatiality in the Practice of the 2003 Convention,” in Stefano and Davis, *Routledge Companion*, 50.

⁶⁹ Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, “Cultural Economics,” 162.

⁷⁰ Smith, *Uses of Heritage*, 56.

involve communities in the preparation of nomination files and ensure informed consent, which can be ambiguous in most contexts.⁷¹ Consent and community rights are of the utmost concern in the authenticity of ICH, because if it is appropriated by state bureaucrats, who are not members of the heritage community, then, in a blunt way, the element cannot retain its designation as ICH. This conundrum in ICH safeguarding is at the core of authenticity concerns: By safeguarding, ICH may lose its authenticity; by doing nothing, ICH becomes marginalized to the point where it may itself be lost. In essence, the critique of ICH authenticity, as related to the 2003 Convention, is concerned with whether the intent of the standard-setting legal instrument can justify the measures taken.

The second main critique of the 2003 Convention has received ample academic scrutiny and yields the most intriguing retrospective analysis of the Convention's most tangible output: the Representative List (as well as the other two inventories). Concerns about the hierarchy of elements, exclusion of certain people's cultural traditions, and itemization label the listing system as the most controversial aspect of the Convention.⁷² As explained by Kurin, "for critics, this is a huge, never-ending task, using a historically discredited methodology misconceiving culture as atomistic items, and bearing little relationship to the goal – as if such inventories in themselves could encourage cultural vitality."⁷³ Valdimar Hafstein has written quite extensively on this criticism, in particular. In his doctoral dissertation, for instance, he accuses

⁷¹ Britta Rudolff and Susanne Raymond, "A Community Convention? An Analysis of Free, Prior and Informed Consent Given Under the 2003 Convention," *International Journal of Intangible Heritage* 8 (2013): 154-64.

⁷² Rieks Smeets and Harriet Deacon, "The Examination of Nomination Files Under the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage," in Stefano and Davis, *Routledge Companion*, 22-39.

⁷³ Kurin, "Key Factors," 72.

these lists of being a “vertical integration of vernacular culture,” which stifles the ICH and, in response to Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, converts habitus to heritage in compliance with bureaucratic policy.⁷⁴ Moreover, in a chapter he wrote on the topic, Hafstein pithily remarked that intangible cultural heritage is “a filing cabinet in the ministry of culture, and whatever is not recognized and filed there ends instead in the dustbin of history.”⁷⁵ An apt metaphor for a heritage system based off selection and inevitable exclusion. For, not all heritage can receive the UNESCO ‘seal of approval,’ and therefore it is deemed unadministrable, uncommodifiable, and, ultimately, not worthy of safeguarding from the ebbing tide of history.

Related in many ways to the criticisms of list-making, a third critique, that of national interests, is also worth noting as a detriment to the internationalist intents of the 2003 Convention. Another of Hafstein’s analogies – that “lists yoke pride to the plough of heritage preservation” – ties the nationalistic pride of a listed element of heritage to the development of an expected safeguarding campaign.⁷⁶ As covered in the history section of the previous chapter, heritage has many nationalistic components. In fact, the term patrimony (another term for heritage) connotes inheritance from one’s father, in this case the nation-state.⁷⁷ In an effort to answer one of the secondary research questions – *What are the political, economic, and cultural implications of state actors or agencies employing UNESCO ICH policy for sport nationalistic purposes?* – it is important to understand that the nationalistic politics imbued into the very makeup of the

⁷⁴ Hafstein, “Making of Intangible Cultural Heritage,” 30.

⁷⁵ Valdimar Tr. Hafstein, “Intangible Heritage as a List: From Masterpieces to Representation,” in Smith and Akagawa, *Intangible Heritage*, 104.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 107.

⁷⁷ Singh, *Creating Norms*, 93.

UNESCO apparatus is inevitably interconnected with territoriality and ethnic identity narratives. Because almost all elements inscribed in the Convention's inventories are rooted in diverse ethnic communities, there is a tension between the tenets of the Convention and the nationalistic agendas of the state parties. As documented by Bortolotto, UNESCO ICH representatives "emphasized the drawbacks of localization strategies in representations of culture as they trigger competition and conflicts among different communities claiming to be the bearers of the most authentic version of a given tradition."⁷⁸ A dynamic example of this occurs when inscribed elements are practiced on both sides of a national border, such as in the case of *kok boru* in the next chapter, which makes it difficult to separate the territorial identity claims from the national nomination. The traditional cultures of localized ethnic groups have always been appropriated by state authorities for the purposes of national symbolism. Therein lies the crux of the above research question: State actors are utilizing the notion of universal heritage as an alternate means of appropriating subnational cultural elements into the panoply of elements that represent the state.⁷⁹ The ICH Convention is simply a modern, global, institutionalized iteration of this unfortunate historic trend, masking diversity with universality.

The clash between universalism and cultural relativism is central to the critiques regarding authenticity, list-making, and nationalism, and is the crux of the Convention's ultimate effects in the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage. As suggested by Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "by putting absolutism (universal human rights) in the service of

⁷⁸ Bortolotto, "Placing Intangible Cultural Heritage," 48.

⁷⁹ In the chapter VI, more is elaborated on the sportive nationalistic purposes employed by state agencies in the safeguarding of folk sports in each of the four case studies.

relativism (cultural diversity), world heritage legislation recasts relativity as diversity.”⁸⁰

Doubts about the authenticity of ICH are concerned with the ‘freezing’ or ‘museumification’ of the element in question, the (in)ability to organically transmit the cultural tradition to future generations without interference, and consent from the actual ‘holders’ of ICH within the community. And, frankly, as eloquently described by Hafstein, “authenticity’s ghost haunts the convention’s implementation and returns in the specter of folklorization.”⁸¹ Meanwhile, the highly politicized nature of list-making is replete with unavoidable debates around selection and rejection, biased processes, and misguided notions that tangible lists save intangible culture. Finally, the political nature of the agency itself inevitably yields contestation in the pursuit of globally-recognized national symbols within the workings of the Convention. The nationalistic interests of state parties are an inescapable reality of the ‘hierarchy of heritage,’ leaving one to wonder how any internationalist ideals can be achieved. With such controversy about the viability of the Convention, there are serious concerns about what UNESCO heritagization processes can actually do for local heritage. And, in this breath, would representation within the Convention inventories have any affect on folk sporting traditions around the world? Although UNESCO has a broader sporting mandate, which crosses over all of the organization’s pillars, folk sport remains a marginal concern in its contemporary heritage management. The following section situates traditional sports and games within the UNESCO infrastructure.

⁸⁰ Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, “Cultural Economics,” 185.

⁸¹ Valdimar Tr. Hafstein, “Intangible Heritage as a Festival; or, Folklorization Revisited,” *Journal of American Folklore* 131, no. 520 (Spring 2018): 134.

Sport and UNESCO

UNESCO has had a rich and idealistic historical relationship with world sport. The current section examines this history, chronicling the organization's foray into global sport governance, its aims as a facilitator of 'sport for all', the development of the Physical Education and Sport Programme, and the growing focus on traditional sports and games. In the early days of UNESCO, sporting initiatives fell under the purview of the organization's Bureau of International Education, where the focus was on physical education and improving sports for educational purposes. In fact, until the late 1970s, much UNESCO sport-related activity had an educational bent. During this period, as noted by sport governance scholar Scott Jedlicka, UNESCO's stance was that "if the general objective was to develop the 'complete man' and if education was not a scholastic but a fundamentally human endeavour, then efforts to reform and develop physical education and sport could not be compartmentalized."⁸² As a result, UNESCO used its institutional relevance and broadly-conceived mandate to exert its moral authority within global sport governance.⁸³ This new position did not sit well with the International Olympic Committee, which held the apex position of the global sporting hierarchy. The struggle for global sport governance between the two international bureaucracies, was a political power play in response to the accelerated modernization of sport and its controversial consequences (e.g. doping, professionalism, politicization, etc.).⁸⁴ As such,

⁸² Scott Jedlicka, "Contested Governance: UNESCO's Role in International Sport, 1952-78," *Journal of Sport History* 47, no. 1 (Spring 2020): 27.

⁸³ Yoan Grosset and Michael Attali, "The International Institutionalization of Sport Ethics," *Society* 48 (2011): 517-25.

⁸⁴ Caroline Meier, "The Early Relationship Between UNESCO and the IOC: Considerations – Controversies – Cooperation," *Diagoras: International academic Journal on Olympic Studies* 1 (2017): 229-48.

throughout the 1960s, UNESCO worked closely with the International Council of Sport Science and Physical Education (ICSSPE), through which its sporting objectives – education, intercultural communication, and peace through sporting encounters – could be more effectively pursued.⁸⁵ Although efforts to command moral authority in the global sporting landscape ultimately failed, due to the IOC's stranglehold on elite-level sport, UNESCO's exertions culminated in the adoption, in 1978, of the *International Charter of Physical Education, Physical Activity and Sport* (Sport Charter), which sought to promote 'sport for all,' the educational qualities of sport, gender equality, anti-doping, sport for development and peace, and cultural activities and national heritage.⁸⁶

It was not until the first International Conference of Ministers and Senior Officials Responsible for Physical Education and Sport (MINEPS) in 1976, that the social and medical concerns related to sport were addressed.⁸⁷ MINEPS was instrumental in the development of the Sport Charter, which established the Intergovernmental Committee for Physical Education and Sport (CIGEPS) to coordinate and supervise UNESCO's sport-related initiatives. Some of these initiatives, sometimes collaborated with the ICSSPE, focused on: (1) access to physical education and sport; (2) sport for all; (3) training educators; (4) organization of annual international physical activity weeks; and (5) encouraging sport science research and

⁸⁵ Steve Bailey, *Science in the Service of Physical Education and Sport: The Story of the International Council of Sport Science and Physical Education 1956-1996* (New York: Wiley, 1997).

⁸⁶ International Charter of Physical Education, Physical Activity and Sport, SHS/2015/PI/H/14 REV, 20th Session of the General Conference, UNESCO (1978).

⁸⁷ There have been six MINEPS conferences: Paris (1976); Moscow (1988); Punta del Este, Uruguay (1999); Athens (2004); Berlin (2013); and Kazan, Russia (2017).

international exchange. Additionally, the CIGEPS affirmed that “the different indigenous cultures of the world have produced all kinds of traditional games and sports, which are expressions of the cultural wealth of nations.”⁸⁸ At the 1991 UNESCO General Conference, an amendment was added to the Sport Charter, “introducing a new article targeting abuses such as doping, violence at sports events, excessive commercial exploitation and precocious intensive training.”⁸⁹ As noted in a 1992 *UNESCO Courier* report, there was much concern in CIGEPS, and UNESCO at large, that sport values were being “threatened by forces outside sport which [were] tending to reduce sport to a money-making activity and ... leading to bitter and in some cases fatal confrontations.”⁹⁰ As a result, in 2005, UNESCO adopted the *International Convention against Doping in Sport* and signed a memorandum of understanding with the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) a year later. Almost since its auspicious beginnings, UNESCO has been involved in international sport governance – in collaboration with the UN, IOC, ICSSPE, CIGEPS, among others – developing a robust Physical Education and Sport (PES) Programme focused on the three pillars of education, science, and (now) culture.

UNESCO has spearheaded all United Nations physical education and sport initiatives since the 1952 General Conference and, as such, the PES Programme, today, provides counsel and assessment related to the educational, scientific, and sociocultural implications of sport.

⁸⁸ Pierre Parlebas, *Le Jeu Fait-Il Partie de la Culture? [Is Play Part of Culture?]*, in *Jeux Traditionnels, Sports et Patrimoine Culturel: Cultures et Éducation [Traditional Games, Sports and Cultural Heritage: Cultures and Education]*, ed. Pierre Parlebas (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2016), 34. [My translation]

⁸⁹ José Banaang, “Sport Timeline: Some Key Dates on UNESCO’s Actions in Physical Education and Sport,” *UNESCO Courier* (2006): 14.

⁹⁰ “UNESCO and Sport,” *UNESCO Courier* 45, no. 12 (December 1992): 22.

The programme focuses on six diverse themes: (1) sport for development and peace (SDP); (2) quality physical education (QPE); (3) value education through sport; (4) women and sport; (5) anti-doping; and (6) traditional games. The impetus for the development of a comprehensive SDP policy spawned from a “concerted effort to remobilize sport as a vehicle for broad, sustainable social development, especially in the most disadvantaged communities in the world.”⁹¹ In fact, the United Nations opened an Office of Sport for Development and Peace, which was recently closed (in 2017) after the IOC was controversially accepted as a Permanent Observer to the General Assembly, a decision which was “influenced by factors linked to the neoliberalisation of development and attractiveness of sport as a tool for development.”⁹² Similarly, QPE was born of neo-institutionalism which shifted global consensus on the objectives of physical education from basic movement knowledge to learning through the physical.⁹³ Working with a number of governmental and non-governmental agencies – including the IOC, the World Health Organization, and the UN Development Programme, among others – the UNESCO QPE programme has successfully brought a diverse grouping of collaborators to the table in order to reduce the policy-practice gap in global physical education curricula. Furthermore, through the PES Programme, UNESCO also focuses on value education through sport, promoting the power of sport through life skills such as fairness, teamwork, equality, discipline, inclusion, perseverance, and respect.⁹⁴ Meanwhile, in concert with the

⁹¹ Bruce Kidd, “A New Social Movement: Sport for Development and Peace,” *Sport in Society* 11, no. 4 (July 2008): 370.

⁹² Nicolien van Luijk, “The International Olympic Committee: A United Nations Permanent Observer of Post-Politics?,” *International Area Studies Review* 21, no. 2 (2018): 146.

⁹³ Christina Uhlenbrock and Henk Erik Meier, “Defining an Organizational Role in a Contested Field: The Evolution of UNESCO’s Approach to Physical Education,” *International Journal of the History of Sport* 35, no. 11 (2018): 1130-48.

⁹⁴ UNESCO, *The Place of Sport in Education: A Comparative Study*, ESD/21/A (1956).

Sport Charter and the 1994 establishment of the International Working Group on Women, UNESCO approved the *Global Observatory for Women, Sport, Physical Education and Physical Activity*, which endeavours to mainstream women's participation, safety, and empowerment in sport.⁹⁵ Next, as highlighted above, the PES Programme's achievements in the anti-doping field – notably through the 2006 Convention – represent a standard of success for the other themes of the programme.⁹⁶ Lastly, the theme of traditional sports has only gained traction within the PES Programme since the ascension of intangible cultural heritage within the UNESCO vernacular, as these “anachronistic remnants of a static and rustic pre-industrial society” are often thought of more as cultural practice than sporting practice.⁹⁷

Although sport sciences and physical education have more often fallen within the historical confines of the UNESCO branches, in a 1963 speech, former Director-General René Maheu (1961-1974), declared that “sport is culture because the transient movements it traces in time and space ... illuminate with dramatic meaning the essential and therefore the deepest and widest values of different peoples and of the human race itself.”⁹⁸ According to French folk sport revivalist Guy Jaouen, “UNESCO works to preserve and promote traditional games and sports and considers it to be a primordial valorisation of an area as important as it is essential to the intangible heritage of cultural heritage global.”⁹⁹ The text of the Convention identifies five

⁹⁵ Lilamani de Soysa and Sarah Zipp, “Gender Equality, Sport and the United Nation’s System: A Historical Overview of the Slow Pace of Progress,” *Sport in Society* 22, no. 11 (2019): 1783-1800.

⁹⁶ Scott R. Jedlicka and Thomas M. Hunt, “The International Anti-Doping Movement and UNESCO: A Historical Case Study,” *International Journal of the History of Sport* 30, no. 13 (2013): 1523-35.

⁹⁷ Roland Renson, “Save Our Sports,” *UNESCO Courier* 45, no. 12 (December 1992): 41.

⁹⁸ René Maheu, “Sport is Education,” *UNESCO Courier* 17, no. 1 (January 1964): 7.

⁹⁹ Guy Jaouen, “Jeux Traditionnels d’Adultes et Environnement Institutionnel [Traditional Games of Adults and Institutional Environment],” in Parlebas, *Jeux Traditionnels*, 39. [My translation].

domains in which ICH is manifested: (1) oral traditions and expressions; (2) performing arts; (3) social practices, rituals, and festive events; (4) knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe; and (5) traditional craftsmanship.¹⁰⁰ Traditional sports and games constitute ‘social practices, rituals, and festive events’ and are, therefore, within the scope of the Convention. For instance, *kuresi* wrestling, which was inscribed on the Representative List in 2016, was deemed “an integral part of Kazakhstani national identity.”¹⁰¹ However, there is still evidence of the Intergovernmental Committee not fully accepting sport as cultural practice, as in the case of the feedback for the nomination of Korean *ssireum* wrestling (inscribed in 2018), which originally stated that it “describes a sporting practice (as opposed to a tradition with a specific cultural significance).”¹⁰² Sport, even traditional folk sport, because of its association with the modern professional sporting spectacle, has always been critiqued as separate from cultural practice. Nevertheless, many national ICH inventories – such as those of France, Romania, Kyrgyzstan, Indonesia, and Estonia – have included folk sports as a separate domain.¹⁰³ The inclusion of folk sports in UNESCO’s broader ICH spectrum points to the global-local efforts to “enhance intercultural dialogue and peace, reinforce youth empowerment, and promote ethical sports practices”¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁰ UNESCO, Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (17 October 2003) MISC/2003/CLT/CH/14, art. 2.2.

¹⁰¹ Benedetta Ubertazzi, “Article 2(2). Manifesting Intangible Cultural Heritage,” in *The 2003 UNESCO Intangible Heritage Convention: A Commentary*, eds. Janet Blake and Lucas Lixinski (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 72.

¹⁰² Intergovernmental Committee, Decision 11.COM 10.b.8, para. 3 (2016).

¹⁰³ Intergovernmental Committee, “Examination of the Reports of States Parties on the Implementation of the Convention and on the Current Status of Elements Inscribed on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity,” ITH/14/9.COM/5.a (2014). [Study of inventory-making in periodic reports]

¹⁰⁴ UNESCO, “Traditional Sports and Games,” UNESCO (website), accessed October 14, 2018, <https://en.unesco.org/themes/sport-and-anti-doping/traditional-sports-and-games>.

To date, there have been six International Conferences of Ministers and Senior Officials Responsible for Physical Education and Sport. In 1999, during MINEPS III, hosted in Punta del Este, Uruguay, the first inkling of an international traditional games policy came to fruition. By proclaiming that the Ministers of MINEPS “support a policy of preserving and enhancing traditional and indigenous sports based on the cultural heritage of regions and nations, including a ‘worldwide list of traditional sports and games,’ and encouraging the holding of regional and world festivals,” the Declaration of Punta del Este was the first step in the heritagization of folk sports.¹⁰⁵ One of the key outcomes of the Declaration was the 2003 publication of the *World Sports Encyclopedia*, authored by Polish sport historian Wojciech Lipónski, in collaboration with UNESCO.¹⁰⁶ The momentum continued in the form of a preliminary report on the desirability and scope of an international traditional sports and games charter, submitted to the 33rd General Conference of UNESCO (2005) by the CIGEPS, upon the endorsement of MINEPS IV (Athens, 2004). The resultant draft charter outlined a number of aspects of traditional sports and games in seven articles: (1) its contribution to ‘Sport for All’; (2) folk sport as world heritage; (3) social and cultural values; (4) dangers of preservation and practice; (5) preservation and promotion measures; (6) folk sport as the heritage of sport culture; and (7) national and international cooperation.¹⁰⁷ Then, at the initiative of UNESCO, a series of

¹⁰⁵ UNESCO, “Third International Conference of Ministers and Senior Officials Responsible for Physical Education and Sport (MINEPS III), Punta del Este, Uruguay, 1999; Final Report,” ED.99/CONF.209/CLD.11 (1999), Annex 1, para. 8.

¹⁰⁶ Wojciech Lipónski, *World Sports Encyclopedia* (Beverly, MA: MBI, 2003).

¹⁰⁷ UNESCO General Conference, Preliminary Report on the Desirability and Scope of an International Charter on Traditional Sports and Games, 33 C/5 (2005), Annex II.

Collective Consultations – with non-governmental organizations (NGOs), international sport federations (ISFs), state party representatives, and traditional sport experts – was developed.

The first Collective Consultation (Paris, 2006) “aimed at creating an international platform for the promotion and development of traditional sports and games.”¹⁰⁸ Then, in 2008, two regional meetings resulted in concerted efforts to change the narrative around folk sports – notably the Busan Appeal, which sought to “support the restoration of balance between modern sports and traditional sports and games,” and the Zanzibar Recommendation of using folk sport to validate cultural diversity, preserve traditions for future generations, and as a promotional tool for cultural tourism.¹⁰⁹ Bolstered by such regional calls to action, the second Collective Consultation (Tehran, 2009) established a UNESCO Advisory Committee which eventually took on the form of the International Council of Traditional Sports and Games.¹¹⁰ Much of the policy work to this point resulted in a 2015 amendment to the 1978 Sport Charter, which now stated that: “The diversity of physical education, physical activity, and sport is a basic feature of their value and appeal. Traditional and indigenous games, dances, and sports, also in their modern and emerging forms, express the world’s rich cultural heritage and must be

¹⁰⁸ UNESCO, “Collective Consultation Aimed at Creating an International Platform for the Promotion and Development of Traditional Sports and Games,” SHS/SRP/PES/2006/ME/3 REV (2006).

¹⁰⁹ TAFISA/UNESCO, “Busan Appeal on the Promotion and Preservation of Traditional Sports and Games,” 4th TAFISA World Sport for All Games (2008); UNESCO, “Sport for Development and Peace: Proceedings of the Zanzibar Regional Ministerial Roundtable, United Republic of Tanzania, 8-10 September 2008,” SHS.2009/WS/3 (2009).

¹¹⁰ UNESCO, “UNESCO Cooperation with Iran: Results of the Second Collective Consultation on Traditional Sports and Games (TSG),” UNESCO Social and Human Sciences (website), accessed July 7, 2020, http://www.unesco.org/new/en/member-states/single-view/news/unesco_cooperation_with_iran_results_of_the_second_collecti/.

protected and promoted.”¹¹¹ Also in 2015, the Verona Declaration was drafted by attendees of the annual Tocatí traditional games festival in Verona, Italy, with “aims to strongly recommend the introduction of traditional games and indigenous sports, which embody ICH, into school programs.”¹¹² The third Collective Consultation (Paris, 2017) focused on elaborating the draft traditional games charter (which had not yet been completed), developing an International Platform on folk sports, and digitizing the *World Sports Encyclopedia*.¹¹³ In fact, UNESCO partnered with Chinese internet conglomerate Tencent to realize this project, with the “aims to safeguard such knowledge as a living heritage in the public domain, narrow the digital divide, and promote the rapprochement of cultures.”¹¹⁴ Finally, the fourth Collective Consultation (Istanbul, 2018) resulted in the development of the World Traditional Sports and Games 2021 (WTSG2021) project, a folk sport festival which is to be inaugurally hosted by Kazakhstan.¹¹⁵ Throughout all of these consultations, recommendations, and charters, traditional sports and games have become an indelible feature of the UNESCO intangible cultural heritage spectrum.

Although not often considered a ‘player’ in the global governance of sport, UNESCO has had a moral influence on the modernization of sport. The 1978 Sport Charter was a culmination

¹¹¹ UNESCO, International Charter of Physical Education, Physical Activity and Sport, SHS/2015/PI/H/14 REV, 38th Session of the General Conference, UNESCO (2015).

¹¹² Guy Jaouen and Petar Petrov, *Traditional Wrestling: Our Culture* (Verona, IT: Associazione Giochi Antichi, 2018), 68.

¹¹³ UNESCO, “Collective Consultation on the Safeguarding and Promotion of Traditional Sports and Games: Final Report,” SHS/TSG/2017/DOC.1 (2017).

¹¹⁴ UNESCO, “UNESCO and Tencent Partner to Create an Open Digital Library on Traditional Games,” UNESCO (website), accessed July 7, 2020, <https://en.unesco.org/news/unesco-and-tencent-partner-create-open-digital-library-traditional-games>.

¹¹⁵ International Council of Traditional Sports and Games, “UNESCO TSG Delegation Visit to Kazakhstan,” ICTSG (website), accessed July 7, 2020, <https://www.traditionalsportsgames.org/index.php/games/23-wtsg/198-tsg-delegation-kazakhstan-visit>.

of UNESCO's idealistic pursuits of a morally progressive sporting landscape. In terms of norm-setting, the subsequent formation of CIGEPS and the Physical Education and Sport Programme were significant developments in the global promotion of quality physical education, sport for development and peace, gender equality, anti-doping, and folk sports. This last theme of the PES Programme is where we turn our attention next. Traditional games, particularly in Global South nations, have been marginalized due to the prioritization of economic and technological advancement, as well as the focus on developing international sport recognition. There are only a few academically-inclined grassroots organizations that have deemed these disregarded folk sports as worthy of study and safeguarding. Thus, as elements of society's intangible cultural heritage, traditional games fall within the purview and preserve of UNESCO, the preeminent global arbiter of heritage.

* * *

Five broad branches, the only United Nations agency with national affiliates, and the global arbiter of heritage, UNESCO is a complex bureaucratic behemoth that is difficult to dissect in a single chapter. Separate mandates exist for the five branches – culture, education, natural sciences, social sciences and humanities, and communications and information – each requiring a dynamic and idealistic administrative apparatus. As noted by Singh, “there is something about UNESCO that is so quixotic — moral adventures, high idealism, lofty humanism, intellectual guideposts, ethical monumentalism, worldwide deeds and, above all, its quest to shape human solidarity.”¹¹⁶ Mired by inevitable nationalistic politics, lacking the

¹¹⁶ Singh, *Creating Norms*, 126.

necessary funds to enact meaningful change, and bogged down with tedious bureaucratic processes, UNESCO has a knack for policy work and is condemned for its lack of groundwork. Its universalizing principles, founded on a one-worldist ethos, are often at odds with the localized jurisdictions within which it hopes to have an effect. In the field of cultural heritage, this criticism may be more apt than when it is applied to the other branches.

UNESCO's foray into the cultural landscape was decidedly Western. Albeit, the organization was founded in a Western metropolis (Paris), in response to the devastations (principally European historic sites) of the Second World War, and upon the internationalist ideals of former colonizers. As such, it is of no surprise that early heritage policies were forged within an outdated, Eurocentric, monumentalist worldview. The 1972 World Heritage Convention, a cultural watershed in its own right, was adopted within this ideological milieu. Then, over the course of thirty years, during which time World Heritage Sites became the flagship of the UNESCO brand, the tangible-intangible debate loomed large. Critics of the monumentalist ethos claimed that tangible heritage rarely recognized the intangible cultural norms and practices associated with them. As such, during the 1990s, and particularly during the two terms of Director-General Matsuura (1999-2009), ICH became an increasingly prominent agenda item. Once the 2003 Convention came to fruition, a majority of the proponents and beneficiaries were from the Global South, effectively balancing the earlier UNESCO trend of recognizing tangible heritage in the Global North. And, within this groundswell movement to recognize intangible cultural heritage of all forms, traditional sports and games have found their niche. Important aspects of our universal cultural heritage, folk sports represent humanity's love of play, the basis for our modern obsession with sport, and the

communitarian ideals of peoples all over the world. The question that we now turn to, then, is: Has the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage affected the practice, status, and meaning of folk sports?

Folk Sport Revolution

Every culture is ethnocentric, fiercely loyal to its own interpretation of reality. Without such fidelity, the human imagination would run wild, and the consequences would be madness and anarchy.¹

Folk sports are the preludes to our modern sporting infrastructure, the roots of play in the civilizational context, and a shared physical culture of diverse localities around the world. Marked by aspects of tradition (the interplay between myth and ritual), folk romanticism, and ethnic identity, folk sports are the ludic heritage of society. In the historical processes of industrialization, globalization, and modernity, such antiquated notions of sport and games were stymied during the *take-off phase* of globalization (the decades around the turn of twentieth century), left in the margins of history as artefacts of an ‘irrelevant’ sporting past. With the complexities of modern life, there is a gravitation ‘back to basics,’ a perpetual draw to community values, nostalgic ways of being, and romanticized notions of tradition. The post-WWII ‘heritage boom,’ folk revival movement (1970s-1990s), and 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage have attempted to remedy the homogenizing effects of the global on local cultural practices. In essence, this preamble is a summary of my dissertation thus far – the meaning of folk sport (chapter II), the effects of globalization (chapter III), the sport-heritage nexus (chapter IV), and the UNESCO Convention (chapter V). With all this contextual framing of my argument(s), the present chapter now delves into specific case studies of folk sports safeguarded under the auspices of the 2003

¹ Wade Davis, *Light at the Edge of the World: A journey through the Realm of Vanishing Cultures* (Madeira Park, BC: Douglas & McIntyre, 2001), 11-12.

Convention. The case studies examine the marginality and nationalism dimensions of the selected folk sports, the motivations and processes of UNESCO recognition, and the practical perspectives and local applications of UNESCO safeguarding. Building on the scholarship of the folk sport revivalists before me, I hope that my contribution can add to the “revolution of body culture”; indeed, the folk sport revolution.²

A Note on Nationalism(s)

With the publication of three field-defining texts, 1983 was a big year for nationalism studies. First, influential Czech philosopher and social anthropologist Ernest Gellner published *Nations and Nationalism*, which took a modernist approach to nationalism, stressing the primacy of political conditions in the making of nations.³ As noted by James Kellas, “for [Gellner], a homogeneous culture, at least at the level of ‘high culture,’ is necessary for modern states, although there may be room for innocuous folk cultures ‘in a token and cellophane-packaged form.’”⁴ Gellner’s blunt observation, however, is a valuable assertion to consider for our study of the meaning of folk sports within national contexts. The second important text published in 1983 was Benedict Anderson’s *Imagined Communities*, which takes a different approach to the ‘idea’ of the nation, positing that it is nought but a figment of a communal imagination, shared collectively by all nationals (citizens). In it, Anderson adds that “nation-ness is the most

² Henning Eichberg, “A Revolution of Body Culture?: Traditional Games on the Way from Modernisation to ‘Postmodernity,’” in *Body Cultures: Essays on Sport, Space and Identity*, eds. John Bale and Chris Philo (London: Routledge, 1998), 128-48.

³ Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1983).

⁴ James Kellas, *The Politics of Nationalism and Ethnicity* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1991), 54.

universally legitimate value in the political life of our time.”⁵ The third equally-influential piece from 1983 is Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger’s *Invention of Tradition*, which, as discussed in Chapter II, adds profoundly to our understanding of the utility of heritage and symbolism in national identity creation. By briefly reviewing these formative nationalism texts, a greater context of sport and the nation can be appreciated. Various types of nationalism are touched on in the case studies below, bolstering an underlying theme of the dissertation: the relationship between folk sport preservation and the nation-building process.

Although beginning solely as liberal nationalism, the ideology of nationalism has spawned a number of branches in these postmodern times, which we will review below. Sportive nationalism, for instance, had sprung up as an ideology all of its own. In Andersonian terms, “it is as if the imagined community or nation becomes more real on the terraces or the athletic tracks.”⁶ Sportive nationalism is a representative nationalism that encompasses a people based on their shared interest in a sporting community. Not to be dismissed solely as political propaganda, as oftentimes can be the case, sport theorist Alan Bairner explains that “sportive nationalism, as opposed to political nationalism hiding behind sport, operates most successfully in societies where the issue of nationality is relatively uncontentious.”⁷ In a time when political leaders grasp at opportunities to bolster the nation, the idea of using sport to

⁵ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 2016), 3.

⁶ Grant Jarvie, “Sport, Nationalism and Cultural Identity,” in *The Changing Politics of Sport*, ed. Lincoln Allison (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), 75.

⁷ Alan Bairner, “Sportive Nationalism and National Politics: A Comparative Analysis of Scotland, the Republic of Ireland, and Sweden,” *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* 20, no. 3 (August 1996), 314.

create a semblance of national pride and reap the benefits of renewed nationalistic fervour, is one that cannot be dismissed. For, as argued by Irish sport historian Mike Cronin, “sport is, and always has been, inextricably linked to the forces of nationalism and identity.”⁸

Of particular importance, Cronin also made efforts to define contemporary sportive nationalism by supposing eight key themes.⁹ The first is that the nationalism expressed through sport may be constructed by a variety of different forces, be they spectators, the sport-media complex, or governments. Second, as sport is a lens through which to study the other major social constructs, so too is sportive nationalism a way to manifest the various other types of nationalism alluded to below. Third, sportive nationalism can be both real and imagined – “real” as in tangible identification via national team uniforms and flags, and “imagined” as in the Andersonian way of imagining a shared community. Fourth, sport can either *create* a sense of nationalism (like the “Scottishness” of shinty or “Irishness” of hurling) or *reinforce* an already strong sense of national pride. Fifth, and contrastingly, sport at the national level can be both a positive force by bringing disparate groups together and a negative force by suppressing ethnocultural diversity; one step removed from outright insurgence and perceived as “war without the shooting.”¹⁰ Sixth, nationalist feelings through sport can also be of a transient or temporary variety, as in the “ninety-minute patriot” that bleeds the national colours during an international soccer match, but thinks nothing of the state of the nation after the final whistle

⁸ Mike Cronin, *Sport and Nationalism in Ireland: Gaelic Games, Soccer and Irish Identity since 1884* (Dublin: Four Courts, 1999), 52.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 55-6.

¹⁰ George Orwell, “The Sporting Spirit,” in *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell: Volume IV: In Front of Your Nose: 1945-1950*, eds. Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus (London: Camelot, 1968), 42.

has blown.¹¹ Seventh, “sport has to be viewed as having an evolving past that is firmly located in the development of understanding of the nation and its nationalism.”¹² Eighth, and last, the constructs of nationalism and sport are both multifaceted and multilayered – they are constantly changing social forces affected by a multitude of different agents. With these eight themes, Cronin has performed a valuable service to future scholars of sportive nationalism. And thus, with these assertions in mind, let us define different types of nationalism that are exhibited in folk sporting contexts.

There is, indeed, a relationship between the safeguarding of traditional cultures and nationalism. As noted by Mary Taylor, “UNESCO’s adoption of heritage protection as a way to promote peace, democratic values, and sustainable development cannot be examined without taking into account the long histories of ‘heritage protection’ tied to patterns of empire and nation-state making.”¹³ Of particular importance are the tenets of ethnic, romantic, liberation and post-colonial, pan- and diasporic, and internal (parochialism) versus external (global promotion), and cultural nationalisms. Ethnic nationalism is premised on the rationale that “‘symbolic’ attachments to particular ethnic communities are valued, and their needs and rights are politically recognized, so long as they are ultimately subordinated to the overarching political community and its complex of myths, memories and symbols.”¹⁴ Although romantic

¹¹ Grant Jarvie and Graham Walker, *Scottish Sport in the Making of the Nation: Ninety Minute Patriots?* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1994).

¹² Cronin, *Nationalism in Ireland*, 56.

¹³ Mary N. Taylor, “Intangible Heritage Governance, Cultural Diversity, Ethno-Nationalism,” *Focaal* 55 (2009): 43.

¹⁴ Anthony D. Smith, “Towards a Global Culture?,” in *Global Culture: Nationalism, Globalization and Modernity*, ed. Mike Featherstone (London: Sage, 1990), 173.

nationalism was covered at length in Chapter II, it is essentially the glorification of the history and natural environment of the nation. Next, liberation and post-colonial nationalisms are both ways in which formerly occupied or colonized nations seek self-determination through the use of native symbols. An example of a postcolonial national folk sport is the indigenous, artistic, collaborative game of Burmese keep-up: *chinlone*. In opposition to the British sport model, Burmese scholar Maitrii Aung-Thwin noted, “establishing the antiquity of chinlone enabled the government to make important claims about the continuity and legitimacy of the Burmese state.”¹⁵ Meanwhile, diasporic nationalism roots the widespread émigré community to the ‘mother country’ through symbols of national heritage. For instance, through the folkish Highland Games an image of ‘tartanry’ and Scottish national identity is conveyed to the rest of the world at various annual gatherings amongst the Scottish diasporic communities.¹⁶ Pan-nationalism, on the other hand, helps “to counteract the fissiparous tendencies of minority ethnic nationalisms and the rivalries of territorial state nationalisms.”¹⁷ Finally, the contrast between internal and external nationalism is of particular importance to comprehend.¹⁸ Internal nationalism, also known as parochialism or provincialism, is focused on maintaining local national support, while external nationalism creates nationalist sentiment in comparison to other nations. For example, the nationalist fervour of winning an Olympic medal or pride in a UNESCO heritage site fall within the external category. All of the nationalisms, however,

¹⁵ Maitrii Aung-Thwin, “Towards a National Culture: Chinlone and the Construction of Sport in Post-Colonial Myanmar,” *Sport in Society* 15, no. 10 (2012): 1349.

¹⁶ Grant Jarvie, *Highland Games: the Making of the Myth* (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh Press, 1991).

¹⁷ Smith, “Global Culture,” 186-7.

¹⁸ William L. Miller, Stephen White, and Paul Heywood, “External and Internal Nationalism,” in *Values and Political Change in Postcommunist Europe* (London: Macmillan, 1998), 124-39.

could, in fact, be looped under the ideology of cultural nationalism.¹⁹ In its extreme form, cultural nationalism could be misconstrued as neo-nationalism, which often evokes a right-wing populism indicative of anti-globalization, nativist, and xenophobic rhetoric.²⁰ Cultural nationalists, however, seek to protect national heritage and folkways as a means of differentiating the nation in the homogeneous global village. As such, cultural nationalism, in effect, best exemplifies the utilization of folk sport preservation in the narratives of nation-building.

TSG as ICH

In the previous chapter, we touched on the intermingling histories of UNESCO and world sport, also delving into the development of traditional sport and games (TSG) within the intangible cultural heritage nomenclature. Here, we elaborate more on this rather unique domain to the 2003 Convention's inventory apparatus. As a result of the 1999 Declaration of Punta del Este, a first institutional document supporting the preservation of traditional games, the most crucial development in the heritagization of folk sports has been their regular inscription on the Representative List. As of 2019, there are thirty-one folk sporting elements inscribed, depending on the classification of sports and games employed. For instance, *castells* human towers (2010), *jultagi* tightrope walking (2011), French (2011), Austrian (2015), and Arab (2018) horse or camel skills, falconry (2016), and alpinism (2019), might be considered more in

¹⁹ John Hutchison, "Cultural Nationalism, Elite Mobility and Nation-Building: Communitarian Politics in Modern Ireland," *British Journal of Sociology* 38, no. 4 (December 1987): 482-501.

²⁰ Eirikur Bergmann, *Neo-Nationalism: The Rise of Nativist Populism* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020).

the realm of physical culture than folk sports, *per se*.²¹ Moreover, some of the inscribed folk sporting elements are incorporated in broader cultural festivals. These festivals include the Mongol Naadam, Persian Nowruz, Chinese Dragon Boat Festival, and Argungu Fishing Festival.²² In addition to these animal sports (falcon, horse, and camel), physical cultural elements (*castells*, *jultagi*, and alpinism), and festival-bound sporting practices (Naadam, Nowruz, Dragon Boat, and Argungu), there remains twenty sportive elements. Within Renson's classification of traditional games, these can be divided into eleven fighting sports (five traditional wrestling styles, three martial arts, Egyptian *tahteeb* stick-fighting, Brazilian *capoeira*, and Southeast Asian tug-o-war rituals), five more equine sports (Kyrgyz *kok boru*, Mexican *charrería*, Croatian *Sinjaska alka*, and the identical Azeri *chovqan* and Iranian *chogan*), two knucklebone throwing games (Mongolian *shagai* and Kazakh *assyk*), one shooting sport (Turkish archery), and one ball game (Irish hurling).²³ However, not all folk sports nominated to the UNESCO inventories were approved and inscribed. After performing a review of all rejected nominations to the ICH inventories, only two folk sports were identified: children's games in the United Arab Emirates (2011) and the Cambodian traditional martial art of *kun lbokkator*

²¹ For relevant readings on these various traditional games, refer to: Bernard Debarbieux and Hervé Antoine Munz, "Scaling Heritage. The Construction of Scales in the Submission Process of Alpinism to UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage List," *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 25, no. 12 (2019): 1248-62; Sulayman Khalaf, "Poetics and Politics of Newly Invented Traditions in the Gulf: Camel Racing in the United Arab Emirates," *Ethnology* 39, no. 3 (Summer 2000): 243-61; Natalie Koch, "Gulf Nationalism and the Geopolitics of Constructing Falconry as a 'Heritage Sport'," *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism* 15, no. 3 (2015): 522-39; Mariann Vaczi, "Catalonia's Human Towers: Nationalism, Associational Culture, and the Politics of Performance," *American Ethnologist* 43, no. 2 (2016): 353-68.

²² Other festivals like the Uygur *Meshrep* (cultural event of the ethnic Uygur in China), *Mousseem* of Tan-Tan (nomadic gathering in Morocco), and Kazakh horse-breeding festival also include games and competitions in the festivities, but are not included in the inscribed folk sport list (Table 3) because they are peripheral aspects of these events.

²³ Refer to Renson's classification in Chapter II. Also, Roland Renson, Michel Manson, and Erik De Vroede, "Typology for the Classification of Traditional Games in Europe," in *Proceedings of the Second European Seminar on Traditional Games*, eds. Erik De Vroede and Roland Renson (Leuven, BE: Vlaamse Volkssport Centrale, 1991), 69-81.

(2014). The former nomination noted that “of almost two hundred traditional games identified by researchers in the 1990s, only twenty to thirty are known and played by children today.”²⁴ However, it was rejected from entering the Urgent Safeguarding List because of the supposed arbitrary selection of only eleven games to safeguard. The *kun lbokkator* nomination, on the other hand, lacked a description of cultural meaning, viability of transmission, and community participation.²⁵ To date, neither state party has resubmitted a nomination for these folk sports. One other point of note is that folk dances (of which there are over seventy inscribed in the ICH inventories), which are an integral aspect of the physical culture spectrum, are not considered in this study. Of the thirty-one inscribed folk sporting elements, only four were selected for case-study analysis, a process described in the next section on methodology.

Table 3 - Traditional Sports and Games Inscribed on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity

Element	Year	State party(s)	Description
Dragon Boat Festival	2009	China	Lower Yangtze River festival with sporting events such as dragon races, dragon boating, and willow shooting
Castells	2010	Spain	Performative human towers in Catalonia
Kırkpınar	2010	Turkey	Annual oil wrestling championships
Naadam	2010	Mongolia	National festival celebrating a nomadic past, during which competitions of the three ‘manly’ sports of traditional wrestling, archery, and horse-racing occur
Pahlevani and Zoorkhanei rituals	2010	Iran	Traditional wrestling and communal calisthenic exercises that take place in a sacred <i>zoorkhane</i> (‘House of Strength’)
Sinjska alka	2010	Croatia	Chivalric tournament in which horse-riding knights aim lances at an iron ring
Equitation	2011	France	School of horseback riding
Jultagi	2011	South Korea	Performative tightrope acrobatics
Taekkyeon	2011	South Korea	Traditional martial art

²⁴ Intergovernmental Committee, Decision 6.COM 8.22, para. 1 (2011).

²⁵ Intergovernmental Committee, Decision 9.COM 9.a.1 (2014).

Chovqan ²⁶	2013	Azerbaijan	Traditional horse-riding game (like polo)
Capoeira circle	2014	Brazil	Afro-Brazilian dance fighting
Knuckle-bone shooting (Shagai)	2014	Mongolia	Team marble game with the objective of knocking sheep knucklebones into target
Tugging rituals and games	2015	Cambodia, Philippines, South Korea, and Vietnam	Traditional tug-o-war rituals in Southeast Asian rice-farming communities
Viennese horsemanship	2015	Austria	School of horseback riding
Argungu Fishing Festival	2016	Nigeria	Fishing and cultural festival near the Matan Fada River, with a series of water competitions including hand fishing, canoe racing, and wild duck catching
Charrería	2016	Mexico	Traditional rodeo festivities
Falconry	2016	Germany, Saudi Arabia, Austria, Belgium, United Arab Emirates, Spain, France, Hungary, Italy, Kazakhstan, Morocco, Mongolia, Pakistan, Portugal, Qatar, Syria, South Korea, and Czechia	Originally a form of hunting, falconry has evolved into a practice of training falcons in diverse cultures around the world
Kuresi	2016	Kazakhstan	Traditional wrestling
Nowruz	2016	Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, India, Iran, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan	Persian New Year's celebrations (March 21), during which traditional games are played, such as <i>kız kuumai</i> (horse-chasing) in Kyrgyzstan, yak polo in Pakistan, or <i>goresh</i> wrestling in Turkmenistan
Tahteeb	2016	Egypt	Performative stick fighting
Assyk games	2017	Kazakhstan	Throwing game involving sheep knucklebones, with focus on positioning of bones
Chogan	2017	Iran	Traditional horse-riding game (like polo)
Kok boru	2017	Kyrgyzstan	Traditional horse-riding game with objective of retaining control of a goat carcass from a scrum of other horsemen
Chidaoba	2018	Georgia	Traditional wrestling
Horse and camel Ardhan	2018	Oman	Performative horse and camel riding
Hurling	2018	Ireland	Team field game played with wooden sticks (<i>hurleys</i>) and small ball (<i>sliotar</i>)
Ssireum	2018	North and South Korea	Traditional wrestling

²⁶ Azeri *chovqan* is the only folk sporting element that is listed on the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding, as opposed to the (less urgent) Representative List.

Alpinism	2019	France, Italy, and Switzerland	Rock climbing in the Alps
Pencak silat	2019	Indonesia	Traditional martial art
Silat	2019	Malaysia	Traditional martial art
Traditional Turkish archery	2019	Turkey	Unique rituals, techniques, craftsmanship, and disciplines of traditional archery

As of 2015, the Intergovernmental Committee's Evaluation Body has reported on the trends and motivations of nominated traditional games and sports. For instance, in reference to the nomination of Viennese horsemanship (2015), the report "noted that a difference should be made between the use of animals for food or ritual, on the one hand, and for entertainment or public spectacle, on the other."²⁷ Subsequent reports have focused on the dangers of commercializing folk sports (as referenced in association with Eichberg's sportification thesis above) and the distinction between traditional and professional variants of the same sport. This point was observed during the nomination process of *kok boru*, when more details were required to demonstrate the sport's "identity as intangible cultural heritage, in contrast to its evolution as a professional sport."²⁸ Nevertheless, as can be observed in the list of folk sports inscribed in the Representative List, there have been new folk sports added to the UNESCO ICH roster every year since 2010 (except 2012), with an average of four new additions since 2016.²⁹ All of the UNESCO initiatives, be they policy work or inventorying, "reinforce the importance of traditional games and sports as a vehicle for tolerance, integration, cultural awareness,

²⁷ Intergovernmental Committee, "Report of the Evaluation Body on its work in 2015," ITH/15/10.COM/10, para. 47 (2015).

²⁸ Intergovernmental Committee, Decision 10.COM 10.b.21 (2015).

²⁹ See Table 3

solidarity, diversity and world peace.”³⁰ Whether these efforts are worthwhile, however, is the underlying pretense of this chapter.

Case Study Methodology

Case studies are an ideal research method through which to examine elements of intangible cultural heritage in the UNESCO context. As noted by the director of the Institute Heritage Studies, Marie-Theres Albert, “case studies have become an infinite pool of knowledge for Heritage Studies, reflecting the diversity of existing cultures and the different aspects of their heritage.”³¹ Case studies allow for the in-depth analysis of particular cases to support a given research question. In my case, the question I most desire to answer in this dissertation is: *Has the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage affected the practice, status, and meaning of folk sports?* As such, I have reviewed folk sports safeguarded under the auspices of the 2003 Convention to ascertain whether the policies and measures therein have had an effect locally. To do this, I have selected four case studies based on geographic distribution, sport type, safeguarding mechanism, type of nationalism exhibited, and marginality.

Through the first criterion (geography), I attempted to include cases from diverse regions of the world. As Danish cultural historian Poul Duedahl remarked: “a way to study the global history of UNESCO could be to select a number of case-study countries that would, for

³⁰ TAFISA/UNESCO, “Busan Appeal.”

³¹ Marie-Theres Albert, “Heritage Studies – Paradigmatic Reflections,” in *Understanding Heritage: Perspectives in Heritage Studies*, eds. Marie-Theres Albert, Roland Bernecker, and Britta Rudolff (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2013), 11.

example, represent all continents.”³² The second criterion (sport type) was to encompass as many of Renson’s aforementioned traditional game categories (Chapter II) as possible. These included: (a) ball games, (b) bowl and pin games, (c) throwing games, (d) shooting games, (e) fighting games, (f) animal games, (g) locomotion games, and (h) acrobatics. The third criterion (safeguarding mechanism) that I used was a combination of Eichberg’s safeguarding outcomes of sportification, pedagogization, and folklorization (Chapter III), along with three others I propose: retraditionalization, playful work, and nationalization.³³ First, by *retraditionalization*, I am referring to the “regeneration or reconstruction of particular traditional forms of life” in contradistinction to the “parallel de-differentiation of traditional boundaries” as a result of globalization.³⁴ Second, ‘playful work’ is a term I employ to describe an evolution of work-related activities into sporting practices, such as cowboy work pursuits developing into rodeo games. And third, my idea about *nationalization* as a safeguarding mechanism stems from that trend that nation-states are adopting folk games as their national sports.³⁵ Next, the fourth criterion (nationalism) can be construed through a number of types, as elucidated earlier in this chapter, but is broadly exhibited through cultural nationalism. And, finally, the fifth criterion (marginality) supposes four themes, based on Diamond-Renson Model of endangered folk sports (Chapter III), namely perceived backwardness, diffusion of global sports, urbanization,

³² Poul Duedahl, “Out of the House: On the Global History of UNESCO, 1945-2015,” in *A History of UNESCO: Global Actions and Impacts*, ed. Poul Duedahl (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 16.

³³ It is important to note that numerous safeguarding measures could be employed for a single folk sport.

³⁴ Roland Renson, “The Cultural Dilemma of Traditional Games,” in *Diversions and Divergences in Fields of Play*, eds. Margaret Carlisle Duncan, Garry Chick, and Alan Aycok (Greenwich, CT: Ablex, 1998), 51-2.

³⁵ This symbolic act is more common (~40), even, than traditional games that have been safeguarded within the 2003 Convention (~30). Refer to Appendix III for list of national sports.

and social pressures to sportify traditional games.³⁶ With these five criteria in mind, I chose four folk sports inscribed on the Representative List in order to better understand how effective UNESCO heritagization is in the safeguarding of traditional games. The four selected folk sport case studies are Turkish oil wrestling, Brazilian *capoeira*, Kyrgyz *kok boru*, and Irish hurling.

Table 4 - Case Study Criteria

UNESCO Folk Sport	Country	Sport Type	Safeguarding Mechanisms	Nationalism Exhibited	Reason for Marginality
<i>Oil wrestling</i>	Turkey	Fighting	Folklorization; Retraditionalization; Nationalization	Romantic; Pan-Nat; Cultural	Urbanization
<i>Capoeira</i>	Brazil	Acrobatics	Sportification; Nationalization	Ethnic; Diasporic; Cultural	Pressure to modernize
<i>Kok boru</i>	Kyrgyzstan	Animal	Playful work; Nationalization	Romantic; Liberation; Cultural	Backwardness
<i>Hurling</i>	Ireland	Ball	Sportification; Pedagogization; Nationalization	Parochial; Postcolonial; Cultural	Diffusion of global sports

In general, case studies tend to follow a patterned method, with distinct sections, so as to control necessary information (as opposed to ‘flowy,’ essay-style subjectivities) in order to compare and contrast with other case studies. The case studies herein are no different. A strict outline to each case study exists, which allows for a digestible comparison of each safeguarding technique and an evaluation of their overall effectiveness. Each case study begins with (1) an introduction of the folk sporting tradition, the locale, and the safeguarding measures employed, followed by (2) a history of the folk sport, from origins to current status. Next (3), the *when*,

³⁶ Roland Renson, “Ludodiversity: Extinction, Survival and Invention of Movement Culture,” in *Games of the Past: Sports of the Future?*, ed. Gertrud Pfister (Sankt Augustin, DE: Academia-Verlag, 2004), 10-9.

where, why, who, and how of the particular folk sporting element within the UNESCO heritagization process is dissected. Each case study then provides insights into the (4) on-the-ground perspectives, seeking to understand the practical application of safeguarding, situating local discourse in global norm-setting, and what it means relative to and how it affects the sporting community. Finally, each case study (5) concludes with a discussion which “contextualizes local discourses theoretically or historically or speculates about the future of the element or the communities in question.”³⁷

A number of important questions and themes emerge across the case studies, including the meaning of folk sports in diverse locales, territoriality, various exhibitions of nationalism, local identity in juxtaposition to global norms, the globalization paradox (modernization, for the sake of safeguarding, at the expense of authenticity), and what ‘UNESCO status’ means. Additionally, some common issues in ICH case studies, as indicated by folklorist Michal Foster, may also emerge, notably “terminology, power struggles between local, national, and international stakeholders, the effects of tourism and commodification on local communities and cultural practices, the value of international recognition, and the implications of selectivity.”³⁸ Based on the aforementioned criteria – geography, sport type, safeguarding measure, nationalism, and marginality – while employing a comparative approach, the objective of the four case studies is to answer the dissertation’s research questions. Turkish oil wrestling, Brazilian *capoeira*, Kyrgyz *kok boru*, and Irish hurling have all had convergent, yet

³⁷ Michael Dylan Foster, “UNESCO on the Ground,” in *UNESCO on the Ground: Local Perspectives*, eds. Michael Dylan Foster and Lisa Gilman (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015), 9.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 10.

divergent, paths along the way to UNESCO inscription, while its adherents are attempting to navigate the fine line between maintaining authentic traditional heritage, engaging in processes of nation-building, and strengthening international cultural recognition.

Case Study 1

United Nations of Folk Wrestling: Turkish *Yağlı Güreş*³⁹

As evidenced through its simultaneous development in disconnected societies, it can be argued that wrestling is the oldest and most basic form of human physical culture. Fostering the primal desire for control, “wrestling corresponds to an ancient and quasi-universal game. It is present worldwide in different forms that often claim to be unique, particular to a group or a place.”⁴⁰ It is the effect of time and distance that has led to the evolution of the regional variations of folk wrestling forms witnessed today throughout the world. There are folk wrestling styles on every continent, each representing symbolic, martial, nationalistic, traditional forms of sporting contests.⁴¹ However there are only a few academic works dedicated to select styles in their national or regional context, such as Loyer and Loudcher’s investigation of the evolution of *catch-as-catch-can* in France, Africanist Matthew Carotenuto’s study of the marginalization of traditional wrestling in Kenya, or Māori studies scholar Hōri

³⁹ Much of the ‘Introduction’ and ‘Sport History’ sections of this case study are reprinted from a chapter I wrote about Turkish oil wrestling and masculinity: Tom Fabian, “Turkish Oil Wrestling and the Western Gaze: Hegemonic Heteronormativity, Islamic Body Culture, and Folk Wrestling Masculinities,” in *The Palgrave Handbook of Masculinity and Sport*, eds. Rory Magrath, Jamie Cleland, and Eric Anderson (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 497-515.

⁴⁰ Tanguy Philippe, “Wrestling Styles and the Cultural Reinterpretation Process,” *International Journal of the History of Sport* 31, no. 4 (2014): 493.

⁴¹ William Baxter, “Wrestling (The Ancient Modern Sport),” in *Les Jeux Populaires: Eclipse et Renaissance [Popular Games: Eclipse and Revival]*, eds. Jean Jacques Barreau and Guy Jaouen (Rennes, FR: Institut Culturel de Bretagne, 1991), 63-93; Rayko Petrov, *The Roots of Wrestling: The Traditional Wrestling Styles* (Lausanne: FILA, 2000).

Manuirirangi's history of Māori wrestling trends.⁴² One of the most prolific folk wrestling scholars is Bulgarian folklorist Petar Petrov, who co-published an article about the political utilization of traditional wrestling, cowrote a book about safeguarding traditional wrestling in southeast Europe, and co-edited a special issue in *The International Journal of the History of Sport* entitled "Wrestling in Multifarious Modernity."⁴³ When it comes to the sport of Turkish oil wrestling, however, Islamic studies scholar Birgit Krawietz is the foremost authority, writing about a range of topics surrounding this unique wrestling style, from nationalism to aesthetics to intangible cultural heritage.⁴⁴

Yağlı güreş (oil wrestling) is one of Turkey's two national sports; the other is *cirit* (or *jereed*), an equestrian team sport involving the use of blunted javelins thrown at opponents in order to tag them out. Along with archery (also inscribed on the UNESCO Representative List, in 2019), the triad of traditional sports is fundamentally related to a nomadic Turkic past, dating

⁴² Frédéric Loyer and Jean François Loudcher, "Le Catch et son Histoire en France: Représentations et Dynamiques Socio-historiques d'un Loisir Spectacle (1900–1970) [Le Catch and its History in France: Socio-Historical Representations and Dynamics of a Leisure Spectacle (1900-1970)]," *Sport History Review* 47 (2016): 26-45; Matthew Carotenuto, "Grappling with the Past: Wrestling and Performative Identity in Kenya," *International Journal of the History of Sport* 30, no. 16 (2013): 1889-1902; Hōri Manuirirangi, "Ngā Ia Nōnoke [Wrestling Trends]," *Te Kōtiritihi: Ngā Tuhinga Reo Māori* 4, (2017): 58–65.

⁴³ Petar Petrov and Detelina Tocheva, "Les Utilisations Politiques de la Lutte Traditionnelle [Political Utilizations of Traditional Wrestling]," *Ethnologie française* 31, no. 2 (April-June 2001): 307-16; Jaouen and Petrov, *Traditional Wrestling*; Katrin Bromber, Birgit Krawietz, and Petar Petrov, eds. "Wrestling in Multifarious Modernity," special issue, *International Journal of the History of Sport* 31, no. 4 (2014).

⁴⁴ Birgit Krawietz, "The Sportification and Heritagisation of Traditional Turkish Oil Wrestling," *International Journal of the History of Sport* 29, no. 15 (October 2012): 2145-61; Birgit Krawietz, "Sport and Nationalism in the Republic of Turkey," *International Journal of the History of Sport* 31, no. 3 (2014): 336-46; Birgit Krawietz, "Prelude to Victory in Neo-traditional Turkish Oil Wrestling: Sense Perceptions, Aesthetics and Performance," *International Journal of the History of Sport* 31, no. 4 (2014): 445-58; Birgit Krawietz, "On Coming to Grips with Turkish Oil Wrestling: Conceptualising Muscular Islam and Islamic Martial Arts," in *Ways of Knowing Muslim Cultures and Societies: Studies in Honour of Gudrun Krämer*, eds. Bettina Gräf, Birgit Krawietz, Schirin Amir-Moazami, Ulrike Freitag, and Konrad Hirschler (Leiden, NL: Brill, 2018), 327-54; Birgit Krawietz, "Designing Edirne's Heritage Trail and Turkish Oil Wrestling," in *The Heritage of Edirne in Ottoman and Turkish Times: Continuities, Disruptions and Reconnections*, eds. Brigit Krawietz and Florian Riedler (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2020), 233-82.

back to the martial horse-based societies of the Eurasian Steppe. Today, there are a variety of folk wrestling traditions festooned throughout Central Asia with similar origins. Stemming from the Turkic word *güres* (wrestling), this proliferation of diverse folk wrestling styles is connected both geographically and etymologically.⁴⁵

In Azerbaijan the term used for wrestling is *gülas*, the Baskirts have *köras*, the Kazaks *küres*, the Kirghizs use the term *kürös*, the Uzbeks have *kurās*, the Tatars *köras* or *küres*, the Turkmens use *göres*, the Uighurs *kürās* or *küres*... and the Yakuts, Sakas, Tuvas, and Hakas have the term *kürās*. These cognate terms suggest that there are strong and deeply embedded similar cultural attitudes to the concept and practice of wrestling throughout Asian Turks.⁴⁶

Even *yağlı güreş* is but one of sixteen folk wrestling styles sanctioned by the Turkish Traditional Sport Branches Federation, although only oil wrestling and *karakucak güreşi* are practiced nationwide. There are an abundance of wrestling styles and cultures throughout this part of the world, some of which have been elevated to the status of national sports, such as in Turkey, Tajikistan, Iran, and Uzbekistan. The national narrative surrounding these ancient physical cultures is particularly relevant in an increasingly homogenous sporting world. French sport historian Tanguy Philippe argues that “the different realities or imaginaries associated with this sport permit us to address the larger question of the articulation between the universality and the diversity of body culture.”⁴⁷ As such, wrestling – and folk wrestling, in particular – holds a

⁴⁵ Halis Erdem, *Doğuşundan Günümüze: Kırkpınar Güreşleri* [From Birth to the Present: Kırkpınar Wrestling] (Edirne, TR: Ceren Yayıncılık, 2010), 9.

⁴⁶ Fatma Nur Başaran and Banu Hatice Gürcüm, “The *Yağlı Güreş* Tradition in Kırkpınar and the Last Master of *Kıspet*-Making,” *Folk Life: Journal of Ethnological Studies* 49, no. 2 (2011): 106.

⁴⁷ Philippe, “Cultural Reinterpretation,” 493.

unique cultural position and is “considered to be simple, direct, conclusive and deeply ‘traditional.’”⁴⁸

As a sportive link to a traditional past, folk wrestling styles are upheld as national heritage distinctions in various countries around the world.⁴⁹ In Turkey, oiled wrestlers represented the ‘strong Turk’ at the turn of the twentieth century, at a time when the Ottoman Empire was attempting to shed the derogatory nickname of ‘the Sick Man of Europe.’ As such, entangled amidst notions of a Muscular Islam, a republican Turkey, and a martial-nomadic past, oil wrestling is an ideal symbol for the nation-state, molding traditionalism and nationalism. To these ends, Turkish bureaucrats and nationalist ideologues are promoting oil wrestling with a renewed zeal; a fervent ‘retraditionalization.’ Along with a successful nomination to the UNESCO ICH Representative List in 2010, Turkish officials have been formalizing other avenues for the promotion of traditional sports for the purposes of Turkic pan-nationalism, attempting to unite all cultural groups within the broader Turkic diaspora.⁵⁰ As a spectacle of symbolic struggle, folk wrestling holds a strong position in the national cultural psyche of many ‘traditional’ nations. Yet, in many cases, globalization influences its marginalization, leaving its adherents *wrestling* with modernity in order to maintain its

⁴⁸ Martin Stokes, “‘Strong as a Turk’: Power, Performance and Representation in Turkish Wrestling,” in *Sport, Identity and Ethnicity*, ed. Jeremy MacClancy (Oxford: Berg, 1996), 26.

⁴⁹ Wrestling is considered a/the national sport in The Gambia, Iran, Mongolia, Senegal, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Turkey, and Uzbekistan. See Appendix III.

⁵⁰ Based in Central Asia, the Turkic peoples share a common ethno-linguistic background. Turkic-speaking peoples include Azeris, Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, Turks, Turkmens, Uzbeks, and Uyghurs.

traditionalism. Turkish oil wrestling, thus, is an ideal case with which to investigate the interweaving themes of heritagization, nationalism, and traditionalism.

SPORT HISTORY

Although heavily affected by cultural diffusion from the Central Asian steppe, Turkish oil wrestling was born of a confluence of both Eastern and Western traditions. According to Thucydides, known as the ‘Father of Scientific History,’ the Spartans were the first to anoint themselves with oil in advance of wrestling matches, so as to make the contest more difficult. This tradition was then adopted by the Byzantines, the Seljuk Turks, and later the Ottoman Turks.⁵¹ Competent wrestlers were, for many ancient civilizations, members of a royal guard, as was the case in Ottoman Turkey, where oil wrestlers made up the janissary (*yeniçeri*) corps of the reigning sultans.⁵² Throughout the centuries, *yağlı güreş* has held a place of distinction within the panoply of Turkish cultural elements. Today, as noted by ethnomusicologist Martin Stokes, “there is no sport which carries as much symbolic ‘weight’ in Turkey.”⁵³

Undoubtedly, though, the sport’s most noteworthy attribute is the annual Kırkpınar oil wrestling national championship, which, in its 659th year, is the world’s oldest continuous sporting festival, dating back to the year 1360.⁵⁴ Murad I, the third *bey* (chieftain) of the Ottoman Sultanate was an integral figure in the history of this tournament, and thus the history of oil wrestling in the region formerly known as Anatolia. Murad I conquered the Thracian city

⁵¹ Krawietz, “Sportification and Heritagisation,” 2146.

⁵² The same status was given to wrestlers in Japan, Bulgaria, Iran, and Senegal.

⁵³ Stokes, “Strong as a Turk,” 22.

⁵⁴ As I am writing this case study, during the 2020 coronavirus pandemic, the annual tournament is at risk of being cancelled for the first time in its six-and-a-half century existence.

of Adrianople during the 1360s, renamed it Edirne, and relocated the Ottoman capital there. Located at the intersection of modern-day Greece, Bulgaria, and Turkey, Edirne is the host city of the Kırkpınar, meaning ‘forty springs,’ and considered “*the* national centre of Muscular Islam.”⁵⁵ As legend has it, the ‘forty springs’ represents the resting place of two brothers who died while wrestling in an effort to please Murad’s brother, Süleyman Pasha, during the Ottoman expansion into Thrace in the 1350s.⁵⁶ Murad was also responsible for the establishment of the title of sultan, the janissary corps of wrestlers, and the *devşirme* system of slavery, which enslaved Balkan Christian boys, who were then raised to serve the military state. During the first two centuries (until 1582) of the Kırkpınar, almost all wrestlers were products of the *devşirme* system, representing villages from across the land. Ottoman athletes learned the ways of oil wrestling in special schools known as *tekke*; similar to Japanese sumo stables, the best wrestlers were ultimately recruited to stables under the sponsorship of local benefactors. Eventually, both commoners and nobility participated in the traditional pastime. Even a number of sultans, including Murad IV (1623–1640) and Emperor Abdülaziz (1861–1876), were considered great *pehlivans* (hero-wrestlers). It was during the latter’s reign that oil wrestling received international attention, as *pehlivans* achieved success abroad in exhibition matches. In 1867 Abdülaziz, with his pehlivan janissary entourage, toured western Europe and impressed French Empress Eugénie, wife of Napoleon III, prompting her famous expression: “*fort comme une Turc*” (strong like a Turk). Today, the Kırkpınar is the “Super Bowl of traditional Turkish

⁵⁵ Krawietz, “On Coming to Grips,” 340.

⁵⁶ Başaran & Gürçüm, “Kıspet-Making.”

wrestling,” with increasing media coverage, prize money, and the celebrity presence of Turkish presidents.⁵⁷ However, this sensationalism is still rooted in rural romanticism, which is manifest throughout much of the nation.

The narratives of rural romanticism – extolled by German poet Johann Gottfried Herder (as noted in Chapter II) – are wrought with masculinities and communitarianism, values that are embodied by traditional sports participants worldwide. In Turkey, the traditional wrestler was considered “the physical extension of the community’s honor” and “a natural resource of the village.”⁵⁸ Outside the major cities, *yağlı güreş* was the sport of choice. Today, however, with decreasing employment opportunities in rural communities and the increasing popularity of Western sports, urban youth are far less likely to participate in the pastime or follow the oil wrestling schedule. Beginning in the 1970s, stemming from urbanization and industrialization, the image of oil wrestling in wider Turkish society was considered backward and antithetical to Western sporting ideals. As one commentator of oil wrestling at this time observed, tournaments were “stamped by a clearly nationalistic and chauvinistic tendency and served first and foremost propagandistic goals.”⁵⁹ This image was slowly changed throughout the 1980s, as oil wrestling was presented in three historico-ideological frameworks, notably (1) its Central Asian heritage, (2) as Ottoman war training, and (3) as a power broker for the modern

⁵⁷ Krawietz, “Sportification and Heritagisation,” 2146.

⁵⁸ Carl Mehmet Hershiser, “Blood, Honor, and Money: Turkish Oiled Wrestling and the Commodification of Traditional” (PhD diss., University of Texas at Austin, 1998), 103, 104.

⁵⁹ Hans-Peter Laqueur, *Zur Kulturgeschichtlichen Stellung Des Türkischen Ringkampfes: Einst Und Jetzt [On the Cultural-Historical Position of Turkish Wrestling: Then and Now]* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1979), 98.

Turkish nation-state.⁶⁰ Thus, the presidency of Turgut Özal (1989-1993), “with its Ottomanist revivalism combined with a version of laissez-faire Westernism, provided special support to the sport of wrestling.”⁶¹ This support extended into the twenty-first century, when, again, popularity began to wane due to further urbanization. As observed by Deane Neubauer, urbanization is one of the core dynamics of contemporary globalization, however, in accordance with the Diamond-Renson Model, urbanization is also a key dimension in the marginalization of folk sports.⁶² In 1980 over half (56%) of the population of Turkey, about 25 million people, lived outside urban centers. This percentage dipped to about one quarter (26%) by 2016, even though the total rural population remains roughly the same.⁶³ As a result, the processes of heritagization, nationalization, and retraditionalization began in an effort to safeguard the national sport.

UNESCO NOMINATION

In November 2010, during the Fifth Session of the Intergovernmental Committee, in Nairobi, Kenya, ‘Kırkpınar oil wrestling festival’ was inscribed on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. The nomination file (no. 00386) was submitted by Dr. Şengül Gitmez, Branch Director of the General Directorate of Research and Education of the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism (MoCT). As claimed within the nomination file, the

⁶⁰ Krawietz, “Sport and Nationalism,” 343.

⁶¹ Yael Navarro-Yashin, *Faces of the State: Secularism and Public Life in Turkey* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 124.

⁶² Deane Neubauer, “Modern Sport and Olympic Games: The Problematic Complexities Raised by the Dynamics of Globalization,” *Olympika: The International Journal of Olympic Studies* 17 (2008): 1-40.

⁶³ “Rural Population – Turkey,” The World Bank (website), <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.RUR.TOTL?end=2016&locations=TR&page=1&start=1960&view=chart>.

Kırkpınar element represents four separate ICH domains: (1) oral traditions (for the prayers and poetic rituals); (2) performing arts (“as the whole event is displayed in front of [an] audience”); (3) social practices, rituals and festive events (the sport component itself); and (4) traditional craftsmanship (of the traditional *kıspet* pants, along with the tool that carries it – the *zembil*).⁶⁴

Although among the first folk sporting elements inscribed on the Representative List, it must be noted that it is a festival (event) that was inscribed, not the sport itself. In fact, the initiative to heritagize the Kırkpınar stemmed from a movement to raise the host city of Edirne within the Turkish cultural landscape – subsequent inscriptions of the Selimiye Mosque (2011) and Sultan Bayezid II Complex (2016) on the tangible World Heritage List provide Edirne with a triad of heritage elements.⁶⁵ A second point of observation is that “the process of obtaining the UNESCO heritage-label is necessarily a national one” and the motivations of the national tourism ministry should not be misrepresented.⁶⁶ Nevertheless, Turkish oil wrestling has attained the status of a UNESCO-safeguarded folk sporting element and Edirne has become the unofficial “world city of wrestling, so to speak, posing as the centre of this somatic heritage.”⁶⁷

Established in 1966, the Turkish Folk Culture Information and Documentation Center began the documentation of ICH elements. Turkish inventorying goes back to the creation of the Folklore Archive, in the 1960s, based on field research conducted to a great extent by folklorists, ethnologists, and anthropologists under the auspice of MoCT. However, “this

⁶⁴ Intergovernmental Committee, “Nomination File No. 00386 for Inscription on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2010,” (2010), 2-3.

⁶⁵ Krawietz, “Edirne’s Heritage Trail.”

⁶⁶ Krawietz, “Sportification and Heritagisation,” 2155.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

existing system was not created with the aim of safeguarding of ICH in mind.”⁶⁸ As such, the MoCT has adopted new approaches for the inventorying of ICH, in line with the operational directives of the 2003 Convention, namely the creation of national ICH inventories. Turkey now has two such inventories: (a) the National Inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage; and (b) the National Inventory of Living Human Treasures, which acknowledges forty-five uniquely-skilled bearers of cultural heritage, including traditional *kıspet*-maker İrfan Şahin (inscribed in 2012).⁶⁹ The national ICH inventory lists 114 elements, including eleven traditional games: the martial sports of oil wrestling, archery, and *cirit*, along with *aşık* (the aforementioned knucklebone game), *topaç* (a top game), *güreş* tradition, a camel game (*deve oyunu*), and four communal games (*sınsın*, *köse*, *kız kaçıрма*, and *mangala* or *göçürme*). In terms of a diversity-homogeneity axis, as referenced in Chapter III, the sport heritage landscape in Turkey exhibits a robust ludodiversity. The MoCT’s Directorate General of Research and Training acts as the executive body of these inventories, “in cooperation with its provincial directorates in 81 cities along with representatives from related institutions (Public Education Center, Municipality, NGOs, universities) and bearers of ICH.”⁷⁰

The UNESCO nomination was devised and led by the municipal government of Edirne.

In 2008, the Provincial Directorate of Culture and Tourism of Edirne, along with the Edirne

⁶⁸ Intergovernmental Committee, “Periodic Report No. 00815/Turkey: Report on the Implementation of the Convention and on the Status of Elements Inscribed on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity” (2013), 14.

⁶⁹ Research and Education General Directorate, “Somut Olmayan Kültürel Miras Envanter Çalışmaları [Intangible Cultural Heritage Inventory Studies],” T.C. Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı (website), accessed June 16, 2019, <https://aregem.ktb.gov.tr/TR-50839/somut-olmayan-kulturel-miras-envanter-calismalari.html>.

⁷⁰ Intergovernmental Committee, “Nomination File No. 00386,” 10.

Historical Kırkpınar Culture and Solidarity Association and other local organizations, prepared and secured the nomination of the Kırkpınar in the National Inventory of ICH. Then, at a meeting of stakeholders in 2009, hosted by the MoCT, the decision was made to further nominate the Kırkpınar to the UNESCO ICH Representative List. The nomination highlighted not only the city and sport, but also the cultural, ritualistic, and performative components of the Kırkpınar. During the weeklong festival, in addition to the wrestling bouts, there are a number of cultural traditions to which the festivities adhere, including various processions and prayers throughout Edirne, performances by *davul-zurna* janissary bands and folk dancing troupes, the traditional oiling ceremony and the *pehlivans'* ritualistic eagle dance (*peşrev*), and the pervasive narration of the *cazgırs* (announcer-poets), who “contribute [to] the establishment of the dialogue between people from different cultures through their poetic prayers called [the] *dualama*.”⁷¹ The nominating party was also required to list current and recent efforts to safeguard the element. With the aim of training and safeguarding professionals, a number of initiatives were highlighted, including the establishment of a ‘Kırkpınar House’ museum, a photography contest, and the Kırkpınar Physical and Sports Education Department at the Edirne-based University of Trakya. Moreover, the Kırkpınar is safeguarded through local legislation, “under the protection of ‘Regulation of Historical Kırkpınar Oil Wrestling’ which was published in the Official Gazette on May 23, 2000.”⁷² As such, it must be noted that the Kırkpınar championship was already safeguarded *prior* to the initiation of UNESCO

⁷¹ Ibid., 5.

⁷² Ibid., 6.

nomination. Ultimately, on November 16, 2010, after all the local and national efforts to preserve and promote oil wrestling, the Kırkpınar nomination file was finally reviewed by the Evaluation Body of the Intergovernmental Committee.

As a result of these safeguarding efforts and satisfaction of the nomination criteria, “seeing no objection, the Chairperson of the [Intergovernmental] Committee declared adopted the decision to inscribe Kırkpınar oil wrestling festival.”⁷³ As a point of fact, the nomination satisfied the criteria for inscription in the following ways: (1) “contributing to social cohesion and harmony”; (2) encouraging intercultural dialogue; (3) safeguarding measures with the engagement of diverse stakeholder communities; (4) free, prior, informed consent of the practitioner community; and (5) inclusion in a national ICH inventory.⁷⁴ Although the UNESCO oil wrestling nomination was a success, Krawietz reiterates an important concern regarding the onus on the non-sportive facets of the element, namely place and event:

No discernible efforts are made to differentiate systematically between the various cultural influences and to take pride in their multiplicity. Being granted Intangible Cultural Heritage status already recognises and cherishes a cultural artefact’s peculiarity, but this does not automatically mean that the applicants who have proposed this status themselves have an interest in revealing its potentially hybrid character. The narrow focus of the Kırkpınar application – despite its national appropriation – has to do with the fact that traditional wrestling was not presented to the international organisation as a shared physical practice of a larger realm, but as tied to a very particular place ... and to a specific annual festival time.⁷⁵

So, although Turkish oil wrestling can be considered one of the first folk sporting traditions safeguarded within the UNESCO ICH framework, its utilization as a conduit for the elevation

⁷³ Intergovernmental Committee, “Adoption of the Summary Records of the Fifth Session of the Committee,” ITH/11/6.COM/CONF.206/4 Rev, para. 249 (2011).

⁷⁴ Intergovernmental Committee, Decision 5.COM 6.42 (2010), 53.

⁷⁵ Krawietz, “On Coming to Grips,” 341-2.

of a cultural capital – being the former national capital – paints a telling picture of the motivations of state party bureaucrats keen on advancing nationalist agendas in the international sphere.

PRACTICAL PERSPECTIVES

Each signatory state party of the 2003 Convention is required to submit a periodic report to the Intergovernmental Committee on the measures taken to safeguard ICH within their territories. Turkey's periodic report was submitted in 2013, outlining a number of initiatives dedicated to the preservation and promotion of their nine inscribed elements (at the time).⁷⁶ These initiatives included the establishment of a Living Museum in Beypazari, the Intangible Cultural Heritage Museum in Ankara, and the *Millî Folklor: International and Quarterly Journal of Cultural Studies*. However, based on the text of the periodic report, the safeguarding of the Kırkpınar, specifically, has not shown significant progress. Although the report claims that “by the inscription of it on the Representative List, the awareness of the Festival increases at the local, national and international level,” there is little evidence to back it up.⁷⁷ In fact, as reported by Krawietz (albeit in 2012), “there is no strong impact of international mass tourism,” due to the distance from Istanbul (3+ hour bus ride), limited non-Turkish tourist materials, and lack of international promotion.⁷⁸ The Kırkpınar essentially remains a local, regional, and pseudo-national event, drawing international spectators from the neighboring Greek and Bulgarian

⁷⁶ As of 2019, Turkey has seventeen elements inscribed in the Representative List (including oil wrestling and archery) and one on the Urgent Safeguarding List.

⁷⁷ Intergovernmental Committee, “Periodic Report No. 00815/Turkey,” 66.

⁷⁸ Krawietz, “Sportification and Heritagisation,” 2156.

Turkic communities. The Edirne municipal government is the primary organizational and safeguarding body of the festival, while the MoCT provides funding and the Ministry of Youth and Sport, along with the Turkish Wrestling Federation (TGF), aid in the training of *pehlivans*.⁷⁹ Although the organizational structure and commercialization of the event may have been streamlined, mediatizing “one of the greatest open-air wrestling competitions in the world,” it seems, based on the lack of new initiatives in the periodic report, as if the event was either (a) properly safeguarded prior to UNESCO heritagization, (b) declining in importance, or (c) no longer in need of UNESCO preservation policies.⁸⁰ My inclination points toward the latter scenario. For, there is another safeguarding mechanism that was established in 2015: The World Ethnosport Confederation (WEC).

Headquartered in Istanbul, the WEC “supports traditional games and sports that are handed down from generation to generation, the conservation, practice and sustainability of these activities and the organization aims to make these activities more permanent and systematic.”⁸¹ The WEC is chaired by Necmeddin Bilal Erdoğan, the son of current Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (2014-), which can be construed as problematic, noting the chair’s familial ties (nepotism) to the authoritarian leader of the nation (nationalism), as well as his connection to a major 2013 corruption scandal.⁸² Regardless of the evident nationalistic

⁷⁹ Founded in 1923, the TGF (*Türkiye Güreş Federasyonu*) is responsible for Olympic wrestling and, since 1999, both oil wrestling and *karakucak* wrestling.

⁸⁰ Intergovernmental Committee, “Periodic Report No. 00815/Turkey,” 64.

⁸¹ World Ethnosport Confederation, “About Us,” WEC (website), accessed May 19, 2020, <https://worldethnosport.org/about-us>.

⁸² In 2013, Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan was accused of detaining three of his cabinet ministers’ sons and the head of the state-run bank for suspected graft. His son, Bilal Erdogan, was implicated in the scandal. Seda Sezer and Dan Williams, “Erdogan Vows Graft Scandal in Turkey won’t Topple Him,” *Washington Post*,

undertones of the WEC, in a booklet written by Bilal Erdoğan, he laments that “sadly, the numerous sports inherited by our ancestors now take a backseat in the world of sports. This is the starting point of our movement to revive these sports.”⁸³ At the moment, the WEC boasts eighteen sport federation members, including traditional games associations from Argentina (*pato*), Azerbaijan (equestrian), Japan (*yabusame*), Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan (*kok boru*), Mexico, Mongolia (horse racing), Poland, Qatar (falconry), Romania (*oina*), three from Russia (including both *kok boru* and *koresh*), three from Turkey (including archery), and Tunisia.⁸⁴ The WEC has also hosted three International Ethnosport Forums (2018, 2019, 2020) and four Ethnosport Culture Festivals in Istanbul (2016, 2017, 2018, 2019), with sports from the aforementioned sport federation members, as well as exhibitions of Indonesian *pencak silat* and Korean *ssireum* wrestling. Finally, the WEC also has strong links with UNESCO, The Association for International Sport for All (TAFISA), and the Turkish Traditional Sport Branches Federation, and is a lead sponsor of the increasingly popular World Nomad Games, launched in 2014 and celebrated biennially. The sole drawback of the WEC, as mentioned previously, is its nationalist connotations, evident in the Turkish-exclusive Board of Directors. In contrast to its more internationalist competitor, the World Ethnosport Society (based in Riga, Latvia), the WEC safeguards the traditional games of Turkey (including oil wrestling) under the guise of a global sport organization. Although could this be considered a situation where the ends justify the

December 29, 2013, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle-east/in-turkey-erdogan-vows-graft-scandal-wont-topple-him/2013/12/29/2cf81270-70b2-11e3-8def-a33011492df2_story.html.

⁸³ As cited in Krawietz, “On Coming to Grips,” 348-9.

⁸⁴ For federations representing a single sport, the sport(s) in question is listed in parentheses. Otherwise, the sport federation represents all traditional games within its territory.

means? For, regardless of how it is being done, there is a distinct retraditionalization of oil wrestling in Turkey as a result of the WEC, MoCT, and Edirne municipal government.

A renewed traditionalization of native wrestling forms in recent times is providing a resurgence to traditional cultural interpretations of wrestling in the national narrative. As discussed by Tanguy Philippe, by reinterpreting folk wrestling, we have the “opportunity to understand the relationships between the social movements and the construction of culture”⁸⁵ Bromber *et al.* add that: “Serving aims such as strengthening ethnic, regional or national identities or simply boosting the tourism business, the re-traditionalization of styles is, in fact, rather a process of innovation or invention than of the restoration of a tradition.”⁸⁶ An example of this process is in Ethiopia, where “the ancient Backhold style of Tiggil [*sic*] is now being revived and promoted officially by the government.”⁸⁷ In addition to retraditionalization, oil wrestling is undergoing a process of heritagization through its inscription on the UNESCO Representative List, which, as we learned in Chapter II, is synonymous with folklorization, the museumization or ‘freezing’ of a cultural form. Granted, both folklorization and heritagization result in a distancing from the authentic cultural form, but at least the heritagization process upholds the tenets of traditionalism, celebrating (if not exaggerating) the romantic history of the sport. And the romantic notions symbolized in the primal ludic contest of wrestling is not lost on participants, spectators, sponsors, or government officials. In his *Mythologies*, Roland Barthes, the famous French essayist, wrote the following about the wrestling performance:

⁸⁵ Philippe, “Cultural Reinterpretation,” 501.

⁸⁶ Bromber *et al.*, “Multifarious Modernity,” 392.

⁸⁷ Baxter, “The Ancient Modern Sport,” 67.

“What is portrayed by wrestling is ... an ideal understanding of things; it is the euphoria of men raised for a while above the constitutive ambiguity of everyday situations and placed before the panoramic view of a univocal Nature, in which signs at last correspond to causes, without obstacle, without evasion, without contradiction.”⁸⁸ This dedicated romanticism is the philosophical safeguard of the ancient sport of wrestling.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Folk wrestling styles around the world are some of the most ancient, basic, and traditional forms of human physical culture. This is the reason that, of all the types of traditional games, these fighting ‘games’ are the most universal. Many nations and regions around the world have a folk wrestling variant, similar in technique but embodying local cultural symbolism. A few of these styles, including *yağlı güreş*, have been inscribed on the UNESCO ICH Representative List, but what have the effects been on the traditional sport form? Based on Turkey’s 2013 periodic report, it seems that little has changed from the pre-inscription status of the sport, or, at least, the safeguarding measures implemented during the nomination process (e.g. local legislation, university department, museum, etc.) are sufficient for the time being. Moreover, the establishment of the WEC, in conjunction with the Turkish Traditional Sport Branches Federation, has provided a broader, albeit ‘Turkocentric,’ organizational framework for the continued promotion of oil wrestling and other traditional games within festivalized, retraditionalized, and nationalized contexts.

⁸⁸ Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans. Annette Lavers (New York: Hill & Wang, 1972), 25.

Nationalist undercurrents are prevalent in many folk wrestling traditions around the world. Because of the sport's romantic allure, oftentimes, "wrestling is systematically used in the construction of myths of national strength and in a moral education in almost chivalric notions of contest and display."⁸⁹ Sportification, modernization, and standardization of these styles have led to the elaboration of 'national' styles, reflected in cultural, political, and ludic contexts. As posited by Bromber *et al.*, "reasons for selecting one particular style as 'national' and standardising its rules may range from political issues ... to a new aesthetic of body movement ... to standards of 'civilised' behaviour ... to risk management."⁹⁰ *Kokowa* wrestling in Niger, Iranian *koshti pahlevāni*, Senegalese *laamb*, and the Central Asian *güres* family of styles all present examples of nationalism through wrestling. In the case of oil wrestling, three types of nationalism have been observed in the retraditionalization and heritagization processes: Pan-nationalism, cultural nationalism, and romantic nationalism. Krawietz has argued that the neo-Ottomanism inherent to modern wrestling is indicative of strong pan-nationalistic tendencies.⁹¹ The heritagization of oil wrestling, and other traditional games, in the national registries also point towards a focus on cultural nationalism, a means of projecting a shared sportive Turkic heritage. And in terms of romantic nationalism, "the reconciliation between heritage or custom and development is carried out up to re-writing or re-reading the past, in order to create a new, original romance."⁹² This rural romanticism is not an uncommon theme in nationalist

⁸⁹ Stokes, "Strong as a Turk," 22.

⁹⁰ Bromber *et al.*, "Multifarious Modernity," 397.

⁹¹ Krawietz, "Prelude to Victory," 449.

⁹² Philippe, "Cultural Reinterpretation," 503.

discourses and plays favorably for the positioning of oil wrestling in the secular-traditional nexus of modern Turkish society.

From an organizational perspective, however, the question is whether the UNESCO safeguarding measures have affected the practice, status, and meaning of Turkish oil wrestling. As far as its practice, the 2003 Convention has had little effect. Sporting practice is generally changed by means of external commercial factors, rather than global bureaucratic policies. For instance, as is evident from the Diamond-Renson Model, urbanization has significantly marginalized oil wrestling in Turkish society, as urban youth look to posher global games in order to occupy their leisure time. In terms of status, undeniably, UNESCO ICH Representative List inscription comes with a certain international recognition and status, but based on the periodic reports, oil wrestling's *status* has changed little in both the global and local sportscares. Moreover, Krawietz's research pointed to the touristic motivations of the Edirne-led nomination, focusing peripherally on safeguarding the sport form itself. Lastly, has its meaning changed? From a theoretical perspective, its folklorization and heritagization inevitably remove an aspect of the sport's authenticity, and therefore its cultural meaning has changed. This is the reason for retraditionalization efforts amongst oil wrestling stakeholders. As such, although Turkish oil wrestling has undergone a heritagization through the processes of folklorization, nationalization, and retraditionalization, its status in Turkey, and amongst the Turkic diaspora, has remained steadfast throughout the UNESCO 'experience.' If this is, in fact, the case, then an argument can be made for the limited effect of the 2003 Convention on the element of Turkish oil wrestling. Perhaps UNESCO recognition is merely a status symbol; a means of differentiating *yağlı güreş* in the united nations of folk wrestling.

Case Study 2

Spectacle and Diaspora: Brazilian *Capoeira*

Scholars of sport have habitually applied the term *physical culture* to more holistically express their area of study. This catchall phrase, however, goes beyond the spectrum of sport, thereby including games, play, dance, martial arts, leisure activities, and physical education. Kinesiologist David Andrews theorizes that physical culture “incorporates numerous ‘events,’ the moments of practice that crystallize diverse temporal and social trajectories through which individuals negotiate their subjective and ... embodied identities and experiences.”⁹³ One of the best examples of a holistic physical culture practice is *capoeira*. It has been termed a sport, game, martial art, play, dance, culture, and way of life. Epitomizing Andrews’ thesis, Brazilian *capoeira* symbolizes liberation: “A liberation from slavery, from class domination, from the poverty of ordinary life, and ultimately even from the constraints of the human body.”⁹⁴ This Afro-Brazilian cultural practice is a multilayered combination of dance, fight, and music; to the observer, a martial art version of breakdance fighting. It is a unique cultural game, distinct from other martial arts around the world in three key areas: (1) the two *capoeiristas* must maintain a flowing movement in time with the associated music, principally the percussive sound of the native Brazilian *berimbau*; (2) there is no blocking, but rather evasive maneuvers to escape the blows of the other participant, which is vital to the ‘deception’ intrinsic to the art; and (3) there are no winners and losers, but rather a substitution system so that the *roda* (term

⁹³ David L. Andrews, “Kinesiology’s Inconvenient Truth and the Physical Cultural Studies Imperative,” *Quest* 60, no. 1 (2008): 56.

⁹⁴ J. Lowell Lewis, *Ring of Liberation: Deceptive Discourse in Brazilian Capoeira* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 2.

for both the game and the playing space) continues until a participant is forced out of the circle, similar to sumo.⁹⁵ The spectacle, an incorporation of Caillois' notions of *agon* (competition) and *mimicry* (simulation), is distinctly unique from other martial arts or sports, leading to its adoption and popularity internationally.⁹⁶ Due to the economic difficulties following a military dictatorship in the last two decades of the twentieth century, Brazilian emigration has globalized *capoeira*, bringing it greater attention from those seeking an eclectic physical activity and conveying the sociocultural history of *brasilidade* (Brazilianness). Katya Wesolowski, an anthropologist and *capoeira* practitioner, argues that the *roda* is a lens through which one can gain "insight into the contested nature of nationalism and the unevenness of citizenship in Brazil."⁹⁷ Since its beginnings, *capoeira* has been embedded in racial politics and the social contestation of the subaltern and marginalized.

In terms of its 2014 inscription on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, like Turkish oil wrestling, the nomination is not sport-specific. As the Turks focused on the national championship event, the Brazilians focused on the *roda*. In fact, in its inscription in the Brazilian 'Book of Knowledge' (national ICH registry), three elements of *capoeira* are highlighted: (1) its history; (2) the teachings or philosophy; and (3) an ethnography of the *roda*.⁹⁸ As explained in the official UNESCO nomination file, "this focus is derived from a

⁹⁵ With the recent professionalization of *capoeira*, competitive tournaments or combative prize-fights do require a more objective, quantitative set of rules, which include points for contacts and the goal of victory.

⁹⁶ Roger Caillois, *Man, Play and Games*, trans. Meyer Barash (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001).

⁹⁷ Katya Wesolowski, "Professionalizing Capoeira: The Politics of Play in Twenty-first-Century Brazil," *Latin American Perspectives* 39, no. 2 (March 2012): 84.

⁹⁸ Cecilia Londrès, "The Registry of Intangible Heritage: The Brazilian Experience," *Museum International* 56, no. 1-2 (May 2004): 166-73.

perspective that acknowledges the Capoeira Circle as a traditional expression that is closely connected to African ancestry and to the symbols and signs of belonging created in a historical context in which the expression and its bearers were marginalized.”⁹⁹ In fact, contemporary *capoeira* can also be considered contested terrain, as government appropriation of one form of the sport has excluded and continues to marginalize practitioners of the other – more traditional – form. Nevertheless, the Afro-Brazilian martial art can be found in over 160 countries, making it a global sport, and “one of the greatest symbols of Brazilian identity.”¹⁰⁰ This is not due to the UNESCO inscription, however, but rather because of its diffusion through the Brazilian diaspora since the 1970s. Its internationalization through the diaspora, in fact, is one of the artform’s distinguishing safeguarding mechanisms. At home, due to a modernist social momentum, it is undergoing a process of sportification. While, abroad, influenced by the political instrumentalization of the dance-fight for nationalistic purposes, it has been heritagized as a UNESCO ICH element. The question now is whether *capoeira*, as a marker of *brasilidade*, can maintain its cultural authenticity within the processes of sportification, glocalization, and heritagization. For, de-authentication is inherent to these processes, thereby categorizing the artform as marginal, based on the modernization reason from the Diamond-Renson Model. One can only hope that “in the meantime capoeira. in the words of Robert

⁹⁹ Intergovernmental Committee, “Nomination File No. 00892 for Inscription on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2014,” (2014), 8

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 3.

Farris Thompson, reigns supreme 'of all the martial arts of the Black Atlantic world,' funky, intoxicating, spiritual, slightly dangerous, profound, and beautiful."¹⁰¹

SPORT HISTORY

The origins of *capoeira* are shrouded in a transnational debate between its authentically Brazilian roots and its "Africanization" (globalization *from* Africa).¹⁰² On the one hand, there are those that adhere to the Afrocentrist thesis, based on the observations of Portuguese painter and ethnographer Albano Neves e Sousa, who likened the movements of *capoeira* to the Angolan combat game *n'golo* (zebra dance) in the 1950s.¹⁰³ On the other hand, many nationalists favour a creolization thesis, whereby *capoeira* was born of the confluence of African fighting traditions in the *senzalas* (slave barracks) of the Bahian sugar plantations of early colonial Brazil.¹⁰⁴ During Christian holidays, which were sometimes extended to slaves, the martial art was practiced under the guise of dance, music, and singing, giving *capoeira* its distinct contemporary aesthetic. Eventually, white authorities prohibited and punished those who practiced African traditional dances in order to suppress Black cultural expressions. A primary reason for this ban was that there was a growing concern of Black mobilization and insurrection, as slaves outnumbered city residents by the 1830s. In Brazil, the transatlantic slave trade ended in 1850, and by 1878 more

¹⁰¹ Joshua M. Rosenthal, "Capoeira," in *Berkshire Encyclopedia of World Sport*, vol. 1, eds. by Gertrud Pfister and David Levinson, 3rd ed (Great Barrington, MA: Berkshire, 2013), 222.

¹⁰² Eric A. Wagner, "Sport in Asia and Africa: Americanization or Mundialization?," *Sociology of Sport Journal* 7 (1990): 401.

¹⁰³ Maya Talmon-Chvaicer, *The Hidden History of Capoeira: A Collision of Cultures in the Brazilian Battle Dance* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008); Christine Dettmann, "History in the Making: An Ethnography into the Roots of *Capoeira Angola*," *World of Music* 2 (2013): 73-98.

¹⁰⁴ Nestor Capoeira, *Capoeira: Roots of the Dance-Fight-Game* (Berkeley, CA: Blue Snake, 2002); T.J. Desch Obi, "The *Jogo de Capoeira* and the Fallacy of 'Creole' Cultural Forms," *African and Black Diaspora: An International Journal* 5, no. 2 (2012): 211-28.

than eighty percent were free, most of which were part of a general migration of former Black slaves to the cities.¹⁰⁵ Many of these unemployed, marginalized individuals formed and joined *malts* (gangs), also known as *capoeiras* because of their predilection for the fighting art. These *malts* caused even more social concern, acting as self-styled mafia families – protecting neighbourhood ‘interests’ from rival *malts* through gang violence. Brazilianist Thomas Holloway paints a poignant sociocultural picture of the *malta* lifestyle in Rio de Janeiro at the time: “The activities of the gangs and the specific fighting technique make capoeira the most persistent and perhaps the most successful effort to establish a social ‘space’ on the part of urban Afro-Brazilians – an area of activity which they controlled, used for their advantage largely on their own terms, and from which they could exclude outsiders.”¹⁰⁶ White authorities grew increasingly nervous of this threat to social order instigated by these so-called ‘vagrants.’ Tensions rose until 1878, when the Rio de Janeiro police chief ultimately condemned *capoeira* as “one of the strangest moral diseases of this great and civilized city.”¹⁰⁷ During the ensuing decade, Rio was divided politically between the Liberal republicans, who were campaigning to abolish slavery, and the imperialist Conservatives, who remained loyal to the monarchy.¹⁰⁸ Ironically, the *capoeiras* sided with the Conservatives, who hired them to work as strong-arm bodyguards, rabble-rousers, and intimidators. Once the abolition of slavery was enacted in

¹⁰⁵ Maya Talmon Chvaicer, “The Criminalization of Capoeira in Nineteenth-Century Brazil,” *Hispanic American Historical Review* 83, no. 3 (2002): 533.

¹⁰⁶ Thomas H. Holloway, “‘A Healthy Terror’: Police Repression of *Capoeiras* in Nineteenth-Century Rio de Janeiro,” *Hispanic American Historical Review* 69, no. 4 (November 1989): 646.

¹⁰⁷ Katya Wesolowski, “From ‘Moral Disease’ to ‘National Sport’: Race, Nation, and Capoeira in Brazil,” in *Sports Culture in Latin American History*, ed. David M. K. Sheinin (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2015), 161.

¹⁰⁸ Brazil had transitioned from Portuguese colony to independent empire during the 1820s.

1888, however, the Conservatives lost considerable ground and the New Republic was founded on November 15, 1889. As the *malts* were associated with – and bullied for – the losing side, *capoeira* was prohibited and criminalized in Rio de Janeiro by the new Penal Code of 1890.

It is for this reason that *capoeira* flourished, albeit ‘underground,’ in the state of Bahia instead of Rio because the art was not affiliated with gangs and therefore the police less strictly enforced the Rio Penal Code. During the early twentieth century two distinct styles of *capoeira* emerged in Bahia, following the teachings of their adoptive *mestres* (master practitioners). The first was Mestre Bimba’s (né Manuel dos Reis Machado) *capoeira Regional*, which borrowed components from other martial arts and valued efficiency and discipline. The second was Mestre Pastinha’s *capoeira Angola*, which is rooted in African folk traditions and was more racially representative. Generally speaking, “Angola is deemed traditional, playful, African, and ‘blacker,’ while by reputation Regional is aggressive, ‘whiter’ and, critics say, less authentic.”¹⁰⁹ Although it is Bimba who “deserves credit for sanitizing and codifying capoeira and raising it to the level of a national icon ... by instituting standardized pedagogy and selectivity in accepting students and by incorporating elements of academic, religious and military traditions to legitimize his style in the eyes of the Brazilian public.”¹¹⁰ In 1936 this ‘destigmatization’ of the traditional battle dance eventually led to the invitation of Mestre Bimba and his students to the presidential palace in Salvador, the Bahian capital, to give a demonstration of *capoeira*. With the tides turning in favour of the martial art, one year later

¹⁰⁹ Rosenthal, “Capoeira,” 222.

¹¹⁰ Lauren Miller, “Capoeira,” in *Martial Arts of the World: An Encyclopedia of History and Innovation*, eds. Thomas A. Green and Joseph R. Svinth (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2010), 39.

Mestre Bimba opened the first *capoeira* academy, Centro de Cultural Física Regional (Centre of Regional Physical Culture), from which the strand gets its name. To distinguish his style of *capoeira*, emphasizing Afro-Brazilian traditional roots, in 1949 Mestre Pastinha opened the competing Centro Esportivo de Capoeira Angola. Then, after President Getúlio Vargas visited Bimba in 1953, he declared *capoeira* as the “only truly national sport.”¹¹¹ Nevertheless, it bears noting, however, that Vargas was influenced by Bimba’s variant (*Regional*), which is less representative of the origins and traditions of the dance-fight. Within the span of seventy-five years, *capoeira* developed from a reviled inner-city gang fight to the pinnacle of the national sports ladder – from ‘moral disease’ to ‘national sport’ – and Vargas’ proclamation opened a nationalist discourse that continued for another seventy-five.

Regarding the title of ‘national sport,’ Wesolowski explains that “more than simply co-opting an indigenous practice as national heritage, this claim in fact contributed to *capoeira*’s very construction as an autochthonous practice.”¹¹² The enthusiasm to politically appropriate the native *capoeira* was in response to the growing popularization of European football and English boxing. One independent scholar expertly sums up the political context of Vargas’ comment:

In the first half of the twentieth century, the second discovery of Brazil aimed to couple political independence with cultural emancipation, and demanded the invention of an

¹¹¹ Matthias Röhrig Assunção, *Capoeira: The History of an Afro-Brazilian Martial Art* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 137; Greg Downey, “Domesticating an Urban Menace: Reforming Capoeira as a Brazilian National Sport”, *International Journal of the History of Sport* 19, no. 4 (December 2002): 1; Katya Wesolowski, “Moral Disease, 161. Also, to note, Vargas was the interim president from 1930 to 1934, president until 1937, and then dictator until 1945, at which point he was overthrown by a coup. He resumed his position as head of state as the democratically elected president from 1951 until his suicide in 1954.

¹¹² Wesolowski, “Moral Disease,” 163.

authentic Brazilian tradition to serve as the basis of an autonomous modern Brazilian art. The quest for modernity was parallel to an intensified quest for *brasilidade*, emphasising all things that differentiate Brazilian culture from European culture. National identity was defined as rooted in race mixing, a cultural amalgamation of the European with the tropical.¹¹³

It was a time when many Afro-Brazilian cultural traditions were being established as national identifiers: black bean *feijoada*, a slave dish, was adopted as the national food; Paraty *cachaça* (sugarcane liqueur) as the national drink; the popular *favela* (shantytown) samba as the national music; and *capoeira* as the national sport. Even the patron saint and artist laureate, both consecrated during this period, were of mixed Afro-Brazilian heritage. Notable Brazilian polymath Gilberto Freyre termed this an era of “racial democracy” in which “African, indigenous people and Europeans lived harmoniously, while modernist artists celebrated anthropophagy – a cultural cannibalism of appropriation and hybridity.”¹¹⁴ Although this period in history is marked by many nationalist trends, they were all embedded within the context of a politically volatile Brazil on the verge of an authoritarian military dictatorship (1964-1985), which would plunge the country into economic turmoil. To put it bluntly, *capoeira* and other Afro-Brazilian cultural traditions, although brought to national attention, became the pawns of political propaganda in the ‘racially democratic’ nation. Even under totalitarian rule, however, *capoeira* became implanted in the national ethos during the 1960s. Mestre Pastinha, in his 1964 book, even went so far as to write that “capoeira angola is practiced by all social classes and receives protection and prestige from the authorities for being one of the most authentic

¹¹³ Styliane Philippou, “Modernism and National Identity in Brazil, or How to Brew a Brazilian Stew,” *National Identities* 7, no. 3 (September 2005): 245.

¹¹⁴ Wesolowski, “Moral Disease,” 164.

manifestations of national folklore."¹¹⁵ *Capoeira* was officially recognized as a 'national sport' in 1972, under the administration of the Brazilian Boxing Federation.¹¹⁶

Today, *capoeira contemporâneos* ('contemporary' *capoeira* practitioners) are making efforts to bridge the gap between the different styles of *capoeira*, including the professional and the traditional. Supported by the socialist government and bringing together politicians, academics, and over five-hundred *mestres*, the main topic of debate at the Third National Capoeira Congress (São Paulo, 2003) was the professionalization of the cultural game.¹¹⁷ The motto of the congress – *Capoeira é Brasil* (Capoeira is Brazil) – was more appropriate than intended, symbolizing the historical contradictions in the racial hierarchy of Brazilian society. Wesolowski best sums up the emotional discourse that divided the attendees: "For many the move to professionalize the teaching of capoeira, even if this came with more regulation, was a new form of mobilization against social inequality and discrimination that have been at the heart of this practice since its inception. For some practitioners, the search for the authenticity and authority in capoeira's mythic past and its inclusion in an imagined and rather elusive *brasilidade* has been superseded by a forward-looking gaze that emphasizes professionalism and 'recovering citizenship.'"¹¹⁸ On July 15, 2008, as a result of a national safeguarding plan (outlined in the 'Practical Perspectives' section below), *capoeira* was named part of Brazil's immaterial cultural heritage. However, the contemporary significance of *capoeira* to Afro-

¹¹⁵ Vicente Ferreira Pastinha, *Capoeira Angola* (Salvador, BR: Escola Gráfica N.S. de Lorêto, 1964), 26.

¹¹⁶ Downey, "Domesticating," 15.

¹¹⁷ Wesolowski, "Professionalizing."

¹¹⁸ Wesolowski, "Moral Disease," 177-8.

Brazilians at home and abroad is the same as it always has been, a liberation: from the elites' appropriation and commodification of cultural expression, from nationalist rhetoric and propaganda, and ultimately from the depredations of industrialization and modernization in a nation that promotes *brasilidade* to the world and ignores inequality at home. The unique martial art may be the 'national sport' of Brazil, but, as observed by anthropologist Greg Downey, *capoeiristas* want only to "pursue the experiential possibilities of play and the phenomenologically rich texture of capoeira."¹¹⁹

UNESCO NOMINATION

The road to national 'Immaterial Cultural Heritage' began with the renewed Brazilian Federal Constitution of 1988, which considered, in its section on national culture, both the material and immaterial dimensions of cultural goods.¹²⁰ Then, in 1997, the National Institute of Historic and Artistic Heritage (IPHAN) created the Working Group on Immaterial Heritage, whose initiatives paid off with a decree (2000) stipulating the establishment of national inventories.¹²¹ Two registries were created: the 'Book of Knowledge' and the 'Book of Expression Forms.' As described in a 2014 study of state party reports conducted by the Intergovernmental Committee, in Brazil,

160 sub-inventories have been carried out to date and over 1,000 cultural elements have been included. Brazil has developed a complex system in which two main approaches are taken

¹¹⁹ Downey, "Domesticating," 26.

¹²⁰ Luiz Renato Vieira, "A Capoeira e as Políticas de Salvaguarda do Patrimônio Imaterial: Legitimação e Reconhecimento de uma Manifestação Cultural de Origem Popular [Capoeira and Immaterial Heritage Safeguarding Policies: Legitimation and Recognition of a Cultural Manifestation of Popular Origin]," in *Capoeira em Perspectivas*, ed. Alanson M. T. Gonçalves (Belo Horizonte, BR: Tradição Planalto, 2012), 133–56.

¹²¹ Paula Assunção dos Santos and Elaine Müller, "When ICH Takes Hold of the Local Reality in Brazil: Notes from the Brazilian State of Pernambuco," in *Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage*, eds. Michelle L. Stefano, Peter Davis, and Gerard Corsane (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell, 2012), 213–22.

towards inventorying national ICH, namely: (i) the process of officially recognizing ICH through a declaration (for the recognition, enhancement, and declaration of their heritage value) and (ii) a set of actions for the identification, documentation and investigation of ICH in two national inventories. These two inventories themselves refer to distinct action lines of ICH policy-making with their own purposes and procedures and represent different safeguarding tools. The direct interplay here between inventorying, policy-making and safeguarding measures is notable.¹²²

Amongst many bearers of ICH, in conjunction with government policy workers, “the creation of the inventory prompted discussions about social memory, preservation of tradition, and cultural identity in Brazil.”¹²³ Unfortunately, due to bureaucratic delays, meaningful projects to safeguard *capoeira* were not implemented until 2005, at which point a couple of major public policy programmes were endorsed and the *Capoeira Viva* (Capoeira Live) campaign was launched. This campaign, funded to the tune of \$1 billion (USD) by the Brazilian oil company Petrobras, “sought to develop projects about Capoeira education and research and to create archives and documentaries about the practice.”¹²⁴ Only during this time did the preparations for an official dossier get underway, nominated by the IPHAN to the national inventories in 2008. As of its inscription, though, *capoeira* became the only ICH element registered on both lists and the only element to be represented on each state’s registry, thereby attaining nationwide acceptance – a far cry from the illegal street gang activity of the early twentieth century.¹²⁵

¹²² Intergovernmental Committee, “Examination of the Reports,” ITH/14/9.COM/5.a, para. 53 (2014).

¹²³ Sergio González Varela, *Capoeira, Mobility, and Tourism: Preserving an Afro-Brazilian Tradition in a Globalized World* (Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2019), 131.

¹²⁴ Vivian Luiz Fonseca and Luiz Renato Vieira, “Capoeira – a Brazilian Immaterial Heritage: Safeguarding Plans and Their Effectiveness as Public Policies,” *International Journal of the History of Sport* 31, no. 10 (2014): 1306.

¹²⁵ Instituto do Patrimônio Histórico e Artístico Nacional, “Roda de Capoeira,” IPHAN (website), accessed June 6, 2018, <http://portal.iphan.gov.br/pagina/detalhes/66>.

The UNESCO nomination process, however, superseded the national initiative, and began in 2004, during a speech given by then-Minister of Culture, Gilberto Gil. Speaking to a gathering at the United Nations headquarters in Geneva, Gil highlighted that “capoeira has spread around the world and it is recognised today as a tool for pedagogical action, social inclusion and socialisation of people of various ages, creeds, social classes, nationalities and ethnicities.”¹²⁶ The minister further extolled the virtues of his national sport, claiming it as “an icon of the representativeness of Brazil around the world.”¹²⁷ As a gesture of cultural expression, Gil “brought with him an entourage of 15 Capoeira players from Brazil and abroad and proposed to hold a Capoeira circle to celebrate world peace and establish dialogue between different peoples.”¹²⁸ Thus the Pró Capoeira Work Group (GTPC) was created, which implemented the Capoeira Safeguarding and Incentive Program (Pró Capoeira). The GTPC is composed of representatives from the IPHAN, the Palmares Cultural Foundation for Black culture, the Department of Identity and Cultural Diversity, the Secretariat of Cultural Citizenship, and the Department of Cultural Policies.¹²⁹ The GTPC was the prime mover in the quest for UNESCO recognition, holding a meeting in 2010 with over nine hundred *capoeiristas* that began the nomination process.

The *Roda de Capoeira* nomination file (no. 00892) was submitted by the IPHAN Director of the Department of Intangible Heritage Célia Corsino to the Ninth Session of the

¹²⁶ Fonseca and Vieira, “Public Policies,” 1306.

¹²⁷ Gilberto Gil, “Brasil, Paz no Mundo [Brazil, Peace in the World],” (August 19, 2004). As cited in Fonseca and Vieira, “Public Policies,” 1306.

¹²⁸ Intergovernmental Committee, “Nomination File No. 00892,” 11.

¹²⁹ Fonseca and Vieira, “Public Policies,” 1307.

Intergovernmental Committee (November 2014), hosted in Paris. The consent petition was signed by the aforementioned 955 *capoeiristas*, representing all twenty-seven federal states of Brazil. The nomination file expressed that “the capoeira circle is a deeply ritualistic space, congregating chants and gestures that express a world view, a hierarchy, a code of ethics, revealing companionship and solidarity. The circle is a metaphor to the vastness of the world. With its joys and its adversities. Constant change. In the capoeira circle, great masters are formed and consecrated, the traditional practices and values of Afro-Brazilians are transmitted and reinforced.”¹³⁰ Moreover, when prompted to explain the fight-dance’s social function, nominators claimed that “the Capoeira circle plays the role of an exporter of Brazilian culture. A symbol of Afro-Brazilian culture, of ethnic miscegenation and of resistance, this mode of expression is the pride of its community and of the Brazilian people as a whole.”¹³¹

Safeguarding initiatives proposed in the nomination file include a National Dossier, *Viva Meu Mestre* (Hail My Master) Awards, individual state safeguarding committees and councils, mapping *mestres*, *capoeiristas*, and researchers, and implementing educational programming into the school curricula. The IPHAN National Culture Fund budgeted over \$2 million (USD) for these varied safeguarding initiatives.¹³² In a 2016 study of various nomination files, Brazil was praised for its broad approach which incorporates “several policy-making areas (such as environmental protection, tourism and health) and have even created specific inter-ministerial

¹³⁰ Intergovernmental Committee, “Nomination File No. 00892,” 3.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 9.

structures for this purpose.”¹³³ Overall, the *capoeira* nomination file was well-written, formulated on sound policy, and followed appropriate nomination criteria.

The Evaluation Body of the Intergovernmental Committee agreed. As such, on November 26, 2014, “the Subsidiary Body found that the file satisfactorily demonstrated that the element constituted the intangible cultural heritage of Brazilians and that it also embodied the memory of the African diaspora in Brazil as well as being a symbol of Brazil around the world.”¹³⁴ As reported in the ‘Report of the Subsidiary Body,’ the following criteria for inscription were satisfied:

- (1) *Capoeira* demonstrated the ability to promote social cohesion and Brazilian identity;
- (2) Inscription would “contribute to awareness of the significance of [ICH] as a means to resist oppression and discrimination, while promoting dialogue between individuals of different ethnicities, social classes, ages, genders and nationalities and testifying to human creativity”;¹³⁵
- (3) The aforementioned comprehensive safeguarding strategies;
- (4) The ample representation amongst the numerous petition signatories; and
- (5) A national inventory system.

Frankly, on paper, the file seemed almost perfect. However, a divergence within the ranks of practitioners in Brazil – notably along the lines of the *Angola* and *Regional* variants – caused a

¹³³ Intergovernmental Committee, “Examination of Reports,” ITH/16/11.COM/9.a, para. 23 (2016).

¹³⁴ Intergovernmental Committee, “Adoption of the Summary Records of the Ninth Session of the Committee,” ITH/15/10.COM/4, para. 504 (2015).

¹³⁵ Intergovernmental Committee, Decision 9.COM 10.8, para. 2 (2014).

schism based on anti-establishmentarian lines. The most blatant evidence was present within the demographical data of the appended consent form. Of the 955 signatories, *Angola* practitioners were underrepresented and marginalized, as they are the faction that are openly against the bureaucratization of their craft. Brazilian anthropologist Sergio González Varela noted:

The definition and characterization of capoeira that policy makers, international organizations like UNESCO, and government agencies make from the 'outside' of culture clashes with the local perspective of *Angola mestres*. Because the definition from the outside encompasses not only capoeira *Angola* but all styles, the *Angola* adepts consider it an affront to their traditional values (and their position as true bearers of tradition), evidenced by the inclusion of competition, martial arts contests, and complicated acrobatic moves, which are absent in *Angola* performances. Although the definition of capoeira as [ICH] recognizes the artistic and creative side of the practice, the institutionalization of this status through a formal international organization [like UNESCO] still faces the reticence of practitioners who consider capoeira a form of resistance and rebellion against a system.¹³⁶

Therefore, it would seem that the UNESCO nomination criteria – notably 1, 2, and 4 – has not, in fact, been so neatly met. As is explained below, by marginalizing *capoeira Angola*, the sport cannot be considered a conduit for social inclusion, a lightning rod for anti-discrimination, nor a proper representation of all classes and ethnicities within the Brazilian state. Although all might seem peaceful, spotless, and formalized on the global surface, underneath, at the local level, it seems that the bearers of this intangible cultural heritage are at odds about the best ways to preserve and persevere.

¹³⁶ González Varela, *Capoeira, Mobility, and Tourism*, 135.

PRACTICAL PERSPECTIVES

The heritagization process of *capoeira* has yielded a number of politically-divisive consequences within the Brazilian nation-state. Much like our previous case study, based on much of the academic literature and UNESCO documents, it seems as if *capoeira* was fully vibrant within its community of practitioners and safeguarded within the auspices of the state bureaucracy before UNESCO nomination. Moreover, as is discussed below, the Brazilian diaspora has also contributed to the international recognition of the national sport. So, then, why the need for UNESCO inscription? The answer seems to lie somewhere in the realm of political instrumentalization. As a ludic practice of resistance, *capoeira* is contrary to the notion of state control, yet the federal government, through the GTPC, has continually tried to formalize, nationalize, and institutionalize the sport. The 2014 inscription on the UNESCO Representative List “presented a situation where a social practice that was reticent to structure itself formally had to negotiate with the government and international institutions in such a structured way. Many *capoeira* Angola mestres, who had never desired a path to formal organization, criticized those who chose a new cultural heritage status over preservation of tradition and even accused them of betraying the Afro-Brazilian cause.”¹³⁷ The heritagization process of *capoeira* has been strongly associated with politico-nationalist manoeuvrings, which, in turn, have been part and parcel to its appropriation by adherents of the sportification and traditionalist models.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 130.

To understand this debate, that continues to this day, it is worth delving into the three official *capoeira* symposia or congresses. The first, which was hosted by the air force in 1968, began the debate by framing *capoeira* as either a 'sport' or a 'culture.' The culturalists argued that *capoeira* was a 'living folklore' and, thus, should not be sportified. The sport contingent, however, argued that, if left unregulated, *capoeira* would degenerate to a violent fighting sport, reminiscent of the *malta* street gangs of a half century before. They furthered their point by claiming that "with modern regulations and technically-sophisticated training methods, [*capoeira*] could contribute to national well-being while also preserving and celebrating Brazilian folk culture."¹³⁸ This motivation to sportify *capoeira* was part and parcel to a social momentum to modernize traditional games; a ripple effect, as extolled by the Diamond-Renson Model, which threatens endangered forms with extinction via de-authentication. If the intent of the first symposium was to define the ludic act, then the second symposium, held the next year, was intended to unify the factions (namely *Angola* and *Regional*). It was hoped that "successful unification ... could transform *capoeira* from merely 'folklore' into 'a sport of national scope.'"¹³⁹ Alas, it was at this point that the debate degenerated, and another symposium was not held until the aforementioned 2003 *Capoeira é Brasil* congress.

In the interim, Carlos Senna, a former student of the famed Mestre Bimba, embroiled the practitioner community further into the schism, by ardently pursuing the *sport-capoeira* line. In his words, he wanted to "save" the Capoeira community "from the cultural deterioration of

¹³⁸ Downey, "Domesticating," 15.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

folklorization” through its “emancipation as sport.”¹⁴⁰ This led to the modernization, and bastardization, of the sport through point-based tournaments with objective scoring. The pendulum swung back in favour of folklore in the late 1980s, and *capoeira* as a ‘cultural game’ was championed by the newly-independent Brazilian Capoeira Federation.¹⁴¹ Toting an anti-sport stance, the Federation “attempted to empty the pugilistic aspects of capoeira competitions so as to treat competitions as a cultural manifestation.”¹⁴² This campaign, as well, brought much criticism onto the practice. Much like other reproaches of folklorization, many critics held that “capoeira defined as ‘folklore’ is an innocuous, ludic cultural manifestation, relegated to museums and commemorative performances.”¹⁴³ The local concern with the cultural authenticity of *capoeira* did not end there. During the final symposium (2003), after years without a formal meeting, practitioners were still up in arms. Many who attended the congress protested “the institutionalization of capoeira—in essence, its transformation from ‘play’ to ‘sport’—and, more specifically, a recently enacted law to regulate capoeira as a profession under the state or federal council of physical education.”¹⁴⁴ Federal law 9696, enacted in 1998, required all *capoeira* instructors to become certified – through an expensive, year-long course – thereby marginalizing practitioners from the lower socioeconomic strata. What many sportification adherents failed to grasp, however, is that “capoeira’s differences from other

¹⁴⁰ Carlos Senna, *Capoeira: Arte Marcial Brasileira. Ante-projeto de Regulamentação* [*Capoeira: Brazilian Martial Art. Draft Regulation*] (Salvador, BR: Prefeitura, Cadernos de Cultura No. 3, 1980), 20. Quoted in Downey, “Domesticating,” 16.

¹⁴¹ Until 1992, the Brazilian Capoeira Federation was under the auspices of the Brazilian Boxing Federation.

¹⁴² Downey, “Domesticating,” 21.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 23.

¹⁴⁴ Wesolowski, “Professionalizing,” 85.

sports, not its fidelity to the 'sport' paradigm, motivated its adoption internationally," and led to its continued representation of a ludic *brasilidade*.¹⁴⁵

The internationalization of *capoeira* is another practical perspective to note. It has occurred without the aid of UNESCO inscription, nor of Brazilian institutional entreaties. As anthropologists Scott Head and Heloisa Gravina assert, "conceptualizing capoeira Angola in terms of the Black Atlantic entails treating this singularly danced fighting-form as a performative embodiment of the disjunctive temporality at the heart of African Diasporic cultural expression."¹⁴⁶ There are eight million *capoeiristas* in the world, of which one quarter have migrated to over 160 nations, creating vibrant diasporic communities and engaging in processes of glocalization, creolization, and pedagogization. In Canada, for instance, "*contemporâneos* also see capoeira as a diasporic practice that permits them to perform Canadian nationalism."¹⁴⁷ Although the term *globalization* is often invoked, *diasporic* is more appropriate, as "capoeira classes across the world are taught by expatriate, self-exiled Brazilians to students who are enrolled into 'schools' of capoeira that are still based in Brazil."¹⁴⁸ And, frankly, *capoeiristas* within the growing diasporic community (since the mid-1970s) receive greater cultural agency than those who remained. Wulfhorst *et al.* attribute this to the sport's "post-colonial revaluation of cultural worth. Viewed as lowbrow in Brazil, it confers on practitioners

¹⁴⁵ Downey, "Domesticating," 21.

¹⁴⁶ Scott Head and Heloisa Gravina, "Blackness in Movement: Identifying with Capoeira Angola in and out of Brazil," *African and Black Diaspora: An International Journal* 5, no. 2 (2012): 194.

¹⁴⁷ Janelle Joseph, "The Practice of Capoeira: Diasporic Black Culture in Canada," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 35, no. 6 (2012): 1091.

¹⁴⁸ Sara Delamont and Neil Stephens, "Up on the Roof: The Embodied Habitus of Diasporic *Capoeira*," *Cultural Sociology* 2, no. 1 (2008): 60.

overseas the sort of prestige not available in the homeland.”¹⁴⁹ Additionally, the fight-dance remains a strong diasporic sport because: “First, the martial art increased its global reach through the immigration of Brazilian capoeiristas, who control the teaching of capoeira overseas. Second, the language of capoeira abroad is still the Portuguese; students have to learn many terms and songs in Portuguese. Third, instructors present the martial art as an authentic expression of the Brazilian culture.”¹⁵⁰ Through the Brazilian diaspora, *capoeira* has, in effect, reached a level of sportification beyond mere modernization; the internationalization of an Afro-Brazilian martial art.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The Afro-Brazilian marital art of *capoeira* – part dance, part fight, part national sport, part cultural heritage – represents all things to all peoples. Practitioners learn the circle of life through the *roda*, learn of historical resistance through their *mestres*, and learn cultural agency through their participation. *Mestres*, the bearers and transmitters of heritage, represent tradition, corporal pedagogy, and a philosophy of life. Politicians employ *capoeira* for nationalistic purposes in an attempt to reconcile a history of oppression. Emigrants find comfort in a sense of community through the extensive Brazilian diaspora. And the newly anointed *capoeiristas*, in the academies of far-flung urban centres, benefit from an exotic physical pursuit. It is a ludic expression that can be described in a plethora of ways by diverse

¹⁴⁹ Cristina Wulforth, Cristina Rocha, and George Morgan, “Intimate Multiculturalism: Transnationalism and Belonging amongst Capoeiristas in Australia,” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 40, no. 11 (2014): 1808.

¹⁵⁰ Angela da Rocha, Felipe Esteves, Renato Cotta de Mello, and Jorge Ferreira da Silva, “Diasporic and Transnational Internationalization: The Case of Brazilian Martial Arts,” *Brazilian Administration Review* 12, no. 4 (October/December 2015): 408.

stakeholders. It is also contested terrain. Whether its origins are from Angolan *n'golo* or invented on the Bahian plantations, it is martial first, art second. For over a century, until the 1950s, *capoeira* was stigmatized, marginalized, and criminalized. To be a *capoeirista* was to live a subaltern existence, fighting against societal oppression as if it were your opponent in the *roda*. But as times change and culture is fluid, the fight-dance became vogue with the military dictatorship in the 1960s and its political instrumentalization began. Attempts to morph it into a national calisthenics movement, which “sought to derive from capoeira a set of physical exercises distinctive of the national kinaesthetic genius,” ultimately failed.¹⁵¹ Then the sportification process, which accentuated the divide between the traditionalist *Angola* and reformist *Regional* parties, idled. Most recently, the Ministry of Culture, through its patrimonial arm (IPHAN), sought international recognition, a meritorious act of implanting Brazilian physicality and ludo-identity onto the global stage.

Although, it seems that heritagization was neither necessary nor the answer to a *capoeira* community divided between bureaucrats and practitioners. The national government had already made its mark on the sport’s politicization by enabling its heritagization, both in national registers and through UNESCO recognition. This was a clear case of civic nationalism (unison through shared citizenry) versus ethnonationalism (resistance to state appropriation of cultural traditions). The mission statement of the world’s largest *capoeira* association, Abadá-Capoeira, reads: “Diffusing Brazilian culture, promoting integration, recovering citizenship, and professionalizing;” a most telling and accurate summation of the civic nationalist

¹⁵¹ Downey, “Domesticating,” 9.

objectives.¹⁵² Indeed, *sport-capoeira* adherents or *contemporâneos* have sportified, professionalized, and transformed the Brazilian national sport. The diasporic communities, however, maintain an arm's-length relationship with the tumultuous debates in the homeland. Although diasporic *capoeira* is less jaded and somewhat removed from the political manoeuvrings of the Brazilian bureaucracy, the internationalization and UNESCO recognition of *capoeira* can be interpreted as a form of diasporic nationalism, whereby *capoeira* is used as a shared heritage and cultural connection to the homeland. Moreover, the elite *capoeira* academies abroad, as well as *capoeira's* incorporation into the Brazilian school curricula, substantiate a process of pedagogization as well.¹⁵³ Indeed, throughout this case study we have witnessed evidence of processes of sportification, folklorization, pedagogization, nationalization, and internationalization. As can be gleaned from this array of safeguarding measures, the divergent stakeholders of *capoeira* have attempted to conserve their ludic practice in whichever means best fits their particular ends.

Although the Ministry of Culture had already promoted *capoeira* as an immaterial cultural heritage of the nation – becoming the only ICH on both national registers and recognized in all twenty-seven states – this occurred in accordance with the criteria of the UNESCO Convention. For all intents and purposes, *capoeira* was already visible, its significance was widely promoted, and it was lauded as a conduit for intercultural dialogue. From a safeguarding standpoint, what more could UNESCO recognition do? Commercialism and

¹⁵² As cited in Wesolowski, "Professionalizing," 88.

¹⁵³ Gerard Taylor, *Capoeira: The Jogo de Angola from Luanda to Cyberspace*, vol. 2 (Berkeley, CA: Blue Snake, 2007).

nationalism seem to be at the root of the answer. International promotion for the hope of increased tourism is a valid reason for inscription, although, due to its sullyng commercial implications, is often not overtly expressed. Additionally, nationalism, both external and diasporic, can be invoked in rationalizing the UNESCO nomination procedures. By attaining 'UNESCO status,' a *Brazilian* national sport is a global icon. This not only benefits the image of the Brazilian peoples but benefits the politicians who orchestrated the entire process. This case has exemplified three particular types of nationalism that are endemic to many folk sporting contexts: Ethnonationalism, demonstrated in the resistance of the traditionalist *Angola* practitioners to national government appropriation; cultural nationalism in the zealous national heritagization project; and external nationalism in the form a global cultural promotion of *brasilidade* through UNESCO recognition. So, to pose the primary research question, yet again, has heritagization via UNESCO had any implications on the practice, status, and meaning of *capoeira*? In answer, due to UNESCO heritagization, the practice has been further sportified, its status has been both nationalized and globalized (essentially glocalized), and the meaning of the Afro-Brazilian martial art has only further marginalized *Angola* practitioners within the broader Brazilian sportscape. Thus, in many respects, the 2003 Convention has actually *negatively* affected the practice, status, and meaning of *capoeira*.

Case Study 3

Equine Games of the Central Asian Steppe: Kyrgyz *Kok Boru*

There is a Kyrgyz proverb that states that “the horse is the wing of a man.”¹⁵⁴ As intrinsic to nomadic culture as navigation to Polynesians, riding horses is a way of life for the peoples of Central Asia. The ubiquitous symbolism of the horse in this part of the world is a commodified and romanticized marker of a nomadic past. Equestrian historian and archeologist Carolyn Willekes notes that “over several thousand years of domestication, the horse has served numerous roles in the steppe, as a source of meat and milk, as a mode of transportation, an instrument of war, a symbol of ritual, a companion, and ... an ‘athlete’ in sports and games.”¹⁵⁵ The horse sport of choice in this region is known by many names: *buzkashi* in Afghanistan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan, *gökbörü* in Turkey, *kupkari* in Uzbekistan, *kokpar* in Kazakhstan, and *kok boru* in Kyrgyzstan. The game is also played among the Uyghurs of Western China and various Iranian ethnic groups, such as the Pashtun and Baloch. *Kok boru* is a free-for-all melee of fifteen to hundreds of horsemen, each trying to wrestle the carcass of a dead calf or goat free from the scrum. Representing the inherent juxtapositions in Central Asian societies, the game is currently played in front of tens of thousands in the urban centres of Kabul, Bishkek, and Almaty, as well as in smaller agrarian communities with naught but an endless horizon as its spectator. In his foundational anthropological study of Afghan *buzkashi*, American diplomat and Afghanistan documentarian Whitney Azoy explains that the game

¹⁵⁴ Austin Reza, dir. *Home Game*, season 1, episode 5, “Kok Boru.” Aired June 26, 2020, on Netflix.

¹⁵⁵ Carolyn Willekes, “A Tale of Two Games: *Cirit*, *Buzkashi* and the Horsemen of the Asiatic Steppe,” *Nomadic Peoples* 21 (2017): 287.

“relates to society as: (1) a commemoration of cultural heritage; (2) a metaphor for chaotic, uninhibited, and uncontrollable competition; and (3) an arena in which certain aspects of political competition can actually occur.”¹⁵⁶ Interestingly, politics have forever been intertwined with the violent and wild game, exemplified by the early *khans* (political elite) who used the sport to gain power, prestige, and fortune. Due to Azoy’s work, among the Central Asian equine games, *buzkashi* has received the most academic attention from Western scholars. However the variously named carcass-wrestling sports (highlighted above) share similar historical, technical, sociocultural, political, and traditional aspects.

In Kyrgyzstan, players are called *kok-boruchu* – *chapandazan* in Afghanistan and *kokparshy* in Kazakhstan – and there are two forms to the sport: traditional and sportified. The traditional form is played individually (‘every horseman for himself’) in a rural scrum with unlimited space, and is variously called *alaman*, *dodo*, *jatama*, and *jayiltma*. For a sensory description of the game, German sport historian and Olympic Games administrator Carl Diem reprinted the eye-witness account of Swedish geographer Sven Hedin during a 1901 visit to East Turkestan (the present-day Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region of China):

The hooves of 80 horses drum on the hard ground. The noise is deafening and mixes with wild shouts and the clatter of stirrups. In a cloud of dust they rush past us ... Now a fight arises, as if it (the carcass) were a bag of gold. A jumble of horses and riders, enveloped by a cloud of dust. Some horses fall, other rear and others shy away. The riders, always with one foot in the stirrup, impetuously slide to the ground and reach for the prize. Some fall from their horses and are trodden on, others hang halfway under the horses, but all work to tackle the carcass in the wild disorder ... at last a man has the fleece and it is jammed between his right leg and the saddle, he storms out of the mass and rushes like the wind in a wide arc on

¹⁵⁶ G. Whitney Azoy, *Buzkashi: Game & Power in Afghanistan* (Long Grove, IL: Waveland, 2003), 4.

the plain, followed by all the others. In a minute they return, the fleece is thrown at our feet, and so begins a new battle.’¹⁵⁷

The modern, sportified game is team-based and structured around a national league. Played during three twenty-minute periods, on a 200x70-metre field, two teams of four *kok-boruchu* attempt to place the *ulak* (goat carcass) in the opposing teams *kazan*, a large well-like goal (measuring 4.4 metres in diameter and 1.2 metres high). Although the traditional ‘open’ game of the rural, mountainous regions of the country is seemingly more authentic, the modernized stadium version of *kok boru*, remains replete with a nostalgic traditionalism within a reconstructed national imaginary. Like *buzkashi* in Afghanistan, *kok boru*, is the national sport of Kyrgyzstan.

As a recent addition to the UNESCO ICH Representative List (2017), *kok boru* has been heritagized. As a national sport, however, *kok boru* is safeguarded within the processes of nationalization, notably under the auspices of the Directorate of National Kinds of Sports. Indeed, the Kyrgyz Republic, like other Central Asian nations, is in the midst of a national identity-building process in an attempt to remedy its global anonymity. A significant aspect of this process is defining the nation based on its traditional past along with the post-Soviet realities of self-determination. The sportification and nationalization of *kok boru* help attain this national narrative, as “a nation defines itself by what it reveres, and the totems of a distant,

¹⁵⁷ Carl Diem, *Asiatische Reiterspiele: Ein Beitrag zue Kulturgeschichte der Völker* [*Asian Equestrian Games: A Contribution to the Cultural History of Nations*] (Berlin: Deutscher Archiv-Verlag, 1941), 35. As cited in Willekes, “Tales of Two Horses,” 296.

seemingly nobler past can be invoked to enormous effect.”¹⁵⁸ In this sense, traditional cultural elements, like *kok boru*, embody the liberation nationalism rhetoric of many post-Soviet states attempting to differentiate their cultural heritage from Soviet cultural heritage. Folk games in many traditional societies can be a distinct marker of the reimagination of the nation. As I argue, the heritage of Kyrgyz *kok boru* is entangled between contemporary nationalistic politics and the history of the equine games of the Central Asian steppe.

SPORT HISTORY

Kyrgyzstan is a mountainous, rugged, isolated Central Asian nation with a population of about six and a half million inhabitants, most of which are ethnically Kyrgyz. The Kyrgyz people are a Turkic ethnic group, originally a coalition of forty Mongol tribes.¹⁵⁹ Due to the harsh environment, nomadic pastoralism was the preferred way of life, requiring the domestication of the horse, which ultimately led to the development of concomitant equestrian games. The game of *kok boru* or *buzkashi* has three origin stories. First, Afghani traditionalists claim that the game was likely brought west across the Central Asian steppe by the Mongol hordes, demanding “the horsemanship and fearlessness that a man would need to be successful in battle and to take away enough of the spoils in its aftermath to make the effort worth while.”¹⁶⁰ Second, another tradition harkens to the feudal era of tribal warfare, during which prisoners would be used as the *ulak*.¹⁶¹ Third, in the Kyrgyz version, the game started with the

¹⁵⁸ Will Boast, “A Kingdom for a Horse: Kokpar and the Future of Kazakhstan,” *Virginia Quarterly Review* 93, no. 3 (Summer 2017): 32.

¹⁵⁹ *Kyrgyz* is the Turkic word for ‘we are forty,’ referring to the forty regional clans of legend who defended against the Uyghur invasion of the ninth century.

¹⁶⁰ Steve Craig, *Sports and Games of the Ancients* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2002), 155.

¹⁶¹ A. A. Motamedi, “Buzkashy Game in Afghanistan,” *Afghanistan* 12, no. 2 (1957): 1-6.

use of a wolf carcass, after horsemen chased down the animal which threatened their herds.¹⁶²

This last origin story corresponds with the translation of the term *kök börü*, which means ‘blue wolf.’ The other Kyrgyz term for the sport is *ulak tartysh* (goat grabbing), which is much more aligned with the Persian *buzkashi* (goat dragging).

In 1876 Kyrgyzstan became part of Czarist Russia, remaining a Soviet satellite state from the Russian Revolution (1917) until the country’s independence in 1991. Unfortunately, “Soviet ideology negatively influenced the preservation and development of a number of elements of popular culture which were regarded as vestiges of the past,” and thus little is known about the history of *kok boru* apart from its persistence throughout the majority rural territories.¹⁶³ In many Soviet states, only folk games that imitated a labour activity, like *kok boru*, survived as an integral component of labour training.¹⁶⁴ Although, in most cases, Soviet power either suppressed or sportified folk games of an ethnic nature.¹⁶⁵ For instance, in the Russian republic of Buryatia, in Siberia, the *Surkharban* national traditional sport festival was sportified beginning in the 1950s, with traditional Buriat wrestling losing much of its originality and attraction. However, since the fall of the Soviet Union, changes to the *Surkharban* “can be summed up as re-using the traditional name of the games, reintegrating the games with religion, removing non-

¹⁶² Emma Levine, *A Game of Polo with a Headless Goat: in Search of the Ancient Sports of Asia* (London: André Deutsch, 2000), 204.

¹⁶³ National Commission for UNESCO of the Kyrgyz Republic, “Country Report: Kyrgyzstan,” in *2nd Training Course for Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage* (Tokyo: Asia/Pacific Cultural Centre for UNESCO, 2008). https://www.accu.or.jp/ich/en/training/country_report_pdf/08_09/country_report_kyrgyzstan_01.pdf.

¹⁶⁴ A.M. Tiik, “Estonian Winter Folk Games,” *Soviet Education* 24, no. 2 (1981): 79.

¹⁶⁵ Henning Eichberg, *Questioning Play: What Play Can Tell Us about Social Life* (London: Routledge, 2016), 199.

traditional games and reintroducing the traditional rules.”¹⁶⁶ The reinvention of folk games throughout much of the former Soviet regions followed this same process, *kok boru* is not an exception to this historical trend. Blended with romantic nationalism and rural folklore, the reinvention of *kok boru* is part of a pan-regional process of identity creation and conservation of traditional pasts quashed by the Soviet occupation.

One particular story rests in Kyrgyz lore and exemplifies the nationalistic element of the traditional sport: “In a 1949 journey, subterfuge was used by the Kirghiz people of the northern Afghanistan high Pamir plateau, who used a buzkashi game to capture a Chinese fort that blocked their return home. While the invited soldiers of the fort attended the buzkashi game, Kirghiz fighters captured the fort with a single shot.”¹⁶⁷ Unfortunately, during the same period as this Kyrgyz Trojan-horse saga, “the game was transformed into a codified sport with authorized referees, uniformed teams, a demarcated playing field, a cumulative scoring system, and severe penalties (including arrest) for any form of dispute during play.”¹⁶⁸ Official rules were defined in 1949, games were first hosted in hippodromes in 1958, and the National Kok Boru Federation, established in 1998, “plays a key role in promoting and safeguarding the element through the development and organization of activities.”¹⁶⁹ Today there are sixteen professional, eighty semi-professional, and six hundred amateur teams that compete annually

¹⁶⁶ Stefan Krist, “Where Going Back is a Step Forward: The Re-Traditionalising of Sport Games in Post-Soviet Buriatia,” *Sibirica* 4, no. 1 (April 2004): 109.

¹⁶⁷ Alyce Taylor Cheska, “Revival, Survival, and Revisal: Ethnic Identity Through ‘Traditional Games,’” in *Meaningful Play, Playful Meaning*, ed. Gary Alan Fine (Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics, 1987), 152.

¹⁶⁸ G. Whitney Azoy, “Buzkashi,” in Pfister and Levinson, *Berkshire Encyclopedia*, 205.

¹⁶⁹ “Kok Boru, Traditional Horse Game,” UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage (website), accessed January 31, 2019, <https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/kok-boru-traditional-horse-game-01294>.

for the President's Cup. Moreover, Kyrgyzstan also hosted the first three traditional sport World Nomad Games (2014, 2016, and 2018), finishing atop the medal standings in each edition.

From its nomadic heritage to its contemporary professionalism, *kok boru* has been employed as the groundwork for a traditionalist upswell in the national psyche. An isolated, post-Soviet, Central Asian nation like Kyrgyzstan is, to a certain degree, defined by this symbolic national sport. It is recognized as “a ceremony of integration; past is linked culturally with the present and men are linked socially with one another.”¹⁷⁰ As such, a variety of safeguarding measures have been employed to maintain the popularity of the sport. First, *kok boru* is upheld in an effort to bolster traditional rural romanticism, connecting past with present. Second, the game developed out of the pastoral pastimes of the herders, a form of ‘playful work’ that acted as a leisure pursuit of the horsemen of the steppe. Third, the folk game was sportified in the mid-twentieth century to conform to the modern, specialized, bureaucratized sport forms of our era. Fourth, *kok boru* was internationalized within the World Nomad Games, which even includes a team from the United States. Fifth, the sport has been pedagogized, as well, by instituting training centres, the development of school teams, and research performed through the Kyrgyz State Academy of Physical Culture and Sports. As a result of these processes, *kok boru* has (as of 2017) been heritagized on the UNESCO Representative List, thus internationally recognized as an intangible cultural heritage of humanity.

¹⁷⁰ Azoy, *Buzkashi*, 44.

UNESCO NOMINATION

The UNESCO nomination of *kok boru* was led by Elnura Korchueva, former Secretary-General of the National Commission of the Kyrgyz Republic for UNESCO, under the auspices of the Ministry of Culture, Information, and Tourism. During a 2008 training course for the safeguarding of ICH, hosted in Japan, Korchueva reported that “the Kyrgyz Republic is mostly identified with its intangible heritage elements, such as epics, rituals, rites, and customs ... connected with the nomadic lifestyle and culture of the Kyrgyz in the past.”¹⁷¹ The Kyrgyz commitment to intangible heritage has been enacted in laws, such as the law for the ‘protection and use of historical and cultural heritage’ (1999) or the Law on National Kinds of Sports (2003). ICH documentation has been carried out since the late 1980s, sporadically and locally, by various cultural organizations with financial aid from international organizations, culminating in the establishment of the National List of ICH in 2012.¹⁷² As per the 2014 Kyrgyz periodic report to UNESCO, the Kok Boru Public Foundation had already implemented policies regarding safeguarding and promoting folk sports, organizing the traditional games of *chabysh* (horse racing), *kyz kuumai* (catching a girl on a horse), *kok boru*, *er enish* (wrestling on horseback), *kurosh* (traditional wrestling), and *jamby atu* (archery on horseback) during the traditional Nowruz New Year’s celebrations.¹⁷³ With all of this momentum around the heritagization of *kok*

¹⁷¹ National Commission, “Country Report.”

¹⁷² Intergovernmental Committee, “Examination of the Reports of States Parties on the Implementation of the Convention and on the Current Status of Elements Inscribed on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity,” ITH/14/9.COM/5.a, para. 52 (2014).

¹⁷³ Intergovernmental Committee, “Periodic Report No. 00837/Kirgizstan: Report on the Implementation of the Convention and on the Status of Elements Inscribed on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity,” (2014), 24.

boru, a nomination for UNESCO recognition was submitted in 2015. This nomination, however, was unsuccessful.

During the 2015 deliberation process, the nomination for *kok boru* was referred back to the state party for resubmission. As the only case study element – and one of the only traditional sports – to be rejected by the Evaluation Board of the Intergovernmental Committee, it is important to note the justification for such a decision, as well as to identify any themes or issues from which we can learn more about the status of folk sports within the UNESCO safeguarding framework. The Evaluation Board rejection was based on five counts. First, the nomination did not explain the respect for the sensitivities of diverse communities (i.e. lack of community consent). Second, due to the violent nature of the game, there were concerns about the health risks to participants, horses, and goats. Third, the nomination did not adequately differentiate *kok boru* as an element of ICH from being a professional sport. Fourth, it was not clear as to how inscription would enhance visibility to the element or raise awareness of its significance. Fifth, in relation to the fourth, “the entertainment aspect of the game [was] presented inconsistently as both a feature that could contribute to visibility and awareness-raising and a threat to the viability of Kok boru as cultural phenomenon.”¹⁷⁴ In sum, the sport was too violent, lacked community consent, failed to explain why UNESCO recognition was sought, and further confused matters about the sport’s professionalization.

¹⁷⁴ Intergovernmental Committee, Decision 10.COM 10.b.21 (2015).

Interestingly, with regard to the first issue, as noted by sport sociologist Eric Dunning, socially-tolerated violence is a major structural-functional characteristic of folk games, along with fluctuating game patterns, no limits on territory, and emphasis on force over skill – all of which are typical of traditional *kok boru*.¹⁷⁵ This is to say that there may be a disconnect between how cosmopolitan UNESCO bureaucrats conceptualize sport and the actual practice of traditional games. The second issue, a lack of community consent, has to do with nationalist politics incorporating local heritage in the state apparatus. As explained by Rodney Harrison, “UNESCO’s requirement that nominations are made via States Parties, thus prioritising the agendas of nation-states over those of minorities (and, somewhat contradictorily, the ‘universal’ principles on which it purports to stand). In this way, Indigenous and minority critique has often been marginalised as groups are subsumed within nation-states and representations of their culture employed within broader nationalist discourses.”¹⁷⁶ If gone unchecked, this type of state nationalism over local traditional heritage can lead to an ‘unauthorization’ of heritage, further folklorizing the authenticity of an element. The third problematic dimension of the rejected nomination was that the reasoning for nomination was not clearly outlined: What would UNESCO inscription do for the viability of *kok boru*? Indeed, this is one of the research questions of this dissertation, which is discussed in the last section of this case study. The inclusion of this reasoning, however, is notable. The fourth issue with the nomination was that the author(s) of the file could not decide whether professionalization of *kok boru* was a

¹⁷⁵ Eric Dunning, “The Structural-Functional Properties of Folk-Games and Modern Sports: A Sociological Analysis,” *Sportwissenschaft* 3, no. 3 (September 1973): 215-32.

¹⁷⁶ Rodney Harrison, *Heritage: Critical Approaches* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 136.

hindrance or stimulant of preservation. Although, as we know from much of the above discussion, professionalization (as an aspect of the sportification process) is a confusing safeguarding measure tending to de-authenticate a folk sporting tradition. These issues are both intriguing and significant, not just to the status of *kok boru*, but to the safeguarding of traditional games, in general. The issues, generally, point towards a questioning of the motivations for safeguarding through the international Convention, which supports the relationship between folk sport preservation and nationalism.

The National Commission for the Kyrgyz Republic of UNESCO resubmitted the nomination file (no. 01294) for *kok boru* to the Twelfth Session of the Intergovernmental Committee (Jeju, South Korea) two years later. The file claims that “*kok boru* is an expression of cultural and historical tradition ... for the public in general, it is, undoubtedly, more than just a traditional game. It is a competition that consolidates concerned communities regardless of the self-identification and of social status.”¹⁷⁷ This time, the nomination satisfied all of the criteria: (1) transmission of equestrian skills and respect for nomadic traditions through *kalystar* (elder) trainers; (2) inscription would ensure viability of the element; (3) robust safeguarding mechanisms; (4) support from bearer communities; and (5) inclusion in the national inventory as of 2015.¹⁷⁸ The areas of viability, safeguarding, and consent are worth examining further. First, to pay lip-service to the notion of viability (2nd criteria), the nomination file states that “the status of ICH element of world’s significance will help to strengthen feelings of empathy and

¹⁷⁷ Intergovernmental Committee, “Nomination File No. 01294 for Inscription in 2017 on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity” (2017), 4.

¹⁷⁸ Intergovernmental Committee, Decision 12.COM 11.b.19 (2017).

pride by and among concerned communities, and of the feeling of belonging to the world's culture."¹⁷⁹ Considering the reasoning behind the rejection of the first nomination file, this is a rather vague and unsatisfactory description of why inscription is necessary for the viability of the sport. Next, the safeguarding measures outlined in the file are three-pronged: (1) Education, through training camps and the establishment of a research chair of national games within the Kyrgyz State Academy of Physical Culture and Sports; (2) documentation and research, including a national inventory and electronic catalogue; and (3) popularization. The initiatives involved in the popularization of *kok boru* include increased competition, public lectures, video content, hosting the World Nomad Games, and organizing a UNESCO conference, entitled 'The Role of Traditional Knowledge and Games of the Nomad Culture in Sustainable Development.' Lastly, although the bearer communities were consulted this time around, the consent form read like a boilerplate message. For example, Rahat Akmatova, a 'moderator' of *kok boru* and 'face of the Kyrgyz sports social network,' wrote that the addition of *kok boru* to the UNESCO Representative List "would help to raise awareness and interest of ... the national games, to increase [the] number of tourists to the country, represent 'Kok Boru' as a brand of [the] national games, thus creating [a] number of positive opportunities for the Kyrgyz Republic," only adding afterwards that inscription would also "transmit this game to ... next generations as heritage."¹⁸⁰ Indeed, it seems very much as though tourism and nationalism were higher on

¹⁷⁹ Intergovernmental Committee, "Nomination File No. 01294," 6.

¹⁸⁰ National Commission for UNESCO of the Kyrgyz Republic, "Consent of Communities," April 6, 2016, <https://ich.unesco.org/doc/src/33535.pdf>.

the agenda for the nominators than heritage and tradition. Nevertheless, based on the above adhered-to criteria, *kok boru* was inscribed on the Representative List on December 7, 2017.

One last aspect of the nomination of *kok boru* is worth exploring, its territoriality. As defined by Steven Grosby, territoriality “implies: (a) how the land is conceived by those who live within the territory, and (b) the consciousness of - or we may say the shared significance attributed to - these bounded patterns of relationships.”¹⁸¹ According to Italian anthropologist Chiara Bortolotto,

In avoiding a territorial definition of communities, [the 2003 Convention] establishes an ‘open’ relationship between heritage, communities and place whereby community membership is not ‘naturally’ established by local roots, thus promoting dynamic representations of culture and identity. This, however, clashes with the political mechanism of the Convention, based on negotiations between States bent on promoting national interests, as well as with the identity and economic uses social actors make of heritage, often depending on precise geographical delimitation of cultural resources.¹⁸²

So, what happens when an ICH element, like *kok boru*, is practiced on both sides of a national border, notably the Kyrgyz borders with Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Xinjiang (territories where the sport is also played)? Does *buzkashi* not become heritagized in those territories? This nationalization of ICH seems counterintuitive to the ‘shared heritage’ of humanity approach. As an example, in 2013, ‘Chovqan, a traditional Karabakh horse-riding game,’ was nominated by Azerbaijan for inscription on the Urgent Safeguarding List. *Chowgān* is the ancient Persian precursor to modern-day polo, which is still played throughout Central

¹⁸¹ Steven Grosby, “Territoriality: The Transcendental, Primordial Feature of Modern Societies,” *Nations and Nationalism* 1, no. 2 (1995): 149.

¹⁸² Chiara Bortolotto, “Placing Intangible Cultural Heritage, Owning a Tradition, Affirming Sovereignty: The Role of Spatiality in the Practice of the 2003 Convention,” in Stefano and Davis, *Routledge Companion*, 46.

Asia.¹⁸³ However, in October 2013, Iranian Vice-President Eshaq Jahangiri, along with the chairman of the Iranian Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization, sent a letter to the UNESCO Secretariat emphasizing “that since traditional versions of the Karabakh horse-riding game are performed in Iran also, a multinational nomination had to be submitted, rather than a purely national one.”¹⁸⁴ Azerbaijan then renamed its element to ‘Chovqan, a traditional Karabakh horse-riding game *in the Republic of Azerbaijan,*’ omitting any reference to the Iranian claim. As a result, in 2017, Iran submitted and successfully inscribed its nomination of ‘Chogān, a horse-riding game accompanied by music and storytelling,’ on the Representative List.

Although not within the scope of this study, in 2019, both Malaysian *silat* and Indonesian *pencak silat*, similar martial arts from neighboring Asian nations, were also inscribed on the Representative List. If the same traditional sport is practiced in more than one territory, then it begs the question as to why it is not heritagized on the same nomination. There are nominations that have successfully included multiple nominating state parties – Southeast Asian tugging rituals (2015), falconry (2016), and alpinism (2019) – exemplifying a coordinated effort to safeguard traditional physical culture. Although there has been little evidence of friction amongst Central Asian states due to the *kok boru* nomination, if the case of *chowgān* is

¹⁸³ H.E. Chehabi and Allen Guttmann, “From Iran to All of Asia: The Origin and Diffusion of Polo,” *International Journal of the History of Sport* 19, no. 2-3 (2002): 384-400.

¹⁸⁴ Benedetta Ubertazzi, “The Territorial Condition for the Inscription of Elements on the UNESCO Lists of Intangible Cultural Heritage,” in *Between Imagined Communities and Communities of Practice Participation, Territory and the Making of Heritage*, eds. Nicolas Adell, Regina F. Bendix, Chiara Bortolotto, and Markus Tauschek (Göttingen: Universitätsverlag Göttingen, 2015), 115.

any indication of nationalist political agendas, it bears noting the territoriality of the inscribed element.

PRACTICAL PERSPECTIVES

As claimed both by Jürgen Palm and Wojciech Lipoński (Chapter III), there exists a positive correlation between industrialization and the marginalization of folk traditions. Kiyul Chung, former Secretary General of the World Culture Open Organizing Committee, posits three threats that face ICH as a result of the industrialization process: (1) structural adjustment programs, such as foreign financial assistance with dire consequences to local cultural identity; (2) corporate outsourcing, which further industrializes ‘traditional’ cultures; and (3) corporate media, which tends to marginalize local cultural content as ‘backwards’ in favour of global narratives.¹⁸⁵ Industrializing societies can be viewed as ‘traditional societies’ in the midst of an identity crisis, whereby traditional lifestyles are forsaken for the opportunities of modernization. As a result, traditional customs, like folk games, are labeled backward vestiges of a pre-industrial past. In the case of Kyrgyzstan, the country has seen much industrial growth since the collapse of the Soviet Union, leading to the marginalization of certain traditional customs. The perceived backwardness of *kok boru*, as compared to Western sporting norms, is one of the four reasons for the marginalization of diverse physical cultural forms highlighted in the Diamond-Renson Model. Much of the traditionalism surrounding the sport of *kok boru*, however, has to do with the sacred symbolism of the horse in Central Asian culture, rather than

¹⁸⁵ The World Culture Open, founded in the early 2000s, is an organization that promotes cultural diversity and exchange. Kiyul Chung, “Mitigating Losses to Intangible Cultural Heritage in a Globalized Society,” in *Globalization and Intangible Cultural Heritage*, ed. Laura Wong (Paris: UNESCO, 2005), 99.

the structure of the game itself. “As companions, iconography, and sustenance, horses are ubiquitous” in Central Asian society, “horse milk and horsemeat were dietary staples and skill on horseback was crucial for hunting, herding, and warfare.”¹⁸⁶ For one of the least densely populated nations, with over two-thirds of the population living outside urban centres, the horse is an indelible marker of rural Kyrgyzstan. The concept of rural romanticism is a prevalent ideology in the nationalist movements of many countries, and the nostalgic reinventions of traditional sports in these locales are a means to connect the populace with their traditional, rural pasts. As a source of locomotion, employment, and leisure activities, the horse is the symbol of Kyrgyz rural romanticism.

One of the key safeguarding mechanisms that has enabled its preservation over hundreds of years, is the fact that *kok boru* is intrinsically connected to the work of the nomadic tribes of the past. ‘Playful work’ is a term I employ to explain games that have evolved from the leisure time associated with work. Games that have evolved from hunting (e.g. archery, darts, fishing, etc.), harvesting (e.g. *ta’uma haari* coconut tree climbing in the Pacific), or pastoral work (Argentine *pato*, rodeo games, or *kok boru*) fall within this evolutionary category of games. Although some origin stories point towards the preparation of horse and rider for war – and, although, it seems a more popular origin tale – *kok boru* “provided a way to display skills that celebrated everyday work with the livestock.”¹⁸⁷ Like its name (blue wolf) suggests, *kok boru* (and likely the other goat-dragging games in neighboring countries) stemmed from the leisure

¹⁸⁶ Boast, “Kingdom for a Horse,” 28.

¹⁸⁷ Willekes, “Tale of Two Horses,” 295.

pursuits of pastoralists. In many regions of the world, “the presence of the horse in daily life has led to the development of equestrian competitions.”¹⁸⁸ Although Turkish *cirit* may have developed as a war preparation game (considering the use of javelins), in the Americas, American rodeo, *rodeo chileno*, and Mexican *charrería* (inscribed in 2016) developed from cowboy games.¹⁸⁹

One of the best examples is Argentine *pato*, which is similar to *kok boru* in many ways. Spanning miles of open fertile land on the Argentine Pampas, tens (and sometimes hundreds) of *gauchos* fought for control of the *pato* in an equine version of keep-away with a live duck (sewn into a rawhide sack) as a ball.¹⁹⁰ As fundamental to *gaucho* culture as *kok boru* to Kyrgyz, riding horses was not simply a form of employment or enjoyment, it was a way of life. Dutch cultural theorist Johan Huizinga argued that work and play are mutually exclusive; that the “play-concept must always remain distinct from all the other forms of thought in which we express the structure of mental and social life.”¹⁹¹ Conversely, historian Richard Slatta, who has written extensively on cowboy cultures, contests that *gauchos* “certainly did not recognize stark distinctions between work and play. As long as they could be on horseback, they were content. Putative distinctions between work and play were blurred.”¹⁹² As Anglo-Argentine naturalist, William Henry Hudson – better known by his Spanish pen name, Guillermo Enrique Hudson –

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 287.

¹⁸⁹ Ibrahim Yildirin and Tolga Sinoforglu, “The Revival of the Djerid Game in Turkey,” in *Horse Games – Horse Sports: From Traditional Oriental Games to Modern and Olympic Sport*, eds. Andreas Amendt and Christian Wacker (Beirut: Arab Scientific, 2012), 79-86.

¹⁹⁰ *Gauchos* were Argentine, Uruguayan, and southern Brazilian *mestizo* cowboys in the 17th to 19th centuries.

¹⁹¹ Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play-Element in Culture* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1955), 7.

¹⁹² Richard W. Slatta, *Cowboys of the Americas* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 141.

noted in the 1840s: “To the gauchos of the plains, who took to the back of a horse from childhood... the Pato was the game of games... Nor could there have been any better game for men whose existence, or whose success in life, depended so much on their horsemanship.”¹⁹³

This sentiment could easily have described a Kyrgyz nomad.

As noted by Slatta, and in contrast to Huizinga’s assertion, horse sports most often developed out of work – whether that be work with the herd, in the cavalry, or with a plough or cart. As such, the idea that *kok boru* preservation is based on the notion of ‘playful work’ is not so farfetched. A nomadic society that domesticated horses out of necessity played a game in their spare time. And as that society upholds the sacred horse as a marker of a traditional, romantic, rural past, I argue that a game as symbolic as *kok boru* is ingrained in the national psyche, regardless of UNESCO heritagization. Moreover, “rural heritage,” claims social anthropologist Christoph Brumann, “lends itself more easily to appropriations by outsiders – themselves often urbanites – who then stylise it into timeless tradition and the pristine wellspring of national consciousness and virtues.”¹⁹⁴ As such, the ulterior motives of tourism, rural traditionalism, and romantic nationalism, as alluded to above, seem to be the root of the UNESCO nomination.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

In June 2020, the original documentary series *Home Games* premiered on Netflix. The docuseries chronicled eight unique sports around the world, six of which were traditional

¹⁹³ William Henry Hudson, *Tales of the Pampa* (New York: Knopf, 1916), 251.

¹⁹⁴ Christoph Brumann, “Heritage Agnosticism: A Third Path for the Study of Cultural Heritage,” *Social Anthropology* 22, no. 2 (2014): 177.

games, including *kok boru*.¹⁹⁵ Other Hollywood appearances of the sport include the feature-length film *The Horsemen* (1971), starring Omar Sharif, a two-minute clip in *Rambo III* (1988), and the Oscar-nominated short documentary *Buzkashi Boys* (2011). To be honest, few traditional games have received this much coverage within popular culture mediums. In fact, an argument can be made that inclusion in the Netflix docuseries has done more for the awareness of *kok boru* than UNESCO recognition. Thus, the question must again be asked: *Has the UNESCO Convention affected the practice, status, and meaning of kok boru?* The game has not changed at all because of inscription (and should not), there is moderately more international recognition, and the meaning of *kok boru* remains a worthwhile tradition in a transitioning society that needs such romantic markers of a shared heritage. UNESCO inscription is, indeed, a mark of international acceptance and recognition. However, with over five hundred elements of intangible cultural heritage on the Representative List, it would seem difficult to stand out in any meaningful way. In this regard, it is more likely that UNESCO recognition is used as a mark of distinction by promoters of the element, similar to touristic plaques at UNESCO tangible heritage sites.

In summary, the key substantiations from this case study are that the resiliency and authenticity of *kok boru* relies on a sacred cultural symbol (horse), the evolution of work to play ('playful work'), and a shared heritage with neighboring territories (territoriality). With regard to the reinvigorated traditionalism around the horse sport, politicians were aligned with the

¹⁹⁵ The eight highlighted sports include Florentine *calcio storico* (folk football), the Highland Games, freediving in the Philippines, Texas roller derby, *kok boru*, Congolese *catch fétiche* wrestling, Balinese *makepung lampit* (water buffalo racing), and Indian *pehlwani* wrestling.

tenets of liberation nationalism, attempting to differentiate Kyrgyz heritage from Soviet heritage. Additionally, an underlying sense of romantic nationalism is prevalent in the rural connotations of *kok boru* as the playful work of the nation's forefathers. The primary issue with the nomination of *kok boru* to the UNESCO Representative List is that it territorializes the sport by neglecting to reference the practice of the element in neighboring territories. This territoriality is, in a sense, a blatant nationalistic ploy. For a nation that is attempting to shed its Soviet history and reduce its global anonymity, it makes sense for the Kyrgyz Republic to uphold its most popular sport as an illustration of the marriage between traditionalism and modernization. In conclusion, *kok boru* has survived as a symbol of Central Asian heritage, has been revived as romantic allusion to a traditional nomadic past, and has been revised as the contemporary ludic representation of the Kyrgyz nation-state.

Case Study 4

The Fulcrum of Sportive National Identity: Irish Hurling

The ancient, national, Gaelic game of hurling is an internationally recognizable marker of Irish cultural heritage. Along with Guinness beer, the shamrock symbol, and St. Patrick's Day, hurling represents the Irish peoples. Together with Gaelic football, in the Republic of Ireland, "they are accorded the status of national pastimes, with leading politicians attending major matches and turning them into virtual state occasions."¹⁹⁶ The sport is similar to other stick-and-ball sports, such as Scottish *shinty*, which are somewhat more regionalized than the

¹⁹⁶ Bairner, "Sportive Nationalism," 323.

national hurling and *camogie* (the women's version of the sport).¹⁹⁷ Hurling is played between two teams of fifteen, wielding curve-ended sticks called *camáns* (or hurleys), attempting to hit a small ball (*sliotar*) through the opposing teams H-shaped goalposts. Touted as the oldest field game in the world, supposedly dating back two millennia, hurling is indelibly attached to rural Irish folklore.¹⁹⁸ The accounts are replete with tales of fairies, the mythologies of the Fenian warrior Fionn mac Cumhaill (Finn MacCool), and the hurling exploits of the twelfth-century epic *Táin Bó Cuailnge* hero Cúchulainn, considered the first Irish sportsman and nationalist.¹⁹⁹ However, hurling would not have survived to the twenty-first century were it not for the organizational efforts of the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA), founded in 1884, which administers the Gaelic games of hurling, Gaelic football, camogie, and handball. As noted by geographer David Storey, "this sporting organisation projects itself not only as an upholder of a specific form of sporting heritage but also as a conduit for the wider (re)production of Irish cultural and natural identity."²⁰⁰ The amateur Gaelic games are a marker of county-based parochial nationalism, as the GAA administers 1,615 clubs (with another 400 abroad) and half a million members in the thirty-two counties of Ireland.

Gaelic games, like most traditionally indigenous sports, offer a different kind of nationalism: A parochial nationalism that hinges not on Olympic medals or international

¹⁹⁷ J. Ninian MacDonald, *Shinty: A Short History of the Ancient Highland Game* (Inverness, UK: Carruthers, 1932); Hugh Dan MacLennan, *Shinty!* (Nairn, UK: Balnain, 1993); Irene A. Reid, "Shinty, Nationalism and National Autonomy in Scotland, 1887–1928," *International Journal of the History of Sport* 30, no. 17 (2013): 2098–114.

¹⁹⁸ Art Ó. Maolfabhail, *Camán: 2,000 Years of Hurling in Ireland* (Dundalk, IE: Dundalgan, 1973).

¹⁹⁹ Cronin, *Nationalism in Ireland*, 76.

²⁰⁰ David Storey, "Heritage, Culture and Identity: The Case of Gaelic Games," in *Sport, History, and Heritage: Studies in Public Representation*, eds. Jeffrey Hill, Kevin Moore, and Jason Wood (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell, 2012), 224.

scoreboards, but on the distinguishing characteristics of local physical culture. Ireland is not a soccer country, like Brazil, or a hockey country, like Canada, but a Gaelic country. The name of the sports (*Gaelic* games) themselves promote a sense of nationalistic localism; an ideology that tradition and custom anchor a people to their land, binding them through a shared identity. Sport theorist Alan Bairner speaks to the localization of the sport: “A sense of place, and more particularly of small towns and rural communities, is common to the majority of evocations of Gaelic games in Ireland even today.”²⁰¹ As a decidedly non-internationalist sport, hurling represents the communities within each county, as well as the Irish nation, but not as an ‘us against them’ nationalism. In terms of a parochial nationalism, sport historian Mike Cronin, who has added significantly to the scholarship of the GAA, writes that “the strength of Gaelic games, the very peculiarity of its parochial nationalism, is that it allows Ireland to say to the rest of the world, ‘this is us, this is our game.’”²⁰² Indeed, the national sport of hurling, the focus of this last case study, has been leveraged as a lightning rod for nationalist sentiment, a touristic brand wielded by commercial entities, and a marker of Irish intangible cultural heritage to the rest of the world. Although recently (2018) inscribed onto the UNESCO Representative List, hurling has survived in a grander scheme of Gaelic cultural revival spearheaded by the GAA, which “had saved the traditional national game of hurling from extinction ... had gained

²⁰¹ Alan Bairner, “National Sports and National Landscapes: In Defence of Primordialism,” *National Identities* 11, no. 3 (September 2009): 232.

²⁰² Cronin, *Sport and Nationalism*, 113.

control for nationalists of their athletic pursuits ... [and] had created in the realm of sport a sense of national identity."²⁰³

SPORT HISTORY

Throughout the centuries, the sport of hurling has survived attempts to eradicate the distinctively Irish pastime during the periods of Norman invasion (starting in 1169), the Christianization of Ireland, and British imperialism. As explained by sport historian Tim Chandler, "hurling was first mentioned in the Irish Annals in a description of the Battle of Moytura (1272 BCE). The invaders first defeated the residents in a game of hurling and then did likewise in the battle for the lordship of Ireland."²⁰⁴ Although claimed to be a two-thousand-year-old sport cloaked in mythological tales, evidence of hurling can be traced to the early Medieval period, mentioned in an early Irish legal code known as the Brehon laws, written sometime around the seventh century, which spoke of a rough stick-and-ball game, particularly in terms of compensation for those hurt with the stick. Another oft-cited example is the 1366 Statutes of Kilkenny, instituted by Norman invaders, which attempted to prohibit indigenous Irish activities, including a game termed *horlinge*. There is little precise evidence, however, that linearly links *horlinge* with modern hurling. As noted by Irish historian Angela Gleason about the contextual nature of hurling scholarship: "The atmosphere in which the texts were studied and translated necessarily prompted a heady blend of nostalgia and

²⁰³ Marcus de Búrca, *The GAA: A History* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1999), 76.

²⁰⁴ Timothy J. L. Chandler, "Hurling," in Pfister and Levinson, *Berkshire Encyclopedia*, 687.

nationalism.”²⁰⁵ Many Irish histories written during the Gaelic cultural revival at the end of the nineteenth century tended to aggrandize certain elements of Irish cultural heritage. As a result, based on a manuscript written by Englishman John Dunton, the first identifiable account of hurling was in 1699.²⁰⁶ Gaelic hurling historian Liam Canny attests that the ‘golden age’ of hurling was during the eighteenth century, as landlords and peasants both engaged in the sport. Championship games were known to attract crowds of over 10,000. However, due to the Act of Union of 1800, which abolished Irish parliament in favour of direct rule from Britain, “society became irremediably divided into Protestant Ascendancy Landlord and Irish Catholic peasant, hurling died, almost overnight.”²⁰⁷ In addition to the sport losing considerable traction during this period, the Great Famine of 1847 further decimated Irish rural culture, one of the last bastions of hurling adherents. As a result, the late-nineteenth-century renaissance of the sport can be linked to broader notions of anti-imperialism, cultural revivalism, and postcolonial nationalism.

Throughout much of the nineteenth century, British loyalists openly discouraged or prohibited hurling, promoting instead the British sport of cricket, which had spread widely by the 1870s. The modernized, British version of athletics (track and field), as well, developed quite prominently throughout the country by this point. And, in conjunction with these sporting trends, the game of *hurley* developed as the Irish version of field hockey, adopted by

²⁰⁵ A. B. Gleason, “Hurling in Medieval Ireland,” in *The Gaelic Athletic Association, 1884-2009*, eds. Mike Cronin, William Murphy, and Paul Rouse (Dublin: Irish Academic, 2009), 5.

²⁰⁶ Liam Canny, “The Irish Game of Hurling,” *Folk Life* 19, no. 1 (1981): 96.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 97.

loyalist private schoolers, who sought to Anglicize the game of hurling. This last sporting trend, the appropriation of a native Irish sport, it seems, was the watershed moment in the hurling revival movement, inspiring a number of 'Home Rulers' to take action. It was Michael Cusack, a teacher, athlete, and nationalist, who changed the state of play on the island. An ardent Gaelic culturalist, Cusack sought to re-establish the Gaelic language in literature, traditional Irish music, and the national sport of hurling. Growing up in County Clare in the 1850s, Cusack witnessed residual games of hurling and was a prominent opponent of the erosion of local pastimes due to the subservient favouritism of British imports. Thus, in 1882, Cusack founded the Dublin Hurling Club, "the seed out of which the GAA grew."²⁰⁸ As a result, the Gaelic Athletic Association for the Preservation and Cultivation of National Pastimes – a telling and foreshadowing title – was founded on November 1, 1884.

According to Cronin, "the twin goals of the GAA at the time of its formation were nationalism and self-definition against Britain."²⁰⁹ Before 1884, hurling was a relatively unorganized, non-standardized, localized pastime. By 1886, however, hurling and Gaelic football became newly popular social phenomena in both rural and urban communities. The first annual All-Ireland Senior Hurling Championship, an inter-county tournament pitting the best hurlers from local county clubs against one another, occurred in 1887 and became an instant success. Moreover, women's camogie was also developed during the 1890s as an ideal physical expression of Irish womanhood.²¹⁰ By its quarter-century anniversary (1909), the GAA

²⁰⁸ De Búrca, *The GAA*, 10.

²⁰⁹ Cronin, *Sport and Nationalism*, 115.

²¹⁰ Mary Moran, *A Game of Our Own: Camogie's Story* (Dublin: Corry Media, 2011).

had expanded to include over eight hundred affiliated clubs, and the 1931 All-Ireland Senior Hurling Championship drew an audience of 91,500. The GAA was established during a period of increased Anglicization of Irish culture, and thus the pro-Gaelic organization became a conduit for the cultivation and construction of Irish national character through sport. In fact, many have proclaimed the importance of the GAA in the founding of the Irish Free State (1922), following the Irish War of Independence.

Indicative of Neubauer's globalization consequence of transforming values, throughout much of the twentieth century, there have been various claims about hurling losing popularity amidst a fight for cultural survival.²¹¹ One such claim, in a 1958 edition of the populist *Sunday Independent*, explains the mid-century state of play:

Delegates to the annual GAA conference today are sure to get warmed-up when they consider the General Secretary's statement on the revival of hurling. Listen to this extract: 'It is time to stop the talk about spreading hurling and get down to the work of having it done.' Challenging and true. Remember Mr. O'Keefe's 'appointment' speech made on the eve of the Cork-Galway All-Ireland final in 1927. It was hurling then. After 30 years in office it is the same story.²¹²

In an effort to curb dropout rates, the GAA actually banned its members from playing in and spectating 'foreign' sports (mainly soccer and rugby) until 1971. The lack of parity within the All-Ireland Senior Hurling Championship, the pinnacle event of Irish sporting nationalism, was also at issue. Throughout its 133-year history, three teams – Kilkenny (36 titles), Cork (30 titles), and Tipperary (28 titles) – have dominated the tournament, winning over 70% of the titles. The

²¹¹ Neubauer, "Modern Sport and Olympic Games."

²¹² *Sunday Independent*, April 6, 1958. As cited in Seamus J. King, *A History of Hurling* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 2005), 321.

late 1980s to the late 1990s, however, saw a renewed popularization of the sport, with four different counties – Galway, Offaly, Clare, and Wexford – winning titles and reenergizing the sport.²¹³ With this newfound popularity, however, the commercialization of the sport ensued. “In keeping with the broader symbolism attaching to ideas of Ireland and Irishness which operates in other place-promotional ventures,” Guinness became an official sponsor of the championship tournament in 1995.²¹⁴ Even with the excitement of the 1990s, however, the Hurling Revival Sub-Committee centenary report of 1994 provided a rather pessimistic outlook for the sport. Although the committee members lamented the drop in playing standards, the crux of the matter was that less young people were being introduced to the sport. This was due to the popularization of soccer, the perceived danger of hurling by parents, and the decrease in school teacher-coaches, notably the Christian Brothers, “who saw the promotion of Gaelic games as an essential part of their educational philosophy and who inculcated the idea that Irish games were the proper games for Irish boys.”²¹⁵ As a result, the GAA established the Hurling Development Committee to ‘revive’ and raise the profile of the sport.

In 2004, the Committee unveiled the National Hurling Development Plan with the aim of increasing participation, optimising playing standards, and ensuring best administrative practices. The key elements of the plan are dubbed the 5Ps: (1) grassroots *projects*; (2) *personnel* hires, notably in the form of a National Hurling Development Manager; (3) facilitation of *pitches* in urban areas; (4) raising the *profile* of the game through new media; and (5) *partnerships* with

²¹³ Denis Walsh, *Hurling: The Revolution Years* (Dublin: Penguin, 2005).

²¹⁴ Storey, “Case of Gaelic Games,” 229.

²¹⁵ King, *History of Hurling*, 313.

the Irish Sports Council and Department of Sport. Although, today, hurling is the sport of choice for marketers within the Irish Tourist Board, the most popular sport, Gaelic football receives much of the Association's resources and attention. Thus, prolific hurling author Seamus King argues that "to ensure its survival," perhaps a separate organization is needed to govern hurling or a professional sport model.²¹⁶ Despite an ebb-and-flow history of popularity throughout the thirty-two counties, hurling has continued to survive. Although, there are those, like King, that would liken the current state of the game with that of 1884, threatened by cultural encroachment in the form of globalization, rather than British imperialism. As such, perhaps the sport's 2018 inscription onto the UNESCO Representative List is this century's version of the establishment of the GAA; a twenty-first-century 'preservation and cultivation of national pastimes.'

UNESCO NOMINATION

In November 2018, during the Thirteenth Session of the Intergovernmental Committee, in Port Louis, Mauritius, the sport of hurling was heritagized on the UNESCO Representative List. The process for the UNESCO nomination began as a grassroots initiative, brought to the Hurling Development Committee in 2010. Although UNESCO recognition became an aspiration within the GAA, it could not be activated because Ireland was not a signatory to the 2003 Convention. As such, the Committee undertook a plan to pursue this matter with the relevant state agencies until the Irish government officially ratified the Convention in 2015. The submission was led by the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Irish-speaking

²¹⁶ Ibid., 318.

regions) in partnership with the GAA and the Camogie Association, as the women's sport would also be safeguarded under the same inscription. The nomination file (no. 01263) notes that "hurling is an intrinsic part of Irish culture and it is not limited to one community but rather goes to the heart of the social fabric of modern-day Ireland as it plays an unparalleled role in the promotion of physical fitness, health & well-being, inclusiveness, team spirit and community identity."²¹⁷ When prompted to explain why safeguarding is needed for such a vibrant, ancient, national sport, the file explains that "while there is archaeological evidence that Hurling was once played in areas such as Sligo, West Clare and West Kerry, there has been a long-term contraction in these areas. This historic contraction highlights the need to protect the game of Hurling across Ireland, particularly in depopulated areas."²¹⁸ Of the thirty-two counties of the GAA, there seems to be a tenuous foothold in only about twenty of them. This assessment correlates with the 1994 report of the Hurling Revival Sub-Committee, as well as the lack of parity within the All-Ireland championship. The 2017 Irish Sports Monitor, a report compiled by Sport Ireland (the national sport development organization), estimated hurling and camogie participation at about 1.1% of the population, the twelfth most popular physical activity amongst the populace.²¹⁹ In reality, the most significant challenges to hurling, as with most traditional games, are the "homogenisation of world sports and the financial and media

²¹⁷ Intergovernmental Committee, "Nomination File No. 01263 for Inscription in 2018 on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity," (2018), 5.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 2.

²¹⁹ Sport Ireland, *Irish Sports Monitor: Annual Report 2017*, July 10, 2019, <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/f74e3b-2017-irish-sports-monitor-survey/>. The list of most popular physical activities was as follows: personal exercise (12.4%), swimming (8.5%), running (6.2%), cycling (5.1%), soccer (4.1%), dancing (2.8%), golf (2.5%), Gaelic football (2%), yoga (2%), weights (1.6%), Pilates (1.2%), and hurling/camogie.

power of professional sports.”²²⁰ The diffusion of global sports, as elucidated in the Diamond-Renson Model, is one of the key marginalizing effects of hurling in the contemporary Irish sportscape.

The hopes of the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht are that the global recognition of hurling will encourage the safeguarding of other traditional games around the world, increase the popularity of hurling through renewed understanding of the sport’s mythology and links to Irish nationalism, and boost volunteerism.²²¹ The nomination was supported by an eclectic list of stakeholders, including: students from the Oatlands Primary School (Dublin), the archeology department of University College Dublin, the principal of the Bishopstown Boy’s School (Cork), a UNESCO Research Chair for disability and sport, the Irish Institute of Sport, the Australian Football League, the Camanachd (*shinty*) Association of Scotland, TAFISA, the GAA, the GAA Museum, the Camogie Association, a representative of a *camán* wood manufacturer, professional golfer Paul McGinley, sport scholars in Ireland, Scotland, and the USA, and some county club administrators, coaches, and fans.²²² The nomination for hurling was eventually accepted on November 29, 2018, based on the file’s adherence to all five core inscription criteria: defined as ICH, inscription contributes to visibility and awareness, appropriate safeguarding measures, widespread community consent, and

²²⁰ Intergovernmental Committee, “Nomination File No. 01263,” 8.

²²¹ *Ibid.*, 6.

²²² Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, Republic of Ireland, “Consent of Communities,” March 28, 2017, <https://ich.unesco.org/doc/src/37884-EN.pdf>.

inclusion of element in a national inventory.²²³ The safeguarding measures already in place were elaborated in the nomination file:

Today the skills of Hurling are protected and promoted to new generations through providing coaching and games in Schools, Clubs and Counties throughout Ireland and overseas. Voluntary coaches are responsible for organising coaching sessions in their local schools and clubs, while also ensuring that there is a programme of games for players at each age grade from U.6 up to Adult level. The GAA and Camogie Association have also developed courses, workshops and qualifications to ensure that the volunteers are qualified as coaches and referees ... Furthermore, the skills are promoted through televised games.²²⁴

With all these practical safeguarding plans in place, the question – one final time – is how UNESCO inscription will aid in further preserving the Irish national sport. With government support, extensive GAA efforts (notably the 5Ps), and the mediatization of the All-Ireland finals (e.g. 900,000 people watched the 2016 final on television), it is curious that international recognition is sought for a decidedly national pastime.

PRACTICAL PERSPECTIVES

In a presentation given to the GAA Museum Summer School in June 2019, Sinéad O'Hara, of the International Cultural Policy Unit in the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, commented that hurling is well supported by highly established structures, such as the GAA and Camogie Association, various funding systems, the education system at primary and (now) post-primary levels, media coverage, as well as academic and popular research. Moreover, conveniently similar to my own research question, she asked what effect UNESCO recognition will have on hurling? The answer: (1) greater meaning to participation;

²²³ Intergovernmental Committee, Decision 13.COM 10.b.17 (2018).

²²⁴ Intergovernmental Committee, "Nomination File No. 01263," 4.

(2) a promotional tool to draw more participation; (3) targeting new markets that are aware of UNESCO; and (4) work with public agencies to promote ICH.²²⁵ In effect, the expectation was that UNESCO recognition would result in increased cultural status and financial resources through state recognition and increased membership. Unfortunately, because of the relative recency of the inscription, perhaps a full investigation of the effects of UNESCO heritagization would be futile at this time. Nevertheless, the abundance of other safeguarding mechanisms already in place, prior to nomination and inscription, speaks to the status of the sport of hurling within national policy objectives.

Of the safeguarding mechanisms outlined earlier in this chapter, three apply to the state of hurling in Ireland: sportification, nationalization, and pedagogization. First, “while the GAA articulates a strong sense of tradition, its origins and founding vision reflect an engagement in a process of modernisation through the codification and regulation of sport in Ireland.”²²⁶ With playing regulations, an intricate competition system, and corporate sponsor and broadcaster agreements, hurling has transformed from its folk origins to a modern sport. That said, the continued amateur status of the players, the localized county affiliations, and inherent parochial nationalism benefit the sport’s traditional components more so than many other sportified traditional games. And, to note, just because it has modernized, does not mean it is not marginalized in the global sporting landscape. As for nationalization, the process is fairly

²²⁵ Sinéad O’Hara, “The Journey of Hurling to Inscription on the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity” (PowerPoint presentation, GAA Museum Summer School, Croke Park, Dublin, June 29, 2019).

²²⁶ Storey, “Case of Gaelic Games,” 228.

evident in the description of hurling as the ‘national game,’ but extensive state support also points to a national sport policy model:

Current and past Irish Governments have made successive efforts to safeguard Hurling. The State have included a special reference to ‘Gaelic Games’ in the Physical Education curriculum for Primary School children to encourage widespread participation in Hurling. Furthermore, for the past decade, Sport Ireland, the State Agency for Sport in Ireland, has provided annual funding for the deployment of full-time coaching personnel who provide coaching in schools and aim to support and upskill volunteers. In addition to this, the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs, provides financial support for projects run by Units and Clubs internationally. Furthermore, the State has provided capital funding supports for the construction of many of the Hurling stadia nationally. All of these efforts reflect the commitment of the Irish State to increasing and supporting participation in Hurling.²²⁷

Lastly, the state and the GAA have both been prime movers in the pedagogization of the sport.

As stated in the nomination file, “the importance of education – formal, non-formal and informal – in terms of transmitting the skills of Hurling and ensuring increased awareness and understanding of intangible cultural heritage is unparalleled.”²²⁸ Encouragement of Gaelic games in the physical education curriculum, along with robust coach certification programs, may be the most effective safeguarding measure by directly affecting the increased participation and interest of future generations. Through the processes of sportification, nationalization, and pedagogization, hurling has been critically safeguarded and preserved through government regulation, not UNESCO recognition.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The Irish national sport of hurling has a rich and storied tradition. Like many folk sports of Europe throughout the Early Modern Period (1500-1750), hurling was a marker of

²²⁷ Intergovernmental Committee, “Nomination File No. 01263,” 7.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*, 8.

rural community identity, a pastime for all groups in society. Although almost extinguished by unionism, the Great Famine, and the anglicization of local sports (i.e. *hurley*), the GAA came to the rescue through bureaucratization, standardization, and commercialization. For over a century, the apt-titled 'Gaelic Athletic Association for the Preservation and Cultivation of National Pastimes' has been the champion of hurling. It preserved itself and its traditional games in the face of British cultural imperialism, and "may well have reinvented itself as a mode of resistance ... to all of the homogenising tendencies that accompany late capitalism."²²⁹ The GAA has connected the counties, joined contemporary sport practitioners with their Gaelic heritage, and married the vast Irish diaspora with the 'Emerald Isle.' Its parochial nationalism grounds hurling in the national psyche while contributing to the national identity narrative displayed to the rest of the world. In its contemporary form, "the GAA is both local and global at the same time, simultaneously preserving and harnessing parochial identities while outwardly embracing modern global and local commercial opportunities."²³⁰ Perhaps the GAA sought to pursue a more international safeguarding approach through UNESCO recognition, considering the Association already has eight international units in Australasia, Asia, Britain, Canada, Europe, the Middle East, North America, and New York.

Despite its touristic and marketing appeal, it is based on the diffusion of global sports that hurling is on the decline in much of Ireland. In this case, safeguarding is, indeed, the correct answer. However, does UNESCO safeguarding, in and of itself, have an effect? The

²²⁹ Alan Bairner, "Sport and the Nation in the Global Era," in *The Global Politics of Sport: The Role of Global Institutions in Sport*, ed. Lincoln Allison (London: Routledge, 2005), 98.

²³⁰ Storey, "Case of Gaelic Games," 232.

reason for UNESCO inscription is to boost sport-based tourism, to further internationalize the game of hurling, and to educate the masses on its symbolic meanings and national significance. However, the GAA already has substantive safeguarding mechanisms: pedagogization, government support, research interest from scholars, nationalism, and the commercialization and mediatization of the All-Ireland Senior Hurling Championship. Thus, in terms of safeguarding, there seems little more that UNESCO could achieve that the GAA, in conjunction with the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, has not already realized. Although it is too soon to properly assess the effects of UNESCO heritagization in this instance, another reason for the inscription of hurling on the UNESCO Representative List may be that those charged with the development and safeguarding of the game are acting proactively in a time of accelerated globalization.

* * *

Safeguarding of intangible heritage is a tenuous affair, as even the safeguarding measures, themselves, can be considered intangible. In this chapter, we reviewed a number of such safeguarding measures, including sportification, internationalization, nationalization, retraditionalization, 'playful work,' pedagogization, folklorization, and heritagization. Stemming from Eichberg's predicted outcomes of the modernization of folk sports – sportisation, pedagogization, and folklorization – the branching out of preservation techniques illustrates the breadth of responses to the marginalization of traditional games. But, as noted by Eichberg, these processes do not necessarily maintain the authentic traditionalism of the folk sports in question. Sportification, although technically similar to the original form, is a mimicry of traditional pastimes, commodified and romanticized to fit within the sport-media complex.

Pedagogization, too, leads to a simplification of traditional games so as to attract a wider participation and promote a more accessible activity. And, while the “conscious ‘traditionalization’ of certain sporting activities provides them with a kind of cultural character for their protection,” folklorization tends to ‘freeze’ or ‘museumify’ folk games.²³¹ According to Kurin, “prior to the Convention, folklore and cultural tradition were viewed in UNESCO parlance as somewhat alienable expressions of an unreflective populace, ‘naturally’ practiced customs that could be abstracted from other aspects of life.”²³² Folklorization processes (synonymous with heritagization) have since become a focal point of UNESCO safeguarding efforts.

The objectives of the 2003 Convention were to “ensure better visibility of the intangible cultural heritage and awareness of its significance, and to encourage dialogue which respects cultural diversity.”²³³ For the four case studies above, however, these objectives had already been attained, via the aforementioned safeguarding measures, prior to inscription, thus questioning the motivations for UNESCO recognition. It is possible that, in many cases, UNESCO recognition is sought once a certain threshold of preservation has been attained, and, indeed, a robust safeguarding framework is a nomination criterion for inscription. As such, UNESCO heritagization can be considered an ‘add-on’ measure. So, then, what is the point of UNESCO recognition? In reference to the secondary research question regarding sportive

²³¹ Roland Renson, “Save our Sports,” *UNESCO Courier* 45, no. 12 (1992): 41.

²³² Richard Kurin, “Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage: Key Factors in Implementing the 2003 Convention,” *International Journal of Intangible Heritage* 2 (2007): 12.

²³³ UNESCO, *Basic Texts of the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* (Paris: UNESCO, 2018), art. 16.1.

nationalism – *What are the political, economic, and cultural implications of state actors or agencies employing UNESCO ICH policy for sport nationalistic purposes?* – it was apparent in each of the case studies that touristic and nationalistic motivations were often behind the nominations of the four folk sports assessed.

The aim of many tourism boards is to establish a corpus of sites and experiences that will sustain the “heritage gaze” of the cosmopolitan tourist classes.²³⁴ As such, it is no wonder that the champions of the above folk sport nominations tended to be the cultural tourism agencies of the respective case study nations. Although the remit of bringing attention to the plight of local traditional games falls upon the bearer communities (the practitioners of the sports), the nomination process and subsequent instrumentalization of the folk sporting elements falls within the purview of the respective ministries of culture, tourism, and/or heritage. Although bearer communities are supposed to be consulted and are required to provide their consent, this ‘tourism board’ approach is evinced in each of the four case studies. The Kırkpınar nomination was coordinated by a group of Edirne-based cultural groups, was championed by the General Directorate of Research and Education of the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism (MoCT), and had specific aims to increase tourism to the Turkish cultural capital. The *capoeira* nomination was motivated by the Pró Capoeira Work Group (GTPC), composed of representatives from a number of heritage and cultural policy agencies. Similarly, the *kok boru* nomination was advanced by the Kyrgyz Ministry of Culture, Information, and

²³⁴ Valdimar T. Hafstein, “The Making of Intangible Cultural Heritage: Tradition and Authenticity, Community and Humanity” (PhD diss., University of California, Berkley, 2004), 31.

Tourism. Finally, the nomination of hurling was instigated by the Gaelic Athletic Association, which, in many ways, is a cultural revival organization. The motivations of these ICH champions were undoubtedly the cultural preservation of their respective national folk sports. However, in each case, the touristic element came to the fore.

The other key theme to these case studies and, indeed, the entire dissertation, is the relationship between the preservation of folk games and nationalism. The first key type of nationalism apparent in all the case studies is cultural nationalism, concerned with the protection of folk traditions in response to trends of cultural homogenization. It falls between ethnic and civic nationalisms, focusing rather on national identity creation through shared cultural traditions.²³⁵ For our purposes, cultural nationalism, as a conduit for national identity through collective heritage, also falls between the more parochial ethnonationalism and the more cosmopolitan external nationalism. For example, in the *capoeira* case study, all three nationalisms are exhibited quite plainly: The Afro-Brazilian traditionalism of the *Angola* variant was indicative of an ethnonationalist struggle; the National Institute of Historic and Artistic Heritage sought to appropriate *capoeira* as a symbol of national unity; and the Brazilian state party to UNESCO promoted *capoeira* as an international marker of *brasilidade* amongst the widespread diasporic community. As all of the case studies are representative of, what would be termed, ethnosports, it is understandable that they would exhibit ethnonationalist tendencies as well. The promotion of oil wrestling amongst the broader Turkic community by the World

²³⁵ Kai Nielsen, "Cultural Nationalism, Neither Ethnic nor Civic," in *Theorizing Nationalism*, ed. Ronald Beiner (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999), 119-30.

Ethnosport Confederation, the territorial claim of *kok boru*, and the Irish parochialism of the GAA all point towards an ethnonationalist bent to folk sport preservation. Other nationalisms were also exhibited throughout the UNESCO folk sporting cases: the Turkish and Kyrgyz cases evoked a deep romantic nationalism with the ancient sport of wrestling and ruralism, respectively; Turkic pan-nationalism was an objective of the UNESCO nomination of oil wrestling; in addition to the three counterbalancing nationalisms in the *capoeira* case, diasporic nationalism was also a recurring theme; and the cultural nationalism in the Kyrgyz and Irish cases often permeated as liberation (from Soviet control) and post-colonial (anti-British) nationalisms, respectively. Lastly, with all of the folk sports heritagized through the UNESCO apparatus, a dimension of external nationalism can be referred to in the global promotion of national heritage elements. The interplay of these various nationalisms is indicative of the complex and dynamic relationship between folk sport preservation and nation-building. Whether for ethnic, cultural, or external nationalistic purposes, folk sports are the ludic markers of communities, imagined or real, local or global, traditional or modern.

In addition to the above themes of heritage tourism and nationalism within the motivations of folk sport preservation, each case study had a number of key substantiations that are summarized in the following segments:

- *Kırkpınar oil wrestling festival (2010)*. The first substantiation from the oil wrestling case study was that the element refers to an event, rather than the sport, specifically. This is an important distinction, as highlighted by Krawietz, as the motivation for safeguarding the Kırkpınar was forwarded by members of

the Ministry of Culture and Tourism and local tourist board to bolster Edirne as a cultural capital. The second substantiation is that the element was safeguarded through local legislation (2000) much before the UNESCO nomination process began, which was my first questioning of whether UNESCO safeguarding had any affect. The third substantiation is the folklorization and retraditionalization of oil wrestling. As can be understood, folk wrestling forms may be upheld in modern sporting contexts, but their traditional roots maintain their authenticity and popularity within a nostalgic imaginary. Thus, the first case study demonstrates the subtleties of ICH nominations, the redundancy of UNESCO heritagization, and the allure of folk sport romanticism.

- *Capoeira circle (2014)*. Nationalism is inherent to the cultural battle for *capoeira* 'ownership.' The *capoeira* case study delved into the effects of diasporic internationalization, the onus on external nationalism and global promotion, and ethnonationalist resistance and division. *Capoeira* academies worldwide allow émigrés to maintain a sportive-cultural relationship with sport stakeholders both at home and abroad. Indeed, such strong sporting diasporas, especially in terms of 'national' folk games, are an important aspect of nationalist politics through the extension of an 'our game' slogan to the rest of the world. In a sense, this diasporic connection is a boon to Brazilian state officials, who can assert nationalist rhetoric through sporting pathways. This leads to the second substantiation, global promotion, which speaks to the importance of 'UNESCO status' for developing nations. As a member of the BRICS nations, Brazil is in the

midst of a global ascendancy, which has ramifications in the cultural sphere.²³⁶

Capoeira, as an intangible heritage of humanity, has the ability to promote *brasilidade* to a wider audience than many other cultural forms; such is the popular draw of sports. This instrumentalization of *capoeira* by Brazilian bureaucrats, however, has caused divisions within the *capoeira* community.

Some *capoeiristas*, notably *Angola* practitioners, resist the sportification and internationalization of the Afro-Brazilian martial art. There are those who relish the global promotion of their sport, but traditionalists continue the dance-fight's legacy of resistance by (re)inventing traditions. The *capoeira* case study is a good example of local traditions superseded by global aspirations.

- ***Kok boru, traditional horse game (2017)***. The main substantiation from the *kok boru* case study is the concept of territoriality and how it undermines the internationalist ethos of UNESCO. As with the cases of *chowgān* and *silat*, *kok boru*, though it represents a family of equine sports in Central Asia, neglects their heritage within the nomination. Although it has not (yet) caused any problems for the nomination, it speaks to the diffusion and globalization of sport forms, which are potentially not as localized as many other elements of ICH. The second intriguing revelation of this case study has to do with the mediatization of the sport. With its appearance on the Netflix docuseries *Home Game*, *kok boru* has received a wider audience than many other safeguarding measures would

²³⁶ BRICS refers to the five major emerging economies: Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa.

have permitted. Thus Hollywoodization is a far more potent tool for promotion and awareness than UNESCO heritagization. Lastly, this case study focused more on the traditionalism and 'playful work' aspects of romantic nationalism. The onus on traditionalism in contemporary Central Asian societies demonstrates an adherence to cultural diversity within processes of national reinvention and global recognition. The case of *kok boru* demonstrates that traditional games can maintain their traditionalism in the face of modernity and globalization.

- **Hurling (2018).** The substantiations from the last case study are: (1) decreasing participation, (2) the role of sportive-cultural organizations, and (3) the status of national sports. First, as was demonstrated in the Irish Sports Monitor, hurling participation numbers are decreasing due to the diffusion of more popular global sports. Although this marginalization of folk games is discussed at length in Chapter III, this is the first case study in which it is overtly examined. If young people forsake the games of their predecessors for the glamour of global imports, then participation rates will dwindle, and the sport will eventually recede to a state of archaism. This threat is, indeed, the reason for seeking and implementing effective safeguarding measures. The reality, however, is that UNESCO heritagization is not necessarily the answer. The Gaelic Athletic Association, and other such ethnosport organizations (i.e. the Turkish WEC), seem to be the ideal mechanism: a dedicated, local, multifaceted organization that marries the sportive and the cultural in the pursuit of nationalistic goals.

The GAA has preserved the national sport of hurling since the late nineteenth century, and it is fully expected that it will continue to do so into the future. The last substantiation is the status of national sport – which can easily be applied to each of the case studies. Hurling best exemplifies the meaning of such a status. Although more is discussed on this point in the concluding chapter, it is important to note that the nationalization of a folk sport is a powerful tool for its safeguard and promotion.

One last common theme to all the case studies was the notion that each of their respective territories can be considered a ‘traditional’ nation. Turkey, Brazil, Kyrgyzstan, and Ireland are all considered ‘traditional’ nations in the sense that they uphold older customs and ways of life. As per the ratification of the 2003 Convention, it was purported that Global South, developing, or ‘traditional’ nations would be the benefactors of the intangible cultural heritage turn in the broader heritagescape. Yet it is in these ‘traditional’ contexts in which folk sports are marginalized, as exemplified through the Diamond-Renson Model applied to the four case studies: Oil wrestling suffered from urbanization; *capoeira* is undergoing a sportification identity crisis (ripple effect); *kok boru* is considered backwards as compared to Western sport forms; and hurling is becoming marginalized by the increasing participation in globally-diffused sports. Thus, it is in these communities where folk sports are localized for the purposes of group identity, to maintain traditional cultural practices in the face of a creeping modernization. As observed by Pierre Parlebas, “social groups and people in general distinguish themselves as much by their games as they do by their languages: the Scottish Caber tossing, American Baseball, English Cricket, Basque Pelota, African dugout races or the Afghan Buzkashi are

practices that are as distinctive as their homes or the structure of their genetic heritage."²³⁷ The various folk sports that are represented on the UNESCO List illustrate the diversity of folk games and their indelible connections to traditional bearer communities.

In conclusion, we ask the question one final time: *Has the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage affected the practice, status, and meaning of folk sports?* Based on the themes and practical perspectives from the above case studies, there are various dynamic factors that must align in order for the policies of an international organization to have a meaningful impact with its local constituents. For instance, in the oil wrestling and hurling cases, robust safeguarding frameworks – via the Edirne municipality and the GAA – had already been implemented prior to UNESCO nomination, thereby calling into question the actual affect of Convention policies on the respective elements. Whereas, in the Brazilian case, it can be argued that UNESCO heritagization has had a negative affect on the practice, status, and meaning of *capoeira*, as the concerns of the traditionalist *Angola* practitioners have been suppressed in order to promote a global *brasilidade*. However, inasmuch as the Convention policies affect various types of nationalism, which in turn instrumentalize folk sport safeguarding mechanisms, there is, indeed, a change in the practice, status, and meaning of folk sports. Folk sport revivalism amongst ethnonationalists and cultural nationalists ultimately changes the meaning of traditional games from simple activities to national symbols of intangible cultural heritage. Moreover, the sportification (modernization) of traditional games

²³⁷ Pierre Parlebas, "The Destiny of Games Heritage and Lineage," *Studies in Physical Culture and Tourism* 10, no. 1 (2003): 16.

affects their structure, function, and practice. And, ultimately, by attaining 'UNESCO status,' the status of a folk sport changes from local pastime to heritage of humanity. There are many dimensions – ludodiversity, folklore, globalization, ethnicity, nationalism, heritage, etc. – to the safeguarding of traditional games and UNESCO heritagization is one such avenue. In the end, it would seem that societal recognition, support, and participation are the vital objectives, and it matters not how they are achieved. The next (and concluding) chapter provides a final commentary on various safeguarding alternatives, the issues with UNESCO heritagization, and the future of folk sports.

Revivalism, National Sports, and the Future of Folk Games

*It is never too late to revive your origins.*¹

Throughout the ebbs and flows of the writing of this dissertation, I have often questioned my own perspectives on folk sports as intangible cultural heritage. I have learned tremendously from the literature on traditional games, globalization, and heritage, but every so often, more so in the low points of the grueling haul, I asked myself a fundamental question: Why do traditional sport matters concern practitioners, society at large, indeed, my own interest? Apart from the many nuanced criticisms, is there anything inherently wrong with modern sport *vis-à-vis* folk sport? By arguing for the cultural survival, revival, or diversification of traditional games, have I become an anti-modernist, a luddite, a curmudgeon-skeptic of modern sports? To be sure, my romantic views of glorifying and espousing a ‘back-to-roots/nature’ ethos are idealistic. Perhaps I am reflexively upholding such a romantic attitude towards folk sports because of the unprecedented times in which we live – accentuated by the coronavirus pandemic, in the midst of which I write these words. As noted by folk sport historian Roland Renson: “During periods of socio-economic and cultural uncertainty, the past is often harked back to as a kind of salutary utopia. This ‘back to the roots’ movement can be seen as a kind of ecologist’s reflex within modern sports and recreation.”² In another sense, I lament the fact that “we long ago liberated the individual ... we severed the obligations of kin and community that, for better or for worse, constrain the individual in traditional societies. In

¹ Jean Baudrillard, *America* (London: Verso, 1988), 41.

² Roland Renson, “The Come-back of Traditional Sports and Games,” *Museum* 43, no. 2 (January/December 1991): 77.

glorifying the self, we did away with community.”³ The world is becoming less community-oriented and, as a result, many traditional community practices are losing their relevancy. Throughout my research, I have gained a boundless appreciation for the field of anthropology, for the studying of cultures and diverse ethnic communities. I have also grown critical of the dynamic forces of globalization, modernity, and capitalism.⁴ This is bound to happen in any in-depth study of traditional cultural practices and an argumentation focused on diversification and heterogeneity. Although, in the words of Clifford Geertz: “like nostalgia, diversity is not what it used to be; and the sealing of lives into separate railway carriages to produce cultural renewal or the spacing of them out with contrast-effects to free up moral energies are romantic dreams, not undangerous.”⁵ While I have strived to remain an unbiased “heritage agnostic,” it seems that, at least in the case of traditional sports, I am more of a “heritage believer,” defined by German anthropologist Christoph Brumann as someone who is “tacitly or explicitly committed to cultural heritage in general or to specific heritage items of whose intrinsic value they are convinced and whose conservation they endorse.”⁶ Undoubtedly, for better or for worse, my investment in this project has impacted my perspective.

I ‘believe’ in (or adhere to) the folk sport revivalist credo: the safeguarding of marginalized traditional games in the face of cultural homogenization. In conclusion to the

³ Wade Davis, *Light at the Edge of the World: A journey through the Realm of Vanishing Cultures* (Madeira Park, BC: Douglas & McIntyre, 2001), 140.

⁴ A formidable piece in this criticism, and a book that influenced my own thinking on industry, culture, and the environment, is Thomas Hylland Eriksen’s *Overheating: An Anthropology of Accelerated Change* (London: Pluto, 2016).

⁵ Clifford Geertz, “The Uses of Diversity” (lecture, Tanner Lectures on Human Values, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI, November 8, 1985), 264.

⁶ Christoph Brumann, “Heritage Agnosticism: A Third Path for the Study of Cultural Heritage,” *Social Anthropology* 22, no. 2 (2014): 173-4.

proceedings of the 4th ISHPES/TAFISA Symposium (Duderstadt, Germany, 2000) on *Games of the Past*, editor Gertrud Pfister commented that “cultures are ‘embodied’ by their physical activities. Therefore, physical activities are part of the culture, they build cultural identity, they provide opportunities for identification and they signalise the membership to a group or society. Therefore, the loss of traditional games and sports is a loss of traditions, identities, is a loss of the cultural heritage of a culture.”⁷ Indeed, my dissertation has been framed around this premise. In the era of globalization, however, “we find ourselves caught in a maelstrom of conflicts over political identities and ethnic fragmentation.”⁸ Traditional games are under threat, tied up in politicized ethnic identities and local-global dissonance. As per the proposed Diamond-Renson Model, they have been marginalized via the diffusion of more popular global sports, the urbanization of former rural practitioners, social momentum to modernize traditional games, and the condescending labels of ‘uncivilized,’ ‘weird,’ or ‘backwards’ applied to non-Western folk sporting traditions. Today, traditional games survive predominantly as children’s games, in rural societies, in ethnic enclaves, or amongst the lower classes; in contrast, modern sport is the remit of the ‘serious,’ urbane, homogeneous, upper classes. As observed by physical culturalist Henning Eichberg, the choices for many folk games are either to sportify, become pedagogic tools, or to become ‘frozen’ cultural artefacts or folklore.⁹ The maintenance

⁷ Gertrud Pfister, “Traditional Sports and Games Proposal for a Declaration,” in *Games of the Past: Sports of the Future?*, ed. Gertrud Pfister (Sankt Augustin, DE: Academia-Verlag, 2004), 185. Also, ISHPES stands for International Society for the History of Physical Education and Sport.

⁸ Anthony D. Smith, *Nations and Nationalism in a Global Era* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995), 2.

⁹ Here, I am referring to sportification, pedagogization, and folklorization, as proposed by Eichberg in “A Revolution of Body Culture? Traditional Games on the Way from Modernisation to ‘Postmodernity.’” in *Les Jeux Populaires: Eclipse et Renaissance*, eds. Jean Jacques Barreau and Guy Jaouen (Rennes, FR: Institut Culturel de Bretagne, 1991).

of authenticity, in each case, is negligible. Although folk sport revivalists want to ensure cultural authenticity, they are more concerned with continued practice, thereby employing one of Eichberg's three techniques. A paradox exists: revise folk sports as modern, educational, or 'museumified' entities, but lose their authentic character. In the words of heralded Canadian media theorist Marshall McLuhan, we are "poised between two ages, one of detribalization and one of retribalization."¹⁰ Thus, the underlying question that I have attempted to answer throughout this dissertation is if UNESCO, indeed an institutional representation of global cultural homogenization, can appropriately safeguard the localized, traditional, folk games of diverse communities around the world.

No longer simply a bastion of Eurocentric monumental heritage, for UNESCO the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage was a watershed moment for the inclusion of diverse intangible heritage forms within its framework. The Convention marked a 'heritage turn' in which consideration was given to local traditions, customs, rituals, and folk practices, not just as the intangible heritage of the bearer communities, but as the global heritage of humanity. As noted by Deacon *et al.*, the notion of ICH provided an opportunity to "democratise the process by which value is assigned to heritage."¹¹ And, as the global arbiter of heritage, UNESCO was proclaimed the valuator of ICH. To a certain extent, the aim of the Convention – to promote ICH globally – was achieved. Today, UNESCO recognition is "a supreme mark of distinction for global tourism, local and national prestige,

¹⁰ Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (New York: New American Library, 1964), 299.

¹¹ Harriet Deacon, Luvuyo Dondolo, Mbulelo Mrubata, and Sandra Prosalendis, *The Subtle Power of Intangible Heritage: Legal and Financial Instruments for Safeguarding Intangible Heritage* (Cape Town: HSRC Publishers, 2004), 11.

and funding agencies.”¹² This, in essence, is why UNESCO recognition matters. Indeed, tourism and nationalism are the key substantiations from the case studies in the preceding chapter. In an attempt to answer the primary dissertation research question – *Has the UNESCO Convention affected the practice, status, and meaning of folk sports?* – it became evident that the UNESCO recognition of oil wrestling, *capoeira*, *kok boru*, and hurling did little to affect the practice and cultural consumption of these sports. However, the respective ministries of culture, tourism, and/or heritage benefited from the tourism, nationalism, and funding resulting from ‘UNESCO status.’¹³ Indeed, in the words of prolific globalization scholar Roland Robertson, “diversity sells.”¹⁴ Folklorist Valdimar Hafstein, who has been critical of the inherent exclusivity of list-making and the nationalistic politics that riddle UNESCO heritage work, made clear that heritagization is simply another term for folklorization.¹⁵ Thus, if UNESCO recognition chiefly benefits the national stakeholders that promote folk sports as heritage, then the sport forms themselves become stagnant, folklorized, or ‘itemized’ archaisms.¹⁶ Moreover, if we consider culture as never static, but rather a dynamic melange of temporal, spatial, and identity-based (both individual and group) factors, then such a process of heritagization, through UNESCO ‘listing,’ can actually be interpreted as a detriment to the safeguarding of traditional games.

¹² Brumann, “Heritage Agnosticism,” 177.

¹³ To note, funding was not expanded on in this dissertation, but requires future study.

¹⁴ Roland Robertson, “Glocalization: Time-Space and Homogeneity-Heterogeneity,” in *Global Modernities*, eds. Mike Featherstone, Scott Lash, and Roland Robertson (London: Sage, 1995), 29.

¹⁵ Valdimar Tr. Hafstein, “Intangible Heritage as a Festival; or, Folklorization Revisited,” *Journal of American Folklore* 131, no. 520 (Spring 2018): 127-49.

¹⁶ Here, ‘itemized’ refers to becoming a list item on a heritage list.

The current chapter is meant to answer the secondary research questions regarding the role of folk sport revivalists and the adoption of national folk sports. In so doing, the chapter elaborates on the issues of heritagization, alternatives to UNESCO representation, and the future of folk sport. First, as summarized above, some of the key conclusions from the case studies, as well as questions around heritagization, are noted. Second, we delve into the revival of folk sports, through the invention of sporting traditions. Third, I present an overview of the role of various non-governmental organizations involved in the revival of traditional games, a pastiche of institutions and individuals around the globe that work as an alternative to, and sometimes in concert with, UNESCO. Fourth, in contrast to UNESCO heritagization, we explore my theory of ‘national sport’ adoption, based on the work of sport and social theorist Alan Bairner. In closing, I conclude this chapter and the dissertation with some final remarks on the current and future status of folk sports. In essence, this concluding chapter is meant as a summary, a reflection, and a prediction.

The Roots of Folk Sport Revivalism

Culture is continually evolving. Processes of acculturation, appropriation, and safeguarding are not new. As remarked by esteemed French anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss, “diversity results from the desire of each culture to resist the cultures surrounding it, to distinguish itself from them – in short to be itself. Cultures are not unaware of one another, they even borrow from one another on occasion; but, in order not to perish, they must in other

connections remain somewhat impermeable.”¹⁷ In terms of traditional games, there is a ‘survival of the fittest’ selection process occurring, with continued practice of only those games that are able to adapt to contemporary pressures. As such, folk sport revivalists have been essential advocates for the heritage preservation movement. And, indeed, there seems to be a revival afoot within diverse folk sporting communities. For, as claimed by sport historian Gertrud Pfister, “the propagation of modern sport in western societies has been connected with a ‘desportification’ of leisure activities, a renewed interest in national or regional movement cultures, a renaissance of play and games.”¹⁸

Jürgen Palm, the former president of The Association For International Sport for All (TAFISA), theorized three types of folk sports: disappeared, adapted, and surviving. The first and last refer to those that are extinct and those that still exist, respectively. *Adapted* forms, however, are those that have evolved in order to remain relevant in contemporary society, albeit changing essential (oftentimes traditional) aspects of the sport form. In the case of sumo wrestling, for instance, where much of its religious and ritualistic traits have been stripped away in lieu of modern viewing pleasures, an “instrumental rationality [has been] employed to promote a romantic identification with a rapidly vanishing past.”¹⁹ Palm’s three folk sporting forms coincide with Marxist theorist Raymond Williams’ notions of archaic, residual, and

¹⁷ Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The View from Afar*, trans. Joachim Neugroschel and Phoebe Hoss (New York: Basic Books, 1985), xiii.

¹⁸ Gertrud Pfister, “Research on Traditional Games – the Specific Perspective,” *Journal of Comparative Physical Education and Sport* 19 (1997): 53.

¹⁹ Allen Guttman, “Sports Diffusion: A Response to Maguire and the Americanization Commentaries,” *Sociology of Sport Journal* 8 (1991): 188.

emergent cultures. *Archaic* refers to elements of the past, that may sometimes be deliberately revived. In our case, 'extinct' sports, like Mesoamerican ball games or the ancient Greek *hoplitodromos* race of hoplite warriors, could be categorized as archaic. *Residual* cultures are those that have survived, like various outdoor bowling games in Europe. In contrast, *emergent* cultures can be classified as 'adapted' folk sports, referring to the fact that "new meanings and values, new practices, new relationships and kinds of relationship are continually being created."²⁰ For, as lamented by Palm, "the past can only be replayed in a part of what once was a whole;" recreation is exactly that, not the original creation.²¹ As such, wherever traditional sports survive, they tend to either become residual or emergent in nature. For our purposes, we focus on those emergent folk sporting traditions which have adapted to modernity. They have not been revitalized, *per se*, from archaism, rather they have undergone a revivification process, spawning new life and meanings to old customs and pastimes.

As noted in Chapter II, Henning Eichberg proposed three waves in the revival of 'modern' folk games.²² First, throughout the nineteenth century, a romantic revival spurred nationalistic sport forms, such as German *Turnen* gymnastics (as well as other gymnastics movements in Scandinavian and Slavic locales), the Gaelic games, and various folk wrestling styles (e.g. Swiss *Schwingen*, Icelandic *glíma*, or Breton *gouren*). Second, at the turn of the twentieth century, 'back-to-nature' (e.g. *Wandervogel*) and youth (e.g. Boy Scouts) movements

²⁰ Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 123.

²¹ Jürgen Palm, "Traditional Sport in Industrialized Countries," *Journal of Comparative Physical Education and Sport* 19 (1997): 74.

²² Henning Eichberg, *Questioning Play: What Play Can Tell Us about Social Life* (London: Routledge, 2016), 200-1.

promoted self-determination and 'simpler' *volksports*.²³ Third, in reaction to the popularization of New Games in the 1970s, the contemporary folk sport revivalist movement began, which included the ideology of 'Sport for All.'²⁴ As summarized by Eichberg, "folk sports in their modern form emerged as an alternative to a highly specialized and standardized sport and as a reaction against the disappearance of the festival atmosphere from sporting events. People sought to resist the anonymity of modern life by engaging in physical activities in community."²⁵ This romantic revivalism led to the invention and reinvention of certain sporting traditions to bolster physical cultural identity within changing political milieus. Hobsbawm describes the inventing of traditions as "essentially a process of formalization and ritualization, characterized by reference to the past, if only by imposing repetition."²⁶ Does this not sound familiar? The process of heritagization is but 'a rose by another name': the formalization of a traditional past through institutional impositions (safeguarding measures). Although many folk sports were revived in popular forums, it is the invention of new sporting traditions that is indicative of the desire to differentiate one's local, regional, or national physical culture. We thus turn to one of the secondary research questions: *What are the goals and motives behind the preservation of folk sports?*

²³ John Alexandre Williams, *Turning to Nature in Germany: Hiking, Nudism, and Conservation, 1900-1940* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007); Michael Rosenthal, *The Character Factory: Baden-Powell and the Origins of the Boy Scout Movement* (London: William Collins, 1986).

²⁴ Andrew Fluegelman, ed., *The New Games Book* (Tiburon, CA: Headlands Press, 1976).

²⁵ Eichberg, *Questioning Play*, 199-200.

²⁶ Eric Hobsbawm, "Introduction: Inventing Traditions," in *The Invention of Tradition*, eds. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 4.

There are a number of reasons folk games have been revived in the postmodern melange, including, but not limited to, (re)inventing traditions, ethnonationalism, tourism, and nostalgia. In reference to Gaelic games (in Ireland), Houlihan notes that their revival “was partly the recovery of lost traditions, partly a recognition of the consequences of the unchallenged attraction of Anglo sports, and partly a process of cultural invention and mythologizing.”²⁷ In similar contexts, like the Scottish Highland Games or Basque *pelota*, an undercurrent of ethnonationalist identity is prevalent.²⁸ In such cases, subjugated ethnicities turn to traditionalism (or retraditionalize) in order to resist the hegemonic norms of the state. Heritage tourism also plays a pivotal role in folk sport revival, whereby “an artificial socio-cultural construct but media-transported setting is arranged in which indigenous sports, games and dances are presented in a folkloric showcase.”²⁹ With a boom in the tourism industry during the late twentieth century, disparate locales revived elements of traditional cultural heritage in order to peddle the ‘exotic’ to foreign tourists (and their wallets). Lastly, revival of romanticized folk traditions is part and parcel to the ebbs and flows of national nostalgia and identity creation. Postcolonial African nations, for instance, found a level of cultural authenticity in traditional games and dance forms. A similar development could be observed in the 1987 Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) inventory of traditional games for

²⁷ Barrie Houlihan, “Homogenization, Americanization, and Creolization of Sport: Varieties of Globalization,” *Sociology of Sport Journal* 11 (1994): 367.

²⁸ Olatz González Abrisketa, *Basque Pelota: A Ritual, an Aesthetic*, trans. Mariann Vaczi (Reno, NV: Center for Basque Studies, 2012).

²⁹ Palm, “Traditional Sports,” 76.

the promotion of regional identity and integration.³⁰ Through such interlinked reasons as inventing traditions, ethnonationalism, heritage tourism, and national nostalgia, many non-Western nations are turning to their folkloric pasts and reviving games and ways of being that represent their cultural identity, collective belonging, and traditional values in the face of a hegemonic globalization.

Many 'traditional' fighting arts, for instance, suggest a rather recent invention. Chief among them is the now-global, 'Olympified' sport of taekwondo. Cultural studies scholar Paul Bowman explains that in the aftermath of the Japanese occupation of Korea (1910-1945), nationalist sport reformers employed a three-pronged process to 'nationalize' the imported Japanese karate: "first, trying to persuade martial arts teachers in Korea to use their new name, 'taekwondo'; second, coming up with a persuasive (albeit spurious) etymology for the made-up characters of the new name; and, third, claiming that this modern practice had an unbroken connection with the martial arts of ancient legendary warrior kingdoms, folk traditions, indigenous sports, and heroic battles against invaders."³¹ Taekwondo provides a keen example of the common debate between the traditionalist and revisionist historical approaches to the study of national folk sports. In the Korean taekwondo context, Park and Kim break down these approaches within the literature on taekwondo, whether it was influenced by Japanese

³⁰ Inon Shaharuddin Abdul Rahman, ed., *Inventory of ASEAN Traditional Games and Sports* (Jakarta: ASEAN Committee on Culture and Information, 1998).

³¹ The third process of unbroken connection was apparent in the opening ceremonies of the 1988 Olympics Games in Seoul. Paul Bowman, "Making Martial Arts History Matter," *International Journal of the History of Sport* 33, no. 9 (2016): 916.

karate and/or Chinese martial arts, and the persistent debate among various stakeholder communities.³²

The historical deliberations surrounding the origin and instrumentalization of taekwondo is not unique in the realm of national traditional sports. The martial art of *Muay Thai*, too, was (re)invented for nationalist purposes:

Until the end of the twentieth century, boxing was mainly practiced by Lao ethnic minorities residing in the Isaan region, an impoverished and marginalized province in northern Thailand. Young Lao boys enrolled in boxing training camps with zeal, because sport represented the hope of winning fights in Bangkok and earning some money in order to lift their families out of poverty. Boxing was steeped in cosmology and Buddhist morality: the fights were accompanied by important religious rituals, and the hope of social advancement was anchored in an ideology of religious debts to parents who were responsible for the children. But in the course of the 1980s, the upper class social groups in urban areas of the country began to take interest in these sports practices, which represented after all an attractive spectacle, and they underwent ... a process of sportisation: their rules were standardized, their religious aspects eliminated, and competition took on a primordial role. A sport that was originally associated with a minority, marginalized and despised, *muay thai* was henceforth claimed by the country as a national heritage sport (hence the name, "Thai" boxing), which is now marketed on a global scale.³³

This marginalization, sportification, and reinvention of *Muay Thai* is reminiscent of many 'modern' folk sports. For instance, lacrosse or Argentine *pato* are sports that have been sportified beyond the recognition of the original practitioners for the enjoyment of the dominant classes.³⁴ Today, with the appropriation of the 'national sport' by adherents of the popular, commercial, violent spectacle of Mixed Martial Arts (MMA), there is "anxiety that the Thainess of one of Thailand's most conspicuous and lucrative cultural exports, one that plays such a

³² Cindy Park and Tae Yang Kim, "Historical Views on the Origins of Korea's Taekwondo," *International Journal of the History of Sport* 33, no. 9 (2016): 978-89.

³³ Niko Besnier, "Corps, Sports et Futurs: La Lutte Sénégalaise dans un Contexte Global [Bodies, Sports, and Futures: Senegalese Wrestling in a Global Context]," *Corps* 1, no. 16 (2018): 113. [My translation]

³⁴ Allan Downey, *The Creator's Game: Lacrosse, Identity, and Indigenous Nationhood* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2018).

central role in state-sponsored nationalism, will erode ... The drive to keep Muay Thai specifically Thai, and to keep it connected to royal-national history, has been especially strong in the face of the internationalization of *muay*.”³⁵ In another example, in Uzbekistan, traditional Bukhara wrestling was rebranded and revived as *kurash* by authoritarian president Islom Karimov (1991-2016) in an attempt to present a national traditional sport as a symbol of the newly independent nation.³⁶ One final example is the newly-developed ‘traditional’ martial art of Hungary: *baranta*. Supposedly dating back 1,300 years to the central Asian Jász and Cuman tribes that migrated to the Carpathian Basin, *baranta* is a “fighting style based on a hybrid of Hungarian folk dancing, Mongolian wrestling, and the imagined combat skills of its practitioners’ warrior ancestors.”³⁷ In reality, it is a mythologized, romantic, imagined attempt to link physical culture to nationalistic state politics, promoted by the national military academy as an authentically Magyar martial art. One of the core elements of inventing traditions is that myth supersedes reality and thus the tradition is essentialized. For, in the words of French essayist Roland Barthes, “myth deprives the object of which it speaks of all History.”³⁸ The invention of traditional games, as exemplified by these martial arts, often relies on myth-making in the promotion of the nation and in the revivification of local or regional identities.

³⁵ Peter Vail, “Muay Thai: Inventing Tradition for a National Symbol,” *Sojourn: Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia* 29, no. 3 (November 2014): 534.

³⁶ Tanguy Philippe, “Wrestling Styles and the Cultural Reinterpretation Process,” *International Journal of the History of Sport* 31, no. 4 (2014): 498.

³⁷ Stephan Faris, “Big in Hungary: Whips and Axes: An Ancient Style of Fighting Makes a Comeback,” *The Atlantic*, January/February 2016, <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2016/01/big-in-hungary-whips-and-axes/419103/>.

³⁸ Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans. Annette Laver (New York: Hill & Wang, 1972), 151.

The following two sections explore both sides of this ‘traditionalism’ – revivalism and nationalism – in the contemporary global sporting landscape.

A Patchwork of Traditional Games Associations

As I have noted elsewhere, “the Olympic Games are a pinnacle event in the global sporting calendar, promoting tangible nationalism, cosmopolitan values, and human physical excellence.”³⁹ The 1984 Los Angeles Summer Olympic Games, though, were a critical turning point in the history of global sport. The private investment, corporatism, and commercialization of these Games propelled the Olympic Movement (and the International Olympic Committee) to new heights in the modernization, professionalization, and globalization of sport. Olympic globalism, and concomitant nationalism (due to the nation-state competition model), were dominant, becoming the hegemonic force within the world of physical culture. With such a hegemonic position, Olympic sport became central to sportive nationalism, and folk sport became marginalized, archaic, subaltern. Thus, a revivalism of folk games was inevitable for those locales that sought a sense of identity in the global amphitheatre of sport. Starting with the establishment of the TAFISA movement in 1969 and the Flemish Folk Games File in 1973, traditional games and festivals became a renewed marker of ethnic and regional identity in several European nations. Indeed, Roland Renson and the promotion of Flemish *volksport* was an impetus in the systematization of reviving and safeguarding

³⁹ Tom Fabian, “The *Cool Runnings* Effect: Flexible Citizenship, the Global South, and Transcultural Republics at the Winter Olympic Games,” *International Journal of the History of Sport* 37, no. 17 (2020). Published ahead of print.

traditional games.⁴⁰ Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, a series of European traditional games conferences took place – including two Council of Europe-sponsored seminars (1988 and 1990), over a dozen localized sessions, and the aforementioned Duderstadt ISHPES/TAFISA Symposium (2000) – fostering intercultural exchange of discovery, reconstruction, safeguarding, documentation, and promotional techniques. As an example of one such successful exchange, during a 1982 course on ‘traditional sports and folk games’ (Lamego, Portugal), Danish sport researcher Jørn Møller was inspired by Roland Renson’s efforts in Flanders.⁴¹ Møller claimed not to know of any traditional games in Denmark but was convinced by Renson to commence a ‘search and record’ mission. Within a few years, Møller had chronicled over 400 traditional games in his native Denmark, established the ‘Workshop of Sports History’ program, and founded the Gerlev traditional games park (open-air museum).⁴² Coupled with the dissolution of the former Soviet Union (1991) and the foundation of the European Union (1993), such intercultural exchanges amongst traditional ‘gamesters’ and folk sport revivalists was integral in the preservation of local and regional identities in the shifting national boundaries of Europe (and elsewhere). To maintain this momentum in the restoration of traditional games, Guy Jaouen alluded to four requirements for the future of folk games: (1) academic research, (2) socio-educational promotion, (3) training of personnel, and (3) manufacture of sports

⁴⁰ The importance of Renson’s work is captured in the inscription of the *Programme of Cultivating Ludodiversity in Belgium* on the UNESCO Register of Good Safeguarding Practices. See: Intergovernmental Committee, “Evaluation of proposals to the 2011 Register of Best Safeguarding Practices,” ITH/11/6.COM/CONF.206/9, Decision 6.COM 9.2 (2011).

⁴¹ Jørn Møller, “The Workshop of Sports History - an Arena for Traditional Games,” in Pfister, *Games of the Past*, 163-9.

⁴² Jørn Møller, “Sports and Old Village Games in Denmark,” *Canadian Journal of History of Sport* 15, no. 2 (1984): 19-29.

equipment.⁴³ What was therefore needed for this multifaceted approach was the formation of dedicated traditional games revivalist associations with the ability to lobby national and global institutions and foster a collaborative environment for folk sport revivalists.

Although not often publicized, the network of folk sport associations, federations, and coalitions is robust. At times certain folk sports fall under the umbrella of a ‘modern’ sport organization, like dragon boat racing within the auspices of the International Canoe Federation, but more often traditional games are bureaucratized within dedicated global or national institutions. One of the largest and earliest of these global associations was TAFISA, officially organized in 1991 – the ideological ‘Sport for All’ movement, however, dates back to the late 1960s. Describing the objectives of TAFISA, founding president Jürgen Palm wrote: “We see ourselves as a part of a network which serves the objective of studying, preserving and distributing [sportive] cultural heritage in multiple forms. This network should be consisting of culture and recreation institutions, universities, the school system, tourism boards, foundations and activity oriented museums.”⁴⁴ The hallmark event of the organization is the TAFISA World Sport for All Games, first hosted in Bonn, Germany, in 1992.⁴⁵ The World Games are under the patronage of both the IOC and UNESCO, attract upwards of 50,000 participants and visitors, and host demonstrations, friendly competitions, and spectator trials. To become a TAFISA

⁴³ Guy Jaouen, “Jeux Traditionnels d’Adultes et Environnement Institutionnel [Traditional Games of Adults and Institutional Environment],” in *Jeux Traditionnels, Sports et Patrimoine Culturel: Cultures et Éducation [Traditional Games, Sports and Cultural Heritage: Cultures and Education]*, ed. Pierre Parlebas (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2016), 57. [My translation]

⁴⁴ Jürgen Palm, “Games of the Past – Sports of the Future?,” in Pfister, *Games of the Past*, 183.

⁴⁵ Subsequent Games have been (and will be) hosted in Bangkok (1996), Hannover (2000), Busan, Korea (2008), Siauliai, Lithuania (2012), Jakarta (2016), Lisbon (2021), and Nizhny Novgorod, Russia (2024).

game, the five criteria include: (1) practice for over a century, (2) entertainment for both participants and spectators, (3) reflection of regional or national heritage, (4) cost-efficiency, and (5) accessibility. Traditional games in the program include *bocce* ball, *alysh* belt wrestling, the Indian martial art *silambam*, *Muay Thai*, and arm-wrestling. In reference to the diverse traditional games represented within the TAFISA ‘family,’ Palm claimed that the organization “globalized their regionality” and brought traditional games into UNESCO’s realm of cultural heritage.⁴⁶ Although ‘Sport for All’ is more focused on motivating healthy athletic participation, TAFISA has been a bastion of traditional games promotion and preservation.

Like many international organizations, however, a struggle for legitimacy, accreditation, and representation is currently underway in the realm of folk sport. For instance, acronymic titles like AIMS (2009), ITSGA (2009), IRSiE (2011), WES (2012), and WEC (2015) were established in quick succession, each with similar interests in the control and preservation of traditional games.⁴⁷ The Alliance of Independent recognised Members of Sport (AIMS) is recognized by the IOC and is one of the four membership groups of the GAISF (Global Association of International Sports Federations), but serves only a few traditional games organizations.⁴⁸ Next, the Polish-based Institute for the Development of Sport and Education (IRSiE) is a member of the International Sport and Culture Association (ISCA) and WEC, publishes the *Journal of Sport and Recreation*, and has built a UNESCO inventory-like online

⁴⁶ Palm, “Games of the Past,” 182.

⁴⁷ For a list of the member organizations of each of these international bodies, refer to Appendix IV.

⁴⁸ The other three membership groups of the GAISF are the Association of IOC Recognised International Sports Federations (ARISF), the Association of Summer Olympic International Federations (ASOIF), and the Association of International Olympic Winter Sports Federations (AIOWF).

repository (<http://www.traditionalsports.org/>) with over four hundred detailed descriptions of traditional sports and games from every continent. Another organization, the World Ethnosport Society (WES), described in Chapter II, is the brainchild of Russian anthropologist and ethnosport theorist Alexey Kylasov, publishes the *International Journal of Ethnosport and Traditional Games*, interacts with a number of UNESCO traditional games projects, and is a member of TAFISA. Finally, the 'Turkocentric' World Ethnosport Confederation (WEC), as reviewed in Chapter VI, is headed by the son of the President of Turkey (Necmeddin Bilal Erdogan), is in direct titular conflict with the WES, and is a partner of the World Nomad Games. Although this abundance of sport-governing bodies seems, on the surface, as a boon to folk sport revivalism, the global politicking and power struggles yield concerns for sustainability and cooperative approaches to safeguarding in the future. Moreover, the Arctic Winter Games (1970), North American Indigenous Games (1990), and World Nomad Games (2014) are other traditional multi-sport events outside the TAFISA framework, further decentralizing preservation and promotional efforts. Although some sport-specific organizations are members of more than one of these global associations, such as the Mexican Traditional and Autochthonous Games and Sports Federation (IRSiE, WEC, and ITSGA, below), the lack of central governance, which is a hallmark of the bureaucratic Olympic system, enables personal interests, nationalist politics, and power struggles to distract from original organizational objectives.

A continental organization that is worth highlighting is the European Traditional Sports and Games Association (ETSGA), founded in 2001 by seventeen games associations from

Belgium, France, Italy, and Spain.⁴⁹ The founding president of both ETSGA (and ITSGA) was the aforementioned Guy Jaouen, who headed the Federation of Breton Wrestling and Sports (FALSAB) from 1994 to 2004. By maintaining a network between academics, policy workers, sport federations, museums, and cultural institutions, “the main goal of the ETSGA is to promote and develop the practice of traditional sports and games and also to support the creation of a European network, documents for educational application and the setting up of associations, international meetings and scientific conferences.”⁵⁰ ETSGA’s policy work has extended to the European Parliament, such as a 2011 motion for ‘the resolution in favour of sports and games of cultural tradition in Europe,’ as well as to UNESCO, with contributions to the 1999 Punta del Este Declaration, 2004 Athens Declaration, and 2005 Charter of Traditional Games.⁵¹ Moreover, the ETSGA was instrumental to the European Union’s *Culture 2000* programme, which, like the IRSiE and in continuation of the typological work of Renson *et al.*, aimed to categorize the traditional sports and games of Europe.⁵² Today, ETSGA is one of the largest traditional games organizations in the world, with over seventy members, leading current president Pere Lavega to comment that the association aims to “think globally to act locally.”⁵³ In 2009, during the second UNESCO Collective Consultation on traditional games in

⁴⁹ Refer to Appendix IV.

⁵⁰ Małgorzata Bronikowska and Bartosz Prabucki, “TAFISA and UNESCO Joint Effort for Building Cultural Capital through Traditional Sports. An Analysis of the 5th World Sport for All Games,” *Studia Humanistyczne AGH* 13, no. 1 (2014): 33.

⁵¹ Refer to Chapter V for more information on each of these policy documents.

⁵² Roland Roland, Michel Manson, and Erik De Vroede, “Typology for the Classification of Traditional Games in Europe,” in *Proceedings of the Second European Seminar on Traditional Games*, eds. Erik De Vroede and Roland Renson (Leuven, BE: Vlaamse Volkssport Centrale, 1991), 69-81.

⁵³ Pere Lavega, “The European Association for Traditional Sports and Games,” AEJeST (ETSGA), accessed July 2, 2018, <https://jugaje.com/association/?lang=en>.

Tehran, the ITSGA (International Traditional Sports and Games Association) was formed as an 'international arm,' so to speak, of the ETSGA. Both groups are currently consultative bodies of UNESCO's Intergovernmental Committee for Physical Education and Sport (CIGEPS).

Although UNESCO may have negligible effect in the safeguarding of individual folk sports, in the patchwork of traditional games revival associations, accreditation from UNESCO is an important factor in legitimizing the governance of folk sports revivalism. As a grassroots organization that promotes academic-public cooperation, ITSGA is much more appropriate to manage the global-local concerns of individual traditional games groups than, say, the nationalistic and bureaucratic World Ethnosport Confederation.

In answer to another secondary research question – *What has been the role of folk sport revivalist groups in the application of ICH policy?* – there are ample resources and bureaucracies instituted to aid in the safeguarding of traditional games. Although sometimes working in collaboration with UNESCO, for the most part these organizations perform the bulk of the global promotion and recognition of folk sports. There are still concerns about nationalistic motives (WEC), international power struggles (WES-WEC), and bureaucratization (AIMS within GAISF or ITSGA within UNESCO), but, overall, the role of these varied associations is significant in the folk sport revivalist movement. Even with some concerns, it is notable that there is a handful of international organizations seeking to promote and preserve folk sporting traditions. By 'globalizing' – establishing global governance, applying standard policy, and hosting 'world games' – these groups are, in effect, utilizing the very globalizing dynamics that traditional groups have been attempting to counteract. Perhaps this 'if you can't beat them, join them' mentality is the only salvation for the revival of folk sport. Although tangentially

associated with the UNESCO method of safeguarding, the network of traditional games revival associations provides an alternative to heritagization by focusing specifically on the glocalization, authenticity, and awareness concerns of the specific folk sport practitioner communities. We are in an era of globalized folk sport revivalism.

From Folk Games to National Sports: A Theory

My interest in folk games was instigated by a Wikipedia search for national sports in early 2017. Although I did not think much of it at the time, I was intrigued by the fact that a number of nations adopted folk games as their national sports.⁵⁴ For example, many would assume that the national sport of Argentina is soccer, when, in fact, it is the equine ball game *pato*. This initial foray into national folk sports set me on my path to uncover why traditional games are marginalized, how they are safeguarded, and what the effects of UNESCO heritagization are. I began to theorize that ‘nationalizing’ folk sports may be another avenue for safeguarding, especially as all four of the case study traditional games are considered national sports in their respective countries. This nationalization process was, in fact, one of the safeguarding mechanisms highlighted in the previous chapter. No doubt a form of sportive nationalism, the nationalization of folk games is part and parcel to the predominant nationalism exhibited in each of the case studies: cultural nationalism. Although, could there be an underlying neo-nationalist undercurrent to this cultural appropriation of ethnic games as symbols of national unity? How widespread is this nationalization trend? What is its relationship with UNESCO heritagization? The current section delves into the origins,

⁵⁴ Refer to Appendix III for a list of national sports.

symbolism, and instrumentalization of the national folk sports and how the adoption of such traditional games as national icons relates to UNESCO heritagization.

The birth of nations and, thus, the Age of Nationalism, is commonly associated with the French Revolution (1789), continuing into the decolonization of African nations in the mid-twentieth century. With the creation of new nation-states, nascent governments were eager to root themselves historically and began “binding their chosen high points and memorable achievements into an unfolding ‘national story.’”⁵⁵ Consequently, historians became a desirable commodity in national movements. For, there was a realization that history was not simply collective recollections of the past, but that which was written by historians for a specific purpose. As noted by one of the most influential ‘history-makers’ of the twentieth century, Eric Hobsbawm, “the history which became part of the fund of knowledge or the ideology of nation, state or movement is not what has actually been preserved in popular memory, but what has been selected, written, pictured, popularized and institutionalized by those whose function it is to do so.”⁵⁶ In similar fashion, heritage is selected as required by nation-builders for the purposes of national cohesion, identification, and homogeneity. Indeed, national heritage can be used as a tool “to consolidate a sense of national identity and to assimilate or dispense with competing regional or minority groups.”⁵⁷ Heritage is cultural capital for nationalists, creating

⁵⁵ Stuart Hall, “Whose Heritage? Un-settling ‘the Heritage,’ Re-Imaging the Post-Nation,” in *The Politics of Heritage: The Legacies of ‘Race’*, eds. Jo Littler and Roshi Naidoo (London: Routledge, 2005), 25.

⁵⁶ Hobsbawm, “Inventing Traditions,” 13.

⁵⁷ William Logan, Michele Langfield, and Máiréad Nic Craith, “Intersecting Concepts and Practices,” in *Cultural Diversity, Heritage and Human Rights*, eds. Michele Langfield, William Logan, and Máiréad Nic Craith (London: Routledge, 2010), 11.

buy-in for the intangible nation. Through national symbols and traditions, the imagined community is reinforced with a sense of place, identity, and belonging.

Symbols and traditions root people to place, creating not just a sense of community, but a sense of locality. As such, “the national cultural heritage can be seen as constituting the symbolic landscape of the state.”⁵⁸ National members are united politically through a common ideology, geographically through borders, historically through national myths, and symbolically through a collective heritage. A founder of the field of nationalism studies, historical sociologist Anthony D. Smith has written prolifically on this subject matter. He argues that “the *raison d’être* of any nation must, in the first place, reside in its people and their (alleged) distinctive character: their vernacular language and literature, their land, their history and collective memories, their religion and public rituals.”⁵⁹ Moreover, Smith notes that “symbols – emblems, hymns, festivals, habitats, customs, linguistic codes, sacred places and the like – were powerful differentiators and reminders of the unique culture and fate of the ethnic community.”⁶⁰ Through the nationalism movements of the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries, nationalist symbols became the vogue, beginning with the British anthem *God Save the Queen*, adopted in 1745 and subsequently embraced by most overseas colonies and territories. Then there is the ubiquitous symbol of the national flag, where the revolutionary

⁵⁸ Janet Blake, “From Global to Local Heritage: Intangible Cultural Heritage and the Role of the Museum,” *Anthropology of the Middle East* 10, no. 1 (Spring 2015): 26.

⁵⁹ Anthony D. Smith, “Epilogue: The Power of Ethnic Traditions in the Modern World,” in *Nationalism and Ethnosymbolism: History, Culture and Ethnicity in the Formation of Nations*, eds. Athena S. Leoussi and Steven Grosby (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 330.

⁶⁰ Anthony D. Smith, *Nationalism and Modernism: A Critical Survey of Recent Theories of Nations and Nationalism* (London: Routledge, 1998), 191.

French Tricolore has acted as the prototype of more than fifty national flags around the world. Other official national symbols include the coat-of-arms, the national seal, and the head of state (in monarchic states). Unofficially, popular sites can also constitute national symbols, like famous mountains (Stetind, in Norway) or monuments (Statue of Liberty). Many intangible elements also fall under unofficial national symbols, such as national epics, myths about the origins of the nation, or personifications of the nation through stereotyped characters (e.g. Canadian lumberjacks). Indeed, as Hugh O'Donnell observed, newsprint often stereotypes national character based on bodily techniques and sport-based emotional output.⁶¹ There are national birds (American bald eagle), fish (Philippine *bangus*), animals (Belizean tapir), trees (Indonesian ficus), flowers (Scottish thistle), cuisines (Hungarian goulash), instruments (Zimbabwean *mbira*), and dances (Argentine tango). These intangible symbols constitute what social psychologist Michael Billig termed banal nationalism, "introduced to cover the ideological habits" which enable nations to be reproduced; "daily, the nation is indicated, or 'flagged,' in the lives of the citizenry. Nationalism, far from being an intermittent mood in established nations, is the endemic condition."⁶² The nationalization of these heritage items is part and parcel to the heritagization process. In each of these cases, "existing customary traditional practices – folksong, physical contests, marksmanship – were modified, ritualized

⁶¹ Hugh O'Donnell, "Mapping the Mythical: A Geopolitics of National Sporting Stereotypes," *Discourse & Society* 5, no. 3 (1994): 345-80.

⁶² Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism* (London: Sage, 2014), 6.

and institutionalized for the new national purposes."⁶³ And, for the purposes of this dissertation, there are also national sports.

Why are governments adopting folk games as national sports? They are 'picked,' declared, or proclaimed, by presidential decree or popular demand, because, in reference to Hobsbawm's three types of invented traditions, national sports have the ability to symbolize social cohesion, legitimize authority, and indoctrinate national values.⁶⁴ According to Alan Bairner, "national sports take different forms and, in so doing, they provide us with important insights into the character of particular nations."⁶⁵ Cultural nationalism is of particular importance in this regard, as national sports fit quite neatly in its definition of a shared traditional culture. In fact, suggesting sinister motives, play theorist Brian Sutton-Smith contended that many traditional games were primarily supported to "enhance the national, cultural or individual status of those who have once played them and perhaps should continue to play them."⁶⁶ National folk sports are also important heritage elements in post-colonial contexts, wherein which 'newly' formed nations may look to differentiate their national symbolism from hegemonic cultural forms. For instance, "to understand Gaelic games as a powerful force that resisted imperialism and ludic diffusion is to rationalize why they represent a vigorous form of nationalism, why they deserve

⁶³ Hobsbawm, "Inventing Traditions," 6.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 9. The three types of invented traditions are "a) those establishing or symbolizing social cohesion or the membership of groups, real or artificial communities, b) those establishing or legitimizing institutions, status or relations of authority, and c) those whose main purpose was socialization, the inculcation of beliefs, value systems and conventions of behaviour."

⁶⁵ Alan Bairner, *Sport, Nationalism and Globalization: European and North American Perspectives* (Albany: State University of New York, 2001), 167.

⁶⁶ Brian Sutton-Smith, "Tradition from the Perspective of Children's Traditional Games," in *Proceedings of the Second European Seminar on Traditional Games*, eds. Erik De Vroede and Roland Renson (Leuven, BE: Vlaamse Volkssport Centrale, 1991), 25.

the title of the national game.”⁶⁷ In the cases of Gaelic games, Hungarian *baranta*, or *Muay Thai*, the invention of national folk sporting traditions is integral to the national imaginary. In this sense, ethnonationalism is also a significant dimension: “Another feature of this traditionalist revival is that it appears in the context of ethnic identification processes of cultural minorities and so-called emerging nations, where modern sports have sometimes been viewed as tainted with a colonialist and imperialist ideology.”⁶⁸ Finally, the external nationalist, the one who seeks to globally promote the nation, also benefits from the adoption of a national folk sport, used as a symbol of nationhood that can propagate a curated identity to the rest of the world. The invention of national sporting traditions, therefore, can be taken as a roadmap for the process of safeguarding sportive heritage.

In a 2009 article on the topic, Bairner listed five (sometimes mutually inclusive) criteria for the adoption of national sports: Popularity, invention, international success, tourism, and physical landscapes.⁶⁹ The first somewhat quantitative criterion, popularity, can be based on either/both spectatorship or participatory numbers.⁷⁰ Second, the ‘invention’ of sport refers to its origins in a particular nation, which leads to its eventual adoption as a symbol of national heritage. But, it can also refer to an invented tradition, like in the case of *Muay Thai*, as its “trajectory illustrates that what ends up counting as tradition in the making of a national sport

⁶⁷ Mike Cronin, *Sport and Nationalism in Ireland: Gaelic Games, Soccer and Irish Identity since 1884* (Dublin: Four Courts, 1999), 116.

⁶⁸ Renson, “The Come-back,” 77.

⁶⁹ Alan Bairner, “National Sports and National Landscapes: In Defence of Primordialism,” *National Identities* 11, no. 3 (September 2009): 223-39.

⁷⁰ In *Global Games* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001), Maarten Van Bottenburg provides eleven explanations for the popularization of sports in specific national contexts.

can be the result of complex dynamics of appropriation, transformation, and innovation in which both local and global agents take part.”⁷¹ Third, international success is difficult to associate with a traditional game, as it is inherently parochial in nature, although the success of Kyrgyz *kok boru* at the World Nomad Games is an exception. Fourth, “tourist board” national sports are traditional games that “advertise ‘the nation’ even though it may well be the case that they have demonstrably failed to capture the interest of all of the people.”⁷² Fifth, and last, drawing on Steven Grosby’s notion of territoriality, Bairner defends the primordialism of national landscapes in the adoption of national (traditional) games.⁷³ A wonderful example of a primordial, traditional, national sport is Nordic skiing in Norway, beautifully illustrated in a 1920 Swedish newspaper article about the Holmenkollen ski recreation area: “Just as Olympia in Greece does not only consist of the mountain of this name, but denotes the whole divinity, so we can understand the Holmenkollen in Norway in the same way. It is the name for the national sport, the national hill, the national day. It is a holy mountain.”⁷⁴ Although international sports like soccer, basketball and rugby are pervasive and prevalent in the contemporary global village, partly due to the colonial system, they cannot compare to the temporal longevity of traditional games. According to Bairner, “national sport is about true

⁷¹ Niko Besnier, Susan Brownell, and Thomas F. Carter, *The Anthropology of Sport: Bodies, Borders, Biopolitics* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2018), 212.

⁷² Alan Bairner, “Sport and the Nation in the Global Era,” in *The Global Politics of Sport: The Role of Global Institutions in Sport*, ed. Lincoln Allison (London: Routledge, 2005), 93.

⁷³ Steven Grosby, “Territoriality: The Transcendental, Primordial Feature of Modern Societies,” *Nations and Nationalism* 1, no. 2 (1995): 143-62.

⁷⁴ As quoted in Henning Eichberg, Signe Højbjerg Larsen, and Kirsten K. Roessler, “Gliding Body – Sitting Body. From Bodily Movement to Cultural Identity,” *Sport, Ethics and Philosophy* 12, no. 2 (2018): 117-8.

belonging whereas other sports ... lack the stamp of authenticity."⁷⁵ By using the term 'authenticity,' which is often employed in heritage discourse, we can denote that there is something traditional, local, and 'original' about national sports. As such, I propose a sixth criterion for the adoption of national sports: intangible cultural heritage.

As I have observed in my research, more often than not, countries have opted for *their* national sports to symbolize *their* cultural heritage and national identities, rather than a more popular global sport. The effects of globalization, colonialism, traditionalism, and localism are all dynamically shaping national sporting cultures around the world. In comparison to UNESCO heritagization, the ascendancy of folk games to national sports is another form of safeguarding. We have determined this in each of the case studies in the previous chapter: Turkish oil wrestling, Brazilian *capoeira*, Kyrgyz *kok boru*, and Irish hurling were all national sports *before* being conferred with 'UNESCO status,' and were therefore already safeguarded under the auspices of the state. As a symbol of national cultural heritage, "national sports are simply part of a panoply of elements that serve to legitimize the nation state."⁷⁶ Through the symbolic nature of the national sport, folk games find relevancy as intangible cultural heritage. Other examples include Japanese sumo wrestling, Bangladeshi *kabaddi*, Malaysian *sepak takraw* (feet-only volleyball), Colombian *tejo* (tossing game), or Mexican *charrería* rodeo (also a UNESCO-recognized traditional sport).⁷⁷ In Switzerland, during the 1850s, "the gymnastic

⁷⁵ Bairner, "National Landscapes," 229.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ For further readings, refer to: Allen Guttman and Lee Thompson, *Japanese Sport: A History* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2001); Joseph S. Alter, "Kabaddi, a National Sport of India: The Internationalism of Nationalism and

movement promoted *Schwingen* (from German ‘to swing’), the Alpine form of wrestling, and stone tossing as a *Nationalturnen* (a national sport).⁷⁸ While, more recently, in 1987, it was resolved at the annual meeting of the Icelandic Athletic Federation that *glíma* wrestling, which had been pedagogized since the 1940s, was the official national sport.⁷⁹ Moreover, I have personally received documentation from both Argentine and Andorran state officials testifying to legislation adopting their respective national sports: Argentinian Presidential Decree No. 17468, signed by populist President Juan Perón, declared the game of *pato* as the national sport on September 16, 1953; and a certificate of the Andorran General Council, signed by Secretary General Josep Hinojosa Besolí, confirmed that skiing was established as the national sport on November 19, 1965.⁸⁰ In all of the above examples, a folk game has been adopted as a national sport. In many respects, this is principally due to the fact that “a sport's national provenance and tradition provide a channel for expressing national identity.”⁸¹ Rooted in national identity, a symbol of the nation, and a form of parochial sportive nationalism, folk games are somatic markers of the intangible cultural heritage of a nation.

One of the key alternatives to heritagizing folk sports via UNESCO recognition is their adoption as national sports. By becoming symbols of nationhood, folk sports are, in essence, protected by the state. As elucidated by prolific sport ethicist William Morgan, “to put it in

the Foreignness of Indianness,” in *Games, Sports and Cultures*, ed. Noel Dyck (Oxford: Berg, 2000), 81-116; Kathleen M. Sands, *Charrería Mexicana: An Equestrian Folk Tradition* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1993).

⁷⁸ Henning Eichberg, “Folk Sports,” in *Berkshire Encyclopedia of World Sport*, vol. 1, eds, Gertrud Pfister and David Levinson, 3rd ed. (Great Barrington, MA: Berkshire, 2013), 526.

⁷⁹ Thorsteinn Einarsson, *Glima: The Icelandic Wrestling* (Reykjavik: Glímusaband Íslands, 1988).

⁸⁰ Office of the President of the Nation of Argentina, Presidential Decree No. 17468 (September 16, 1953); General Council of the Principality of Andorra, Certificate of the Secretary General (November 19, 2018).

⁸¹ Van Bottenburg, *Global Games*, 131.

Hegelian terms, we might say that the spirit of the nation (*Volksgeist*) is objectified in its sport practices, that a certain picture of our common life, of our relations with others, is built into these practices and gets played out, often in dramatic terms, whenever we engage in them.”⁸² Expressly, those national sports which are ‘homegrown,’ traditional, or related to folk cultures are undoubtedly more vital to nationalistic policy than national sports of a global provenance, which enable what Scottish sport historian Grant Jarvie terms “ninety-minute patriots,” but makes any meaningful relationship between the national sport and the nation highly subjected to the individual idiosyncrasies of the fan population, relaying little of the national heritagescape to the imagined community of the nation.⁸³ For ethnonationalists, national folk sports can create an elaborate romantic ethno-history. In the eyes of cultural nationalists, the games of the *Volk* are the embodiment of the nation, the quintessence of national physical culture. And, for external nationalists, promoting the nation on global platforms – such as Olympic medals or ‘UNESCO status’ – is of the utmost importance. Although UNESCO recognition adds another touristic avenue to promote sports globally, based on my theory of the adoption of national folk sports, the idea of national self-determination dictates that the nationalization of these folk games is an effective and localized alternative to UNESCO heritagization.

⁸² William J. Morgan, “Sports and the Making of National Identities: A Moral View,” *Journal of the Philosophy of Sport* 24 (1997): 12.

⁸³ Grant Jarvie and Graham Walker, *Scottish Sport in the Making of the Nation: Ninety Minute Patriots?* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1994).

Future Directions

Before concluding my thoughts about folk sport preservation, it is worth expanding on a number of avenues for future research. First, I must acknowledge that gender and class were not featured as case study criteria in this project. Although most folk sports are traditionally a male domain, the case of *camogie* is a fresh perspective to folk sport revivalism. As a start to any study on gender and class in relation to traditional games, I recommend Renson's article on "Local Heroes," in which the stereotype of folk "gamesters" was proven as elderly, lower-class males.⁸⁴ Second, funding systems in relation to UNESCO heritagization could have been further explored in this dissertation and, as such, I propose such a topic for future research. Third, and most importantly, although each of the four case study folk sports manifested a type of marginality highlighted in the Diamond-Renson Model, my own future research will focus more non-UNESCO endangered folk sports. Games such as Nepalese *dandi biyo*, Rwandan *gusimbuka urukiramende*, or the Valle d'Aosta (Italy) stick-and-ball games of *tsan*, *rebatta*, and *fiolet* could benefit more from academic research than those sports inscribed on global inventories. Finally, I also have plans for a number of tangential research projects, including a historiography of folk sports, the territoriality of *kok boru*, *chowgan*, and *silat*, and the practical implications of the UNESCO Traditional Sports and Games Charter. In sum, although I have learned tremendously while studying the various dimensions – globalization, nationalism,

⁸⁴ Roland Renson, "Local Heroes: Beyond the Stereotype of the Participants in Traditional Games," *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* 32, no. 1 (1997): 59-68.

heritage, etc. – of folk sport preservation, it has only sparked boundless interest in the subject matter and a great number of directions for future research.

Final Thoughts

The two alternatives to UNESCO heritagization highlighted in this chapter – revivalist groups and national sports – are similar in many ways, engaged in the recognition, promotion, and preservation of folk games. The primary difference, however, is that folk sport revivalists are not nationalists, but rather pluralists. They are combatting the standardization commonplace in the global sportscape, rather than cherry-pricking the traditional game that best suits nationalistic purposes. Revivalists seek plurality, heterogeneity, diversity. In the words of Clifford Geertz, “we must know one another, and live with that knowledge, or end marooned in a Beckett-world of colliding soliloquy.”⁸⁵ Modern sport, as a *lingua franca* of nations, benefits from the diversity of local ‘dialects.’ But, just as there are only about six hundred “stable and secure” languages – of the approximately ten thousand that have existed in human history – remaining today, of the thousands of localized sport forms only a few hundred are still actively participated in by the original bearer communities.⁸⁶ The folk sport revival movement can also be likened to the roots/folk music revival movement that swept the globe throughout the 1960s and 1970s. Both are caught up in the globalization paradox. Globalization disables locality but enables efficient communication to ‘strike up’ a global conversation (for instance, a nostalgic movement to combat the homogenizing effects of

⁸⁵ Geertz, “Used of Diversity,” 271.

⁸⁶ Davis, *Edge of the World*, 6.

globalization itself). For, those who claim to be maintaining the authenticity of traditional cultures, “play a part in a global cultural game which itself calls for the essentialization of local truth.”⁸⁷ After reviewing various safeguarding measures, we already know that the effects of sportification, pedagogization, and folklorization result in a loss of authenticity, even though the intent is to preserve. For the most apt comparison, as conveyed through the Diamond-Renson Model, folk sports are the endangered species of the physical cultural landscape. And, as the sport-media complex grows, and professional, global, Olympic sports remain central to our entertainment experience, there is little room for both the preservation of folk sports *and* their authenticity.

Dutch cultural historian Johan Huizinga, author of *Homo Ludens*, a foundational text in the field of sport studies, lamented that “with the increasing systemization and regimentation of sport, something of the pure play-quality is inevitably lost.”⁸⁸ A critique of the sportification process, but also of modern sport in general, Huizinga points to the struggle to maintain authenticity in a world of professional sport. As an example of this loss of the pure play-quality, the Swiss game of *Hornussen* (a folk farmer game of team-based golf) was recently appropriated by the energy drink giant Red Bull, as one of their ‘alternative’ sports events, mediatized, modernized, and promoted to a ‘modern’ audience. Inescapably, with the hegemony of modern Olympic sport, most methods employed to preserve traditional sport are tinged with aspects of modern sport. Westernization and capitalism are thus at the root of any

⁸⁷ Mona Abaza and Georg Stauth, “Occidental Reason, Orientalism, Islamic Fundamentalism: A Critique,” in *Globalization, Knowledge and Society*, eds. Martin Albrow and Elizabeth King (London: Sage, 1990), 211.

⁸⁸ Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play-Element in Culture* (Boston: Beacon, 1955), 197.

revival movement. It is for this reason that sport historian Jim Riordan claimed that “Western sports and local games often provide an unstable mixture; and it is a long haul to revive folk games. The corrosive effects of Western sports and values is hard to withstand, especially as traditional games emerged from and reflected a pre-industrial, patriarchal and ritualistic pattern of life.”⁸⁹ Indeed, in an ‘Olympic world,’ marked by capitalistic sporting stakeholders, the sport-media complex, and the standardization of sport forms, the options are to adapt and revise or join the bevy of extinct games and pastimes. Let us hope, instead, that Eichberg’s optimistic prediction comes to light: “Maybe some remnants of the Olympic sport will remain as a sort of circus, show business, and media attraction, but they will no longer dictate the exercises in the schools, the games of everyday life. The masses in different cultures, nations and regions will have their own festivals revealing their own patterns, their own traditions, their own historical and future changes.”⁹⁰ This sentiment seems almost heretical to our contemporary cult of Olympism.

The commercial Olympic sporting spectacle, a capitalistic system which Eichberg refers to as Olympic globalism, “is a machinery for the world-wide standardization of sports,” leaving little room for alternative sports, traditional sports, or new sports.⁹¹ Hoping for the fall of the Olympic Games, so as to save localized traditional games, however, is a futile effort. Rather, as

⁸⁹ Jim Riordan, “State and Sport in Developing Societies,” *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* 21, no. 4 (1986): 297.

⁹⁰ Henning Eichberg, “Olympic Sport – Neocolonization and Alternatives,” *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* 19, no. 1 (1984): 102.

⁹¹ Henning Eichberg, “From Sport Export to Politics of Recognition: Experiences from the Cooperation between Denmark and Tanzania,” *European Journal for Sport and Society* 5, no. 1 (2008): 28.

proposed by German sport historian Gertrud Pfister, “we have to find a balance between the protection of traditional games and their propagation as sport for all, between their globalisation and the preservation of the cultural heritage of nations and groups.”⁹² The future of folk sports is predicated on these balances, using, instead of rejecting, the global forces of accelerated communications and mass migration that have threatened their very existence. Coordination, organization, and participation is required to maintain the relevancy and the authenticity of traditional folk sports in our increasingly homogeneous global village.

I began this chapter, and indeed this entire project, the same way in which I intend to conclude it: By acknowledging my romantic idealism about the preservation of traditional games. In many ways, it seems obtuse to lament the marginalization of folk sport, futile to blame Olympic globalism, and hollow to criticize the UNESCO safeguarding apparatus. But then I think of the underlying contexts and dynamics, which, in effect, is my role as a (future) sport historian. Although I adhere to the revival of folk sports, it is important to understand and remain critical of global institutions that seek to safeguard local practices. There are always ulterior motives in the politicized network of international organizations. Even in a globalized world, the layering of bureaucracies, social dynamics, and idiosyncratic motivations within the UNESCO framework – from the Parisian headquarters to a rural Kyrgyz valley – makes one wonder how and why UNESCO heritagization actually *benefits* the safeguard of traditional games throughout the world. Indeed, as I have learned as a result of the case studies examined herein, the label of ‘UNESCO status’ does little more than itemize the sport on a vast list of

⁹² Pfister, “Proposal for Declaration,” 186.

other heritage elements. It is as useful as a touristic plaque. Instead, it affects the relationship between folk sport preservation and nation-building narratives: External nationalists vie for global recognition through 'UNESCO status'; ethnosport remains a symbol of ethnonational identity; and cultural nationalists seek to bolster national unity through shared cultural traditions, such as the adoption of national folk sports. In conclusion, although UNESCO heritagization may not directly affect the safeguarding of traditional games, it does inculcate nationalist incentives, which, in conjunction with the folk sport revival movement, may be enough to spark a postmodern wave of interest in the recognition, promotion, and preservation of traditional folk games. The Angel of History might yet abstain from closing 'the books' on folk sports. As a final thought, I leave you with the words of eminent sociologist Immanuel Wallerstein: "We design our utopias in terms of what we know now. We exaggerate the novelty of what we advocate. We act in the end, and at best, as prisoners of our present reality who permit ourselves to daydream."⁹³

⁹³ Immanuel Wallerstein, "Culture as the Ideological Battleground of the Modern World-System," in *Global Culture: Nationalism, Globalization and Modernity*, ed. Mike Featherston (London: Sage, 1990), 51.

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Appendix I

Organizations and Specialized Agencies of the United Nations

Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Nations#Specialized_agencies

Acronym	Agency	Headquarters	Est.
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization	Rome, Italy	1945
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency	Vienna, Austria	1957
ICAO	International Civil Aviation Organization	Montreal, Canada	1947
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development	Rome, Italy	1977
ILO	International Labour Organization	Geneva, Switzerland	1919
IMO	International Maritime Organization	London, UK	1948
IMF	International Monetary Fund	Washington, D.C., USA	1944
ITU	International Telecommunication Union	Geneva, Switzerland	1865
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization	Paris, France	1946
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization	Vienna, Austria	1967
UPU	Universal Postal Union	Bern, Switzerland	1874
WBG	World Bank Group	Washington, D.C., USA	1944
WFP	World Food Programme	Rome, Italy	1963
WHO	World Health Organization	Geneva, Switzerland	1948
WIPO	World Intellectual Property Organization	Geneva, Switzerland	1974
WMO	World Meteorological Organization	Geneva, Switzerland	1873
UNWTO	World Tourism Organization	Madrid, Spain	1974

Appendix II

UNESCO Legal Instruments: Conventions, Recommendations, and Declarations

Conventions

- Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education (Paris, 25 November 2019)
- Regional Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees in Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (Buenos Aires, 13 July 2019)
- Asia-Pacific Regional Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications in Higher Education (Tokyo, 26 November 2011)
- Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (Paris, 20 October 2005)
- International Convention against Doping in Sport (Paris, 19 October 2005)
- Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (Paris, 17 October 2003)
- Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage (Paris, 2 November 2001)
- Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region (Lisbon, 11 April 1997)
- Convention on Technical and Vocational Education (Paris, 10 November 1989)
- Regional Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees in Higher Education in Asia and the Pacific (Bangkok, 16 December 1983)
- Regional Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Certificates, Diplomas, Degrees and other Academic Qualifications in Higher Education in the African States (Arusha, 5 December 1981; revised in Addis Ababa, 12 December 2014)
- Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees concerning Higher Education in the States belonging to the Europe Region (Paris, 21 December 1979)
- Multilateral Convention for the Avoidance of Double Taxation of Copyright Royalties (Madrid, 13 December 1979)
- Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees in Higher Education in the Arab States (Paris, 22 December 1978)
- Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees in Higher Education in the Arab and European States Bordering on the Mediterranean (Nice, 17 December 1976)
- Convention relating to the Distribution of Programme-Carrying Signals Transmitted by Satellite (Brussels, 21 May 1974)
- Regional Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees in Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (Mexico City, 19 July 1974)
- Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (Paris, 16 November 1972)

- Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat (Ramsar, 2 February 1971)
- Convention for the Protection of Producers of Phonograms against Unauthorized Duplication of their Phonograms (Geneva, 29 October 1971)
- Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property (Paris, 14 November 1970)
- International Convention for the Protection of Performers, Producers of Phonograms and Broadcasting Organizations (Rome, 26 October 1961)
- Convention against Discrimination in Education (Paris, 14 December 1960)
- Convention concerning the International Exchange of Publications (Paris, 3 December 1958)
- Convention concerning the Exchange of Official Publications and Government Documents between States (Paris, 3 December 1958)
- Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict with Regulations for the Execution of the Convention (The Hague, 14 May 1954)
- Universal Copyright Convention (Geneva, 6 September 1952; revised in Paris, 24 July 1971)

Recommendations

- Recommendation on Open Educational Resources (OER) (25 November 2019)
- Recommendation on Science and Scientific Researchers (13 November 2017)
- Recommendation on Adult Learning and Education (13 November 2015)
- Recommendation concerning technical and vocational education and training (TVET) (13 November 2015)
- Recommendation concerning the protection and promotion of museums and collections, their diversity and their role in society (17 November 2015)
- Recommendation concerning the preservation of, and access to, documentary heritage including in digital form (17 November 2015)
- Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape, including a glossary of definitions (10 November 2011)
- Recommendation concerning the Promotion and Use of Multilingualism and Universal Access to Cyberspace (15 October 2003)
- Recommendation concerning the Status of Higher-Education Teaching Personnel (11 November 1997)
- Recommendation on the Recognition of Studies and Qualifications in Higher Education (13 November 1993)
- Recommendation on the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore (15 November 1989)
- Recommendation concerning the Status of the Artist (27 October 1980)
- Recommendation for the Safeguarding and Preservation of Moving Images (27 October 1980)

- Recommendation concerning the International Standardization of Statistics on the Public Financing of Cultural Activities (27 October 1980)
- Recommendation for the Protection of Movable Cultural Property (28 November 1978)
- Revised Recommendation concerning International Competitions in Architecture and Town Planning (27 November 1978)
- Recommendation concerning the International Standardization of Statistics on Science and Technology (27 November 1978)
- Revised Recommendation concerning the International Standardization of Educational Statistics (27 November 1978)
- Recommendation concerning the International Standardization of Statistics on Radio and Television (22 November 1976)
- Recommendation on the Legal Protection of Translators and Translations and the Practical Means to improve the Status of Translators (22 November 1976)
- Recommendation on Participation by the People at Large in Cultural Life and their Contribution to It (26 November 1976)
- Recommendation concerning the International Exchange of Cultural Property (26 November 1976)
- Recommendation concerning the Safeguarding and Contemporary Role of Historic Areas (26 November 1976)
- Recommendation concerning Education for International Understanding, Co-operation and Peace and Education relating to Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (19 November 1974)
- Recommendation concerning the Protection, at National Level, of the Cultural and Natural Heritage (16 November 1972)
- Recommendation concerning the International Standardization of Library Statistics (13 November 1970)
- Recommendation concerning the Preservation of Cultural Property Endangered by Public or Private works (19 November 1968)
- Recommendation concerning the Status of Teachers (5 October 1966)
- Recommendation concerning the International Standardization of Statistics Relating to Book Production and Periodicals (19 November 1964; revised 1 November 1985)
- Recommendation on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Export, Import and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property (19 November 1964)
- Recommendation concerning the Safeguarding of Beauty and Character of Landscapes and Sites (11 December 1962)
- Recommendation concerning the Most Effective Means of Rendering Museums Accessible to Everyone (14 December 1960)
- Recommendation against Discrimination in Education (14 December 1960)
- Recommendation on International Principles Applicable to Archaeological Excavations (5 December 1956)

Declarations

- Declaration of Ethical Principles in relation to Climate Change (13 November 2017)
- International Charter of Physical Education, Physical Activity and Sport (17 November 2015)
- Universal Declaration on Bioethics and Human Rights (19 October 2005)
- UNESCO Declaration concerning the Intentional Destruction of Cultural Heritage (17 October 2003)
- International Declaration on Human Genetic Data (16 October 2003)
- Charter on the Preservation of Digital Heritage (15 October 2003)
- UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (2 November 2001)
- Universal Declaration on the Human Genome and Human Rights (11 November 1997)
- Declaration on the Responsibilities of the Present Generations Towards Future Generations (12 November 1997)
- Declaration of Principles on Tolerance (16 November 1995)
- Declaration on Race and Racial Prejudice (27 November 1978)
- Declaration on Fundamental Principles concerning the Contribution of the Mass Media to Strengthening Peace and International Understanding, to the Promotion of Human Rights and to Countering Racialism, apartheid and incitement to war (28 November 1978)
- Declaration of Guiding Principles on the Use of Satellite Broadcasting for the Free Flow of Information, the Spread of Education and Greater Cultural Exchange (15 November 1972)
- Declaration of Principles of International Cultural Co-operation (4 November 1966)

Appendix III

List of National Sports

Note: If source is not available, then national sport was deduced by author from informal Google searches. Football (soccer), in most cases, was marked down as the *de facto* national sport.

Country	National Sport(s)	Date Adopted	Source
Afghanistan	Buzkashi		G. Whitney Azoy, <i>Buzkashi: Game & Power in Afghanistan</i> (Long Grove, IL: Waveland, 2003).
Albania	Football		
Algeria	Football		
Andorra	Skiing	November 19, 1965	Certificate from the Secretary General's office
Angola	Football		
Antigua & Barbuda	Cricket		
Argentina	Pato	September 16, 1953	Presidential decree No. 17,468
Armenia	Chess		
Australia	Rugby League		
Austria	Skiing		
Azerbaijan	Wrestling		
Bahamas	Sloop Sailing	1993	Michael Craton and Gail Saunders, <i>Islanders in the Stream: A History of the Bahamian People: Volume Two: From the Ending of Slavery to the Twenty-First Century</i> (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1998), 471.
Bahrain	Football		
Bangladesh	Kabaddi	1972	<i>Banglapedia: National Encyclopedia of Bangladesh</i>
Barbados	Cricket		
Belarus	Football		
Belgium	Football		
Belize	Football		
Benin	Football		
Bhutan	Archery		Victor Rosner, "Archery in Bhutan," <i>Anthropos</i> 62, no. 3/4 (1967): 419-32.
Bolivia	Football		
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Football		
Botswana	Football		
Brazil	Capoeira	1953	Speech by President Getúlio Vargas

Brunei	Football		
Bulgaria	Volleyball/Football		
Burkina Faso	Football		
Burma	Chinlone		Maitrii Aung-Thwin, "Towards a National Culture: Chinlone and the Construction of Sport in Post-Colonial Myanmar," <i>Sport in Society</i> 15, no. 10 (2012): 1341-52.
Burundi	Football		
Cabo Verde	Football		
Cambodia	Sepak takraw /Football		
Cameroon	Football		
Canada	Hockey/Lacrosse	May 12, 1994	National Sport Act
Central African Republic	Football		
Chad	Football		
Chile	Rodeo Chileno	January 10, 1962	Official letter No. 269 of the National Sports Council
China	Table Tennis		
Colombia	Tejo	2000	Colombia Comité Olímpico
Comoros	Football		
Congo, Democratic Republic of the	Football		
Congo, Republic of the	Football		
Costa Rica	Football		
Cote d'Ivoire	Football		
Croatia	Football		
Cuba	Baseball		
Cyprus	Football		
Czech Republic	Football		
Denmark	Handball/Football		
Djibouti	Football		
Dominica	Cricket		
Dominican Republic	Baseball		Alan M. Klein, "Culture, Politics, and Baseball in the Dominican Republic," <i>Latin American Perspectives</i> 22, no. 3 (1995): 111-30.
East Timor			
Ecuador	Football		
Egypt	Football		
El Salvador	Football		
England	Cricket/Football		
Equatorial Guinea	Football		

Eritrea	Football		
Estonia	Basketball		
Ethiopia	Football		
Fiji	Rugby Union		
Finland	Pesäpallo		Jussi Biork, Pauli Vuori, and Ray Pangle, "Pesapallo," <i>Physical Educator</i> 21, no. 2 (1964): 60.
France	Football		
Gabon	Football		
Georgia	Rugby Union		
Germany	Football		
Ghana	Football		
Greece	Football		
Grenada	Cricket		
Guatemala	Football		
Guinea	Football		
Guinea-Bissau	Football		
Guyana	Cricket		
Haiti	Football		
Honduras	Football		
Hungary	Water Polo/Football		
Iceland	Wrestling	1987	Thorsteinn Einarsonn, <i>Glima: The Icelandic Wrestling</i> (Reykjavik: Glímusaband Íslands, 1988).
India	Field Hockey		
Indonesia	Badminton	1951	Iain Adams, "Pancasila: Sport and the Building of Indonesia - Ambitions and Obstacles," <i>International Journal of the History of Sport</i> 19, no. 2-3 (2002): 295-318.
Iran	Varzesh-e Bastani /Wrestling/Polo		H.E. Chehabi, "Sport and politics in Iran: the legend of Gholamreza Takhti," <i>International Journal of the History of Sport</i> 12, no. 3 (1995): 48-60.
Iraq	Football		
Ireland	Gaelic Games		Mike Cronin, <i>Sport and Nationalism in Ireland: Gaelic Games, Soccer and Irish Identity since 1884</i> (Dublin: Four Courts, 1999).
Israel	Football		
Italy	Football		
Jamaica	Cricket		
Japan	Sumo		R. Kenji Tierney, "Outside the Sumo Ring? Foreigners and a

			Rethinking of the National Sport," in <i>Multiculturalism in the New Japan: Crossing the Boundaries Within</i> , eds. Nelson H. Graburn, John Ertl, and R. Kenji Tierney (New York: Berghahn, 2008), 208-17.
Jordan	Football		
Kazakhstan	Football		
Kenya	Football		
Kiribati	Football		
Kosovo	Football		
Kuwait	Football		
Kyrgyzstan	Kok boru		
Laos	Muay Lao		
Latvia	Basketball/Hockey		
Lebanon	Football		
Lesotho	Horse Racing		
Liberia	Football		
Libya	Football		
Liechtenstein	Football		
Lithuania	Basketball		
Luxembourg	Football		
Macedonia	Football		
Madagascar	Rugby Union		
Malawi	Football		
Malaysia	Sepak takraw		
Maldives	Football		
Mali	Football		
Malta	Football		
Marshall Islands			
Mauritania	Football		
Mauritius	Football		
Mexico	Charrería	1933	Presidential decree
Micronesia	Football		
Moldova	Trânta		
Monaco	Football		
Mongolia	Archery/Wrestling/ Horse Racing		
Montenegro	Football		
Morocco	Football		
Mozambique	Football		
Namibia	Football		

Nauru	Aussie Rules/ Weightlifting		
Nepal	Volleyball	May 22, 2017	Ministry of Youth and Sports
Netherlands	Football		
New Zealand	Rugby Union		
Nicaragua	Baseball		
Niger	Football		
Nigeria	Football		
North Korea	Taekwondo		
Norway	Cross-Country Skiing		
Oman	Football		
Pakistan	Field Hockey		
Palau	Baseball		
Panama	Baseball		
Papua New Guinea	Rugby League		
Paraguay	Football		
Peru	Paleta Fronton		
Philippines	Arnis	July 27, 2009	Republic Act No. 9850 – “An Act Declaring Arnis as the National Martial Art and Sport of the Philippines”
Poland	Football		
Portugal	Football		
Qatar	Football		
Romania	Oina		
Russia	Bandy		
Rwanda	Football		
Samoa	Rugby Union		
San Marino	Football		
Sao Tome and Principe	Football		
Saudi Arabia	Football		
Scotland	Golf		
Senegal	Wrestling		
Serbia	Football		
Seychelles	Football		
Sierra Leone	Football		
Singapore	Football		
Slovakia	Football		
Slovenia	Alpine Skiing		
Solomon Islands	Rugby Union		
Somalia	Football		
South Africa	Rugby Union /Football		

South Korea	Taekwondo		
South Sudan	Football		
Spain	Bullfighting		
Sri Lanka	Volleyball	1991	Susil Ranasinghe, "100 Years for Sri Lanka Volleyball," June 6, 2016, http://sportsinfo.lk/volley-ball/100-years-for-sri-lanka-volleyball
St. Kitt's & Nevis	Football		
St. Lucia	Cricket		
St. Vincent & the Grenadines	Football		
Sudan	Football		
Suriname	Football		
Swaziland	Football		
Sweden	Handball		
Switzerland	Wrestling		
Syria	Football		
Taiwan	Baseball		
Tajikistan	Wrestling		
Tanzania	Football		
Thailand	Muay Thai		
The Gambia	Wrestling		
Togo	Football		
Tonga	Rugby Union		
Trinidad & Tobago	Cricket		
Tunisia	Football		
Turkey	Oil Wrestling/Cirit		
Turkmenistan			
Tuvalu	Football		
Uganda	Football		
Ukraine	Football		
United Arab Emirates	Football		
Uruguay	Destrezas Criollas		
USA	Baseball		
Uzbekistan	Wrestling		
Vanuatu			
Venezuela	Baseball		
Vietnam	Football		
Wales	Rugby Union		
Yemen	Football		
Zambia	Football		
Zimbabwe	Football		

Appendix IV

Select Traditional Games Associations and Memberships

The Association For International Sport for All (TAFISA)

Est: 1991 – HQ: Frankfurt – Current head: Ju-Ho Chang – Web: <http://tafisa.org/>

International Fistball Association	World Minigolf Sport Federation	World Association of Taekwondo for All
World Dance Council Ltd.	Federation Internationale de Teqball	World Hapkido Federation
World Martial Arts Committee (WMAC)	World Jeet Kune Do Sports Council	World Hangung Association
World Dodgeball Federation	World Kungfu Dragon & Lion Dance Federation	International Union of Kettlebell Lifting
International Tchoukball Federation	International Zurkhaneh Sports Federation (IZSF)	International federation of wrestling on belts (Alysh)
Majorette-Sport World Federation	World Hapkido Confederation	International Marching League (IML)
International Nordic Walking Federation (INWA)	International SPOQCS Federation	Badminton World Federation
International Kempo Federation	World Kettlebell Sport Federation	World Silambam Federation
Internationaler Volkssportverband e.V.(IVV)	World Traditional Kickboxing Association	International Federation Kitesports Organisations
International Table Tennis Federation Foundation (ITTF)	International Federation of Cheerleading	International Draughts Federation
World Flying Disc Federation (WFDF)	International Sports Chanbara Association	World Bodybuilding & Physique Sports Federation
World Fudokan Federation	International e-Sports Federation	International Dance Organisation (IDO)
World Martial Arts Games Committee (WMAGC)	International NaB Golf Federation	International Jukskei Federation
	International Police Martial Arts Federation	

International Taekwon-do Federation	International de Sambo (FIAS)	International Functional Fitness Federation
International Traditional Taekwon-do Federation	International Qwan Ki Do Federation	International Jump Rope Union
World Judo Federation - Judo for All	United World Wrestling	Sport Jiu-Jitsu International Federation
World Jiu Jitsu Confederation	World Muay Federation - W.M.F.	World Kickboxing League, inc.
Confederazione Boccistica Internazionale	International Field Archery Association	World Baton Twirling Federation
International Armwrestling Federation	International Federation of Muaythai Associations (IFMA)	
International Sambo Federation / Federation	International Cheer Union	

European Traditional Sports and Games Association (ETSGA)

Est: 2001 – HQ: Zaragoza, Spain – Current head: Pere Lavega – Web: <https://jugaje.com/?lang=en>

Confédération des Jeux et Sports Traditionnels de Bretagne (FALSAB)	Fédération Française de Bowling et Sport de Quilles (FFBSQ)	Association Intercommunale de Promotion Sportive et Culturelle des Quilles de Huit
International Federation of Celtic Wrestling (IFCW)	Vlaamse Traditionele Sporten (VLAS)	Fédération ds Foyeurs Ruraux du Gers (FDFR)
Federación Cántabra de Bolos (FCB)	Proyecto Educativo Madera de Ser	Fédération Française de Boule de Fort
Sportimonium	Federación Aragonesa de Deportes Tradicionales (FADT)	Federació Catalana de Bitlles i Bowling (FCB)
Federazione Italiana Giochi e Sport Tradizionali (FIGeST)	Kultura Kirola	Escola Autònoma de Jocs Tradicionals
Institut Nacional d'Educació Física de Catalunya (INEFC)	Jeux, Culture, Tradition d'Anjou	Asociación Grupo de Acción Local Comarca Asón-Agüera
Museo de Juegos Tradicionales	Club San Cristóbal – Bolo Salinero	Brinquedia Rede Galega do Xogo Tradicional
Fédérachon Esport de Nohtra Téra (FENT)	Iparraldeko Joko eta Herri Kirol Federakuntza	

Fédération des Sociétés de Bourles du Nord	Amis du Musée des Jeux	Federació Balear de Tir de Fona
Centres d'Entraînement aux Méthodes d'Education Active (CEMEA)	Museo Etnológico de Galicia/Fundación Ricardo Pérez y Verdes (MELGA)	Museo del Juego y el Deporte Tradicional El Fuerte
Asociación del Bolo Vaqueiro	Tesz-Vesz Ifjúsági és Gyermekalapítvány Szolnok	Fédération Française du Jeu de Boules Parisien (FFJBP)
Associação do Jogos Tradicionais da Guarda (AJTG)	Baranta Traditional Hungarian Martial Arts Association	Instytut Rozwoju Sportu i Edukacji (IRSiE)
Associazione Giochi Antichi (AGA)	Companyia de Jocs l'Anònima	Federazione Italiana Pallapugno
Asociación de Profesorado de Educación Física (ADAL)	Asociación Colectivo Universitario de Palo Canario (CUPC)	Federação Portuguesa do Jogos Tradicionais
Universidade de Coimbra – Faculdade de Ciências do Desporto e de Educação Física	Les Rouleurs de Barriques de Lussac Saint-Emilion	Fundación Bolos de Cantabria
Coordinadora Intercomarcal de Bitlles/Birles (CIB)	Universidad del País Vasco – Departamento de Didáctica de la Expresión Musical, Plástica y Corporal	Fédération de Gouren
Grupo Deportivo 6 Conceyos	Fundación Universidad San Jorge	Federación de Lucha de Garrote Canario
Asociación Galega do Xogo Popular e Tradicional (AGXPT)	Federația Română de Oină (FOR)	Societă Etnomotora Asturiana
Association Ti ar Gouren	Česko-Moravský Prak	Pljočarski Klub Bosansko Grahovo
Associació Cultural Lo Llaüt	Istarski Pljočarski Savez (IPS)	Club Deportivo de Bolos Maragatos
Universidad de Alcalá – Departamento de Didáctica	Unie Hráčů Stolního Hokeje	Folklore Association of Ktima
Asociación La Tella	Universidad de Zaragoza – Departamento de Expresión Musical, Plástica y Corporal	Hrvatski Savez Tradicijskih Igrara i Sportova
Federación de Vela Latina Canaria		Rvački Klub Vitez Šabac
		Palestikos Omilos Serron Diogenis
		Athlitikos Palestikos Sylogos Kalon Dentron

International Traditional Sports and Games Association (ITSGA)

Est: 2009 – **HQ:** N/A – **Current head:** Guy Jaouen – **Web:** N/A

Association Africaine des Jeux et Sports Traditionnels (AAJST)

Traditional Sports and Games Association – Indian Subcontinent

European Traditional Sports and Games Association (ETSGA)

Asociación Panamericana de Juegos y Deportes Autóctonos y Tradicionales

Federación Mexicana de Juegos y Deportes Autóctonos y Tradicionales (FMJDAT)

International Society of Eastern Sports & P.E. – Pan-Asian Society of Sports & P.E.

I.R. Iran Rural Sports & Local Games Federation

Fédération Mauritanienne des Sports et Jeux Traditionnels

Fédération Algérienne des Sports et Jeux Traditionnels

Association Tunisienne de Sauvegarde des Jeux et Sports du Patrimoine

Alliance of Independent recognised Members of Sport (AIMS)

Est: 2009 – **HQ:** N/A – **Current head:** Stephan Fox – **Web:** <http://aimsif.org/>

International Angling Confederation (CIPS)

Fédération Internationale de Savate (FISav)

International Casting Sport Federation
(ICSF)

World Darts Federation (WDF)

International Aikido Federation (IAF)

International Federation of Sleddog Sports
(IFSS)

World Armwrestling Federation (AWF)

World Draughts Federation (FMJD)

International Soft Tennis Association (ISTA)

International Fistball Association (IFA)

International Federation of BodyBuilding
and Fitness (IFBB)

World Minigolf Sport Federation (WMF)

International Sepaktakraw Federation
(ISTAF)

International Powerlifting Federation (IPF)

Ju-Jitsu International Federation (JJIF)

International Dragon Boat Federation
(IDBF)

International Go Federation (IGF)

International Kendo Federation (FIK)

Institute for the Development of Sport and Education (IRSiE)

Est: 2011 – **HQ:** Warsaw – **Current head:** Kazimierz Waluch – **Web:** <http://www.traditionalsports.org/>

Association Of Almokabasah Wrestling Sport (AMW)

Botswana Traditional Sports and Games Confederation (BTSGC)

Traditional Sports and Games Federation – Indian Subcontinent

International Silambam Committee (ISC)

Pakistan Traditional Sports And Games Association

Federación Mexicana de Juegos y Deportes Autóctonos y Tradicionales (FMJDAT)

United States Traditional Sports and Games Confederation

Tsar's Hound Hunting

World Ethnosport Confederation (WEC)

Institute of Sport, Exercise and Health

Kok-Boru and National Sports Union

European Traditional Sports and Games Association (ETSGA)

Union of Africa Traditional Sports and Games

Association Tunisienne de Sauvegarde des Jeux et Sports du Patrimoine

Polski Związek Kręglarski

Fédération Européenne de Bokator (FEB)

Georgian Kettlebell Sport, Mas-wrestling, Tug of War and CrossFit National Federation

Polskie Stowarzyszenie Łucznictwa Tradycyjnego

Bangladesh Ethnosport Association

Georgian Strongmen and Highland Games National Federation

Fundacja Sport-Start

International Center for Tahtib (ICFT)

National Buzkashi and Local Sports Federation

World Ethnosport Confederation (WEC)

Est: 2015 – **HQ:** Istanbul – **Current head:** Necmeddin Bilal Erdogan – **Web:** <https://worldethnosport.org/>

Federación Argentina de Pato y Horseball

Equestrian Federation of Azerbaijan Republic (ARAF)

Japan Equestrian Archery Association

Kazakhstan Ethnosport Association

Kok-boru Federation of Kyrgyz Republic

Federación Mexicana de Juegos y Deportes Autóctonos y Tradicionales (FMJDAT)

Federation of Mongolian Horse Racing Sport and Trainers

Institute for the Development of Sport and Education (IRSiE)
Al-Gannas Qatari Society
Federația Română de Oină (FOR)
Kok-boru and National Sport Federation of Russia
International Belt-Wrestling Koresh Federation
National Sports and Games Association of the Republic of Sakha
Federation of Municipality Sport Clubs – Turkey
Marmara Region Traditional Sports Federation
Federation of Turkish Traditional Archery
Traditional Sport Branches Federation of Turkey
Association Tunisienne de Sauvegarde des Jeux et Sports du Patrimoine

Curriculum Vitae

TOM FABIAN

EDUCATION

University of Western Ontario, PhD, Sociocultural Studies of Sport	2017-2020
De Montfort University, Master of Arts (Sport History and Culture)	2015-2016
McGill University, Bachelor of Science (Kinesiology), Minor in Management	2006-2010

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Seneca College, Sessional Professor	January-April 2019
University of Western Ontario, Graduate Teaching Assistant	January 2017-May 2018

HONOURS & AWARDS

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Earle F. Zeigler Scholarship in Kinesiology	2018

SELECT PUBLICATIONS

1. Fabian, Tom, "Volleygate: Toward a History of the Largest International Sport Federation," *Sport History Review*, vol. 51, no. 1 (May 2020), pp. 84-101.
2. Fabian, Tom, "The Cool Runnings Effect: Flexible Citizenship, the Global South, and Transcultural Republics at the Winter Olympic Games," *International Journal of the History of Sport*, vol. 37, no. 17 (2020), pp. 1-26.
3. Fabian, Tom, "Jocks and Nerds: The Role of Sport in the North American Education System," in *Duelism: Confronting Sport through Its Doubles*, eds. Taylor McKee & Brittany Reid (Champaign, IL: Common Ground Research Networks, 2020), pp. 99-118.
4. Fabian, Thomas, "Turkish Oil Wrestling: Western Heteronormativity, Islamic Body Culture, and Folk Wrestling Masculinities," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Masculinity and Sport*, eds. Rory Magrath, Jamie Cleland, & Eric Anderson (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), pp. 497-515.
5. Fabian, Thomas, "George Plimpton: The Paper Lion and His Legacy," *Aethlon: Journal of Sports Literature*, vol. 33, no. 2 (2018), pp. 67-73.