

## SPORT IN TRANSITION: RIO DE JANEIRO, 1851-1868

*O SPORT EM TRANSIÇÃO: RIO DE JANEIRO, 1851-1868*

*EL DEPORTE EN TRANSICIÓN: RIO DE JANEIRO, 1851-1868*

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**Keywords:**

History.  
Sports.  
Turf.  
Rowing.

**Abstract:** This study discusses sporting experiences under way in Rio de Janeiro between 1851, when the first two clubs had been already founded, and 1868, when a key and long-lasting association was created – the Jockey Club. To reach that aim, newspapers and magazines published in the city in the period under consideration were used as sources. Finally, we concluded that the combination of internal aspects of the sports field with external/contextual factors helps to understand why sport only developed in the Brazilian capital in the late 1860s.

**Palavras chave:**

História.  
Esportes.  
Turfe.  
Remo.

**Resumo:** Este estudo tem por objetivo discutir as experiências esportivas em curso no Rio de Janeiro entre os anos de 1851, momento em que já tinham sido fundados os dois primeiros clubes, e 1868, quando foi criada uma agremiação mais sólida e longeva, o Jockey Club. Para alcance do objetivo, como fontes foram utilizados periódicos editados na cidade no período em tela. Ao final, concluímos que a conjugação de aspectos internos do campo esportivo com fatores externos/contextuais ajuda a entender o porquê de o esporte somente dar passos mais seguros na capital brasileira a partir do final dos anos 1860.

**Palabras clave:**

Historia.  
Deportes.  
Turf.  
Remo.

**Resumen:** Este estudio tiene como objetivo discutir las experiencias deportivas en marcha en Rio de Janeiro entre los años 1851, cuando habían sido fundados los dos primeros clubes, y 1868, cuando fue creada una asociación más sólida y longeva, el Jockey Club. Para alcanzar el objetivo, se utilizaron como fuentes periódicos publicados en la ciudad en ese período. Al final, concluimos que la combinación de aspectos internos del campo deportivo con factores externos/contextuales ayuda a entender la razón de que el deporte haya dado pasos más seguros en la capital del país solamente a partir de fines de la década de 1860.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The two pioneering sporting clubs in Rio de Janeiro – probably in Brazil – were created in 1849 and 1851 respectively: *Club de Corridas*, dedicated to horse racing and *Sociedade Recreio Marítimo*, dedicated to rowing. Although they faced difficulties, including those related to organizing their first events, it can be said that they established many of the elements of a sports field<sup>1</sup> that would be better defined only after the 1860s/1870s transition (MELO, 2014).

From 1851 to 1868, there was a transition in the shaping of the sport phenomenon in the capital of the Brazilian Empire. Some indications of that process can even be seen in terminology. While in the first half of the nineteenth century the words *athleta* and *sport* began circulating in the city, both in newspapers and dictionaries (MELO, 2014), in the 1850s and 1860s the terms became more common. In addition, the meaning came closer to what would be established when the field was definitively consolidated.

The term *athleta* had been used more metaphorically as a synonym for “fighter”. This use was still very common in newspapers, especially to refer to those who somehow challenged or confronted the powers that be, often involved in public controversies. For instance, it was used to define the activities of some newspapers such as *O Grito Nacional*, dedicated to criticizing the slave trade and the persistence of slavery (1852, p. 1). Incidentally, *O Athleta* was launched in 1856 – a very combative and controversial newspaper whose activities even triggered a debate on press freedom.<sup>2</sup>

There was, however, a novelty regarding the term: it also started to be more commonly used to denote those who participated in fights performed at show ventures. It was the case of *Mr. Charles*, the *athlete* who challenged other fighters at the circus of Guarda Velha Street in the second half of the 1850s, exciting the audience with his performance. He promised to pay a thousand *reis* for whoever won, following the rules published in newspapers (DIÁRIO... 1856b, p. 4).

The use of the term to refer to physical features became more common. That was quite noticeable in circus spectacles, which saw great success from the first half of the nineteenth century on, with gymnastics as one of their main attractions (MELO; PERES, 2014). Strong, muscular, beefy individuals started to be commonly called “*athletas*”. That was the case of Achille Giorgini, the “athletic artist”, and director of a company that performed in Rio de Janeiro. His specialty was the execution of “Herculean exercises in the Olympic column” (DIÁRIO..., July 13. 1855, p. 4).

At least one school advertized its offer of “athletic games” to its students: Instituto Colegial (ALMANAK..., 1854, p 344.).<sup>3</sup> Located in Nova Friburgo, it was one of the most important and most advanced Brazilian schools of the mid-nineteenth century. The use of the term by an educational institution is another interesting indicator of how it was spreading and changing its profile.

The term *sport*, in turn, as used to happen, continued to be seen as a typical British habit and considered a contribution to develop the personality of national leaders. Similarly, more news began to circulate about the new sporting habits of the French, indicating the success of horse

<sup>1</sup> We work with Bourdieu's (1983) idea of Sporting Field.

<sup>2</sup> About the controversy, see *Correio Mercantil*, 1856b, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> The institution offered not only primary education, but also preparatory courses for commerce and for higher academies.

racing activities (see, for example, DIÁRIO..., 1857, p. 2). Indeed, one of the arguments most commonly used by those advocating the practice in Brazil was exactly that it was appreciated in civilized countries – an alleged sign of adherence to ideas of progress.

Considering the need to better understand this transition period in the making of the phenomenon in nineteenth-century Rio de Janeiro, not only because it is important to understand the structure of the sporting field, but also to shed light on sport's relationship with the historical context, this study aims to discuss sports experiences in that city between 1851, when the first two clubs were founded, and 1868, when a stronger and long-lived organization was created: the *Jockey Club*.

In order to reach the goal, our sources were periodicals published in the city during the period in question, consulted at the National Library's Brazilian Digital Newspaper Archive. For analysis and interpretation of the material, we took into account the suggestions of Tania Regina de Luca (2005), considering what was published as representations framed from a certain point of view. It is worth considering that some of the materials used include ads of the clubs themselves or very short notes on events. When we considered it to have some potential for clarification, we referred to the specific newspaper/magazine and author.

Although there are already some studies about sport in nineteenth-century Rio de Janeiro – such as Mascarenhas (1999), Melo (2001), Lucena (2001) and Schetino (2008) – none of them looks further into the beginnings of the shaping of the sporting field. The exception is Melo (2014), which addressed sporting experiences in the first half of the century. The originality of this article lies in its uncovering and employing of unpublished or scarcely used sources to draw attention to the peculiarities of that initial period, pointing to perspectives on the phenomenon that may be considered in future research.

## 2 NEW SPORTING EXPERIENCES (1851-1856)

Even though horse races already existed in Rio de Janeiro since the 1810s and despite the great effort by those involved with the creation of Club de Corridas (1849), that pioneering experiment was not very successful. Equestrian competitions were difficult to manage, including from a financial point of view.

After the opening activity held in November 1850, new races would only take place in the following year, when João Guilherme Suckow took over the business. He was a Prussian native who arrived in Brazil in 1824 with troops at the service of the Empire, and became involved with the creation of public transport companies and livestock auctions. He was also a farmer and horse breeder. In an assembly held in February 1851, the Club de Corridas's<sup>4</sup> board leased Prado Fluminense, a race track located in the Engenho Novo neighborhood, to him and David Stevenson.<sup>5</sup>

Suckow was a typical entrepreneur. Although horse racing was linked to his line of business, his relation to it involved not only direct financial interests; it also gave him status and distinction. Such involvement gave him more recognition in the city: "The tenacity Mr.

4 The board included important characters of the Court, such as João Pereira Darrigue Faro (Viscount of Rio Bonito) and Mariano Procópio Ferreira Lage, both linked to the modernization of Brazilian economy.

5 Stevenson was a British lawyer who worked for the British settled in Brazil, especially for those who worked in commerce and those involved with the restriction on the slave trade. He lived in Brazil since the 1820s, also acting as a sales representative.

Major Suckow will eventually establish among us a sort of entertainment that is accepted today and highly protected in Europe for being very useful for the improvement of horses as a race” (CORREIO MERCANTIL, 1853, p. 1).<sup>6</sup>

His entrepreneurial mindset was critical for better structuring the sport and ensuring a popular beginning.<sup>7</sup> He immediately carried out a series of benefits at the racetrack and promoted its reopening as early as June 1851. Soon the horse races would again be present not only at the Prado, but also in the city’s everyday life – a sign that they had become more recognized. Even a market emerged around it. For example, the first references to horse racing appeared in terms of garments and sale of products in general, even in toys such as “horse racing” dolls, offered by “Ao paraíso das crianças” – a notorious store located in Praça da Constituição (DIÁRIO..., 1858a, p. 2). “Depósito de Perfumarias Inglesas” sold a Jockey Club extract for handkerchiefs (CORREIO MERCANTIL, 1856A, p. 4). In fact, the club was part of the 1855 carnival procession (CORREIO MERCANTIL, 1855a, p. 2).

Until 1854, horse races continued frequently. In that year, a group of amateurs organized to promote restricted and limited events whose audience included only guests in the audience and gentlemen-riders.<sup>8</sup> That experience resulted in a new club: Jockey Club Fluminense.

The initiative did not last. The association only promoted one event, because in the same year, 1854, a fire destroyed its horse track, stopping those activities in the city. Suckow had already accumulated large losses and saw few possibilities to successfully continue the business.

The fact is that, unlike the excitement that took over the city in the early years of that decade, a sense of discouragement prevailed in the second half of 1850s. In 1856, a chronicler noted: “There is already talk of regattas, but still no word about the horse racing, which usually starts in June or July. What is Jockey Club Fluminense doing? Will it leave us without races this year?” (DIÁRIO DO RIO DE JANEIRO, 1856a, p. 1).<sup>9</sup>

The development of rowing is similar to horse races’ in that first half of the 1850s. In November 1851, Sociedade Recreio Marítimo promoted its first activity, with high success (MELO, 2014). Even those who somehow criticized the sport recognized the importance of regattas in the city at the time.

However, a new regatta event would only occur in 1852, when the association was already called Sociedade Regata (CORREIO MERCANTIL, 1852a, p. 3). There might have been a change in its former name during the making of its statutes (CORREIO MERCANTIL, 1852b, p. 2). Indeed, when announcing that the regattas would be held on November 1<sup>st</sup> at Enseada de Botafogo, leaders asked members to pay their fees so that tickets could be sent promptly. That is, although the races were scheduled for a public space, members would have their own places to watch it.<sup>10</sup>

6 That publication was important during the Second Empire. It had a liberal and engaged political profile, as opposed to the more moderate *Jornal do Comércio*. The section where the news was published, titled *Pacotilha*, was written by Manuel Antônio de Almeida, whose best known work is *Memórias de um Sargento de Milícias*. The city’s main events were commented in that space.

7 For more information, see Melo (2013).

8 Gentlemen-riders were not paid or compensated for riding horses.

9 The newspaper was one of the first in the country to circulate daily and was characterized both by its emphasis on the commercial aspect and advertising and by adopting an editorial line that advocated the country’s progress. It was marked by its close look into changes in the Court’s society. The author of the column *Folhetim: Conversa com meus Leitores* was José de Alencar, who signed as Al.

10 The board of Sociedade Regata, part of which already acted at Sociedade Recreio Marítimo, shows its profile: Joaquim Marques Lisboa, future

With the announcement, a conflict emerged between horse race and regatta supporters (CORREIO MERCANTIL, 1852c, p. 2). The problem was that horse races had been previously scheduled for the same day. The decision of the rowing association caused perplexity, sounding for some as an unnecessary division of efforts. It would be difficult for the public to attend the two activities, even because they would be held in places far away from each other considering transportation difficulties – about 10 kilometers.

Given the suggestion that the rowing group changed the date of their activity, an anonymous who signed as “Rower” said the request would not be accepted because holding the event on November 1 was a statutory, although he claimed that “the board of Regatta wishes all success for horse racing, which is very useful to the country” (CORREIO MERCANTIL, 1852b, p. 1). The debate was intense.

In the end, the director of Prado Fluminense notified the transfer of horse races to November 7, due to the poor quality of the road to the racetrack (CORREIO MERCANTIL, October 30. 1852e, p. 2). In fact, it had been a very rainy week, but apparently, it was a graceful exit. Suckow did not want to compete with the regattas for audience.

The confusion, however, was not over. Sociedade Regata, despite having insisted on the date and published a series of announcements in newspapers, held an event restricted to members, away from the coast and the reach of the general public, obliterating the audience’s view with a line of vessels where only those with invitations could be.

That was widely criticized and shook the new club’s credibility. The bad impact was widespread and virtually all newspapers of the city addressed the fact for weeks. To show their support, some warship captains organized a new regatta in the same month, (PERIÓDICO..., 1852, p. 5). The event was promoted in a more central area of the Guanabara Bay, in front of the facility boat known as *barca de banhos*, located by the Pharoux Hotel (JORNAL DAS SENHORAS, 1852, p. 159), which facilitated the enthusiastic attendance of the audience to regattas disputed only by the military (JORNAL DO COMÉRCIO, 1852, p. 1).

A new regatta was only held in 1853, this time at the Caju cove (DIÁRIO..., 1853, p. 2). As usual, a good crowd attended. The impact was very positive, although some criticism to the organization remained, including to site selection (PERIÓDICO..., 1853, p. 5). However, despite the success, and even if the occasions were anxiously awaited by a growing part of the population, it was not possible to keep holding regular rowing events.

After nearly two years without regattas, new expectations emerged in 1855. The desire conveyed in newspapers was to organize an event affordable to all, to be closed with “a popular dance and major fireworks to be burned at sea” (CORREIO MERCANTIL, 1855b, p. 1). It was not to be promoted by a club, but rather by an informal group whose leaders included naval officer Theotônio Meirelles da Silva<sup>11</sup> (CORREIO MERCANTIL, 1855c, p. 2). The initiative had strong support from public authorities, including the Navy and the Emperor.

The event seems to have rekindled the flame of rowing in the city. After that, several competitions were promoted among boat owners. At least one of these cases became a major regatta: a dispute between the Brazilian S. Jorge and British Albion, held at Saco da

Admiral Tamandaré (president); the Baron of São Nicolau, Leopoldo Augusto da Camara Lima (vice president); Francisco Leão Cohn, the son of a French tradesman, distinguished career military officer, customs officer (secretary); *comendador* Antonio José da Costa Ferreira (Treasurer).

<sup>11</sup> He would become one of the most productive military historians in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Raposa (Ponta do Caju). Apparently, even an association was created, whose secretary was Thomaz Rocha, on which we did not get much information<sup>12</sup> (CORREIO MERCANTIL, 1855d, p. 4).

In June 1856, given the higher interest in regattas – by Brazilians, Portuguese and English, civilians and Navy military – a meeting was held at Hotel Pharoux to discuss topics such as the best place for the competitions, strategies to raise funds for awards and operational expenses, rules to be adopted (CORREIO DA TARDE, 1856, p. 3). In the end, despite the good intentions, no event was held. At the turn from the 1850s to the 1860s, references to the sport only appeared in newspapers to joke about some urban problem, “The inspector of S. Domingos de Niterói is invited to attend the regatta that should take place on Sunday at Fresh Street Pond, produced by a waterfall of putrid waters that run from a house every day after 10 hours, [...]” (DIÁRIO..., 1861, p. 2).

As with horse racing, it would still take a few years for rowing to consolidate.

### 3 A RECESS (1856-1868)

Between 1856 and 1868, few sporting events were promoted in the neutral municipality of the Court.<sup>13</sup> In 1858, some horse races were held at *Hippodromo* (also called Roman Tournaments). The establishment was located at Campo da Aclamação (Campo de Santana) (CORREIO MERCANTIL, 1858, p. 3), a sort of circus where various spectacles were held, including gymnastics and even bullfighting (CORREIO DA TARDE, 1858, p. 3). As critically noted by a chronicler who identified differences: “What happens is that Mr. Barboglio (the owner) made a sort of mess, because a tournament is not a Hippodrome” (DIÁRIO..., 1858b, p. 1).

In December 1861, there was news that some people were interested in promoting horse racing again in the city. With the headlines “Jockey Club” (CORREIO MERCANTIL, 1861e, p. 3), people were called on to sign up for races that would be held at Praia Vermelha: “Among cheers and before a great audience (although [...] the race was promoted almost secretly), amateurs disputed – of course, each in his own horse, the eight races in the program” (A SEMANA..., 1861, p. 3).

Despite the success, improvisation and lack of organization prevailed. The tracks were inadequate, poorly assembled bleachers even fell, the program was not clear, technical parameters were poor (CORREIO DA TARDE, 1861, p. 3). *A Semana Ilustrada*, always attentive and critical, joked about the event: “We are in the middle of the race course – everything races. [...] Horses race ridden by members of the Jockey-Club, some of which, despite being racers, left as a disappointed race” (*A Semana...*, 1861, p. 2).

Some issues later, the same publication ran a cartoon by Henry Fleiuss, one of the most fruitful cartoonists of the nineteenth century, comparing the poor performance of amateur racers with the good performance of women horse riders who worked at the circus:

<sup>12</sup> Judging for the news, it may be the old Sociedade Regata still in operation.

<sup>13</sup> With the so-called Additional Act of 1834, which promoted significant changes in the 1824 Constitution, Rio de Janeiro became a “neutral city” with its own Chamber, separate from the Province of Rio de Janeiro. That was important to ascribe a central role to the capital, stressing its strong relationship with the monarchy and its special status on the national scene.

Figure 1 – Cartoon



\*In the best environments of Rio de Janeiro, they say that some amateurs from the Jockey Club, to avoid the risk of a second fall, will take horse-riding lessons from the women of the Guarda Velha circus. Horses, scared, will claim there is nothing they can do.

Source: The Week..., 1861, p. 5.

Surrounded by criticism, the group did not promote any more races, although new expectation emerged in 1862: “The Jockey Club was organized again: we are told that there will soon be races at Praia Vermelha” (CORREIO MERCANTIL, 1862b, p. 2). Once again, it was all promises.

Only in 1868 the initiative that would consolidate horse racing in Rio took place: “Yesterday, at the headquarters of the Sociedade Auxiliadora da Indústria Nacional, a meeting took place when a Jockey Club was founded, aimed at holding horse races at Prado Fluminense” (DIÁRIO DO RIO DE JANEIRO, 1868, p. 1). The organization hosting the foundation ceremony of the new horse racing association,

[f]ar from being a trade association, [...] was created in the spirit of the Enlightenment and was, like so many other societies of the time, a community that was intended to be scientific, but gathered scientists, scholars, politicians and men linked to the business world in one space (BARRETO, 2008, p. 3).

The board of the new club included important figures of the Empire, such as the aforementioned Marianno Procópio Ferreira Lage (president), merchant and landowner Henry José Teixeira (1<sup>st</sup> secretary), merchant Felisberto C. Paes Leme (2<sup>nd</sup> Secretary), José Dias Delgado de Carvalho (director), who was a member of a traditional family of the Brazilian nobility, and Eduardo Augusto Pacheco (treasurer), a landowner who became one of the first people interested in the preservation of sport’s memory. The end of the interregnum of horse racing was near.

Rowing went through a similar process. In 1861, an attempt was made at resuming regattas by promoting seven races in which civilian amateurs and military took part (CORREIO MERCANTIL, Sept. 14, 1861, p. 3). There was no association organizing the event, membership in any club was not required, and people signed up individually.

On the day of the event, a real frenzy took over the shoreline, exciting a journalist: “The turnout, the interest sparked by the Botafogo regatta [...] makes us expect its repetition, because

regattas have two characteristics recommended by the Latin poet – *utile et dulce*” (CORREIO MERCANTIL, 1861a, p. 1).

In that same year, the news emerged that a new maritime club was being organized (CORREIO MERCANTIL, 1861c, p. 1). The advertising material for a nautical event promoted by that group, of which we do not have more information, explicitly stated: “In view of the convenience of the audience, the regatta will be held parallel to the beach, [...] so that viewers do not lose any part” (CORREIO MERCANTIL, 1861d, p. 4). Turnout had admittedly become a concern.

Expectation of a large audience even generated a police intervention to organize the parking of cars that arrived at the event. Alternative spaces were also provided to accommodate those interested: “The spectators of the regatta have at their disposal the best place to watch it, up the road from Olinda St. until Mundo Novo [...]. Thousands of people can be accommodated there to enjoy a view that is better than in any beach house” (DIÁRIO..., 1861b, p. 3).

Once again, despite their success, nautical events had no continuity. In 1862, when the creation of Sociedade Passeio Marítimo e Regata was announced (DIÁRIO..., 1862, p. 1), there were difficulties to organize races. A chronicler pointed out:

However, there is already talk of a new regatta; we are sure and almost bet that it will only take place from here to three years. No problem: the best of the party is to wait for it; we will wait with the firm intention of stopping to wait before the 2<sup>nd</sup> month. A society or a club are established he and everything goes wonderfully well for one, two, three months; [...]; in 4<sup>th</sup> month, the temperature goes down [...]; in the 5<sup>th</sup> month, few people go to the races [...] (CORREIO MERCANTIL, 1862a, p. 3).<sup>14</sup>

As in horse racing, it was also from the second half of the 1860s on that the situation began to change with the creation of the Club de Regatas, which would open the way for many associations, anticipating the foundation of the important Club de Regatas Guanabareense (1874).

Another sport failed to achieve great popularity, with which the British established in the city had been involved since the first half of the nineteenth century: cricket (MELO, 2014).

We obtained more information about the practice from 1865 on, when *The Anglo-Brazilian Times: Political Litterary and Comercial* was launched. It was published by Irishman William Scully, one of the leaders of the British community established in Rio.<sup>15</sup> In the first issues of the publication, we found a story about the British Cricket Club. The association would have received a donation of sports equipment, which allowed the “resurgence of the splendid game during winter” (THE ANGLO-BRAZILIAN..., 1865a, p. 1). The news concluded with a call: “We wish all prosperity for the new club and we hope it rises again like a phoenix from the ashes of the old association”. That is, more than a spontaneous practice, there is indication that there had been a cricket club in Rio de Janeiro before 1865, about which we could not obtain more information.

In May 1865, an ad called on the main team of the already called *Rio British Cricket Club* to play against the *Artisans Amateur Cricket Club* (THE ANGLO-BRAZILIAN..., 1865b, p. 4). So there was another association in the city, about which we do not have much information

<sup>14</sup> In that year, there were some regattas in Niterói, of the same model adopted in Rio de Janeiro.

<sup>15</sup> For more information on the publication and its active editor, see: <[http://www.irlandeses.org/dilab\\_scullyw.htm](http://www.irlandeses.org/dilab_scullyw.htm)>. Accessed on: June 19, 2014.



either. In any case, there is indication of lots of action around that sport. In addition to the matches between the two clubs, they used to play against teams from English ships arriving or anchored at the bay of Guanabara, for instance officers of the HMS Narcisus (THE ANGLO-BRAZILIAN..., 1865c, p. 4). There were also matches between vessels and between combined teams of civilian and military players.

The events used to be held on a ground that was located in Campo de Santana – a major entertainment venue in town (SEGAWA, 1996). The teams were formed exclusively by Englishmen, who also made up most of the audience. Only occasionally there was a broader public, drawn by curiosity. In fact, not even ads for matches were found in major newspapers. The British did not seem to want a wider audience; those were occasions for them to meet around a typical cultural practice of their countries of origin.<sup>16</sup>

In contrast to what happened with the other two sports, which began to emerge again in the late 1860s, cricket practice declined. In 1868, *The Anglo-Brazilian Times* published a letter from a newcomer in which he showed surprise at what he considered his countrymen's immobility. He did not accept that *British Cricket* was inactive, and that there was no other sports association encouraged by them: "I am scared to know that Rio's Englishmen have no horse racing or rowing clubs" (THE ANGLO-BRAZILIAN..., 1868a, p. 3). The author noted that those were common habits in the world wherever a group of British were established, who learned to love that sport early.

A few months later, another letter made the same point, more clearly detecting the inactivity of the *British Club*. The author suggested an urgent need to rehabilitate the ground of Campo de Santana, demanding the foundation of a new association, since the previous one had "apparently disappeared" (THE ANGLO-BRAZILIAN..., 1868b, p. 3). The editor echoed the claim, criticizing the lack of interest in the sport: "We expect better things from our young Englishmen than the abandonment of a national game that has followed the English around the world" (THE ANGLO-BRAZILIAN ... 1868c, p. 3). It was only in the 1870s that cricket flourished again in the capital.

#### 4 CONCLUSION

The 1850s were a period of great prosperity for Brazil, a watershed in Brazilian history, a time of great change and State-building (CARVALHO, 2012, CHALHOUB, 2012). Impacts of those changes were clearly felt in the capital of the Empire, including initiatives related to better organization of public services: sanitation, water supply, lighting, health care, transport infrastructure (CHALHOUB, 2012). Rio de Janeiro definitely established itself as the most important city in Brazil, the main entry point for different products and people of several nationalities, as well as a propagator of fashions and customs (SCHWARCZ, 1998).

In this scenario, a more intense public dynamic was created, which resulted even in better structuring of entertainment market. In the capital of the new nation that was consolidating, civil society organized and was also recognized in the entertainment area, which quickly broadened, helping to strengthen and expose the contradictions and ambiguities surrounding the initiatives of adoption of new civilizational parameters. It was in that context that the first and most organized sports experiences took place in the city.

<sup>16</sup> For a discussion about the peculiarities of the British established in Brazil, see Freyre (1977).

The following decade would not be so auspicious for several reasons. A new generation started to express their disagreements with the government of Pedro II more explicitly. They were sharpened with Republican initiatives strengthened as a result of the Paraguayan War – one of the key episodes in Brazilian history, after which both the peak of the Empire and the beginning of its end were evident.

That conflict had a significant impact on Rio's everyday life. From the symbolic point of view, while it was very important to forge a national identity, it created tension in cities, which were reflected in a certain slowing of party life. In addition to the worrisome climate, the financial consequences of the war increased economic difficulties of a crisis that was already taking shape because of problems in the international arena in 1861-1864 (BETHELL, 2012, CARVALHO, 2012). Moreover, successive epidemics, including yellow fever and cholera, frightened the population, helping to keep them from public spaces (CHALHOUB, 2006).

At that time, sports initiatives were still embryonic. The complex operation and the economic context necessary for the maintenance of activities were not fully mastered. We should also consider that the consumer public was not that big. According to the first official census (1872), Rio de Janeiro had 274,972 inhabitants, 228,743 of which were in the city (the rest lived in rural areas); of those, 191,176 were free.

Therefore, this transition in shaping the sports field must be seen from a double perspective. Internally, protagonists could not properly manage associations' activities and did not understand the need to adopt a model that, even though it kept distinction mechanisms, attracted rather the general public, without which the practice could not be maintained. Externally, certain contextual conditions should be taken into account, even to consolidate a consumer market, especially with a better definition of a socioeconomically intermediary stratum.

However, cricket was a different case. As the sport did not gain popularity among nationals, being restricted to people linked to the British, its continuity always depended more on the action of some leaders, and when they left the city – the English moved around a lot – they ended up discouraging the whole scene.

There was even a misunderstanding that surrounded the game. Mascarenhas (2008) recalls that when the British Rio Cricket Club asked the City Council for permission to build the ground in Campo de Santana, the government did not even understand what it was.

In the other two cases – horse racing and rowing – bringing together the two dimensions mentioned – aspects internal to the field and foreign-contextual elements – helps to understand why the sports field took safer steps in Rio de Janeiro after the late 1860s.

In any case, it seems important to draw attention to the fact that, at the time, although with many limits, certain dimensions already existed that would be best defined during the nineteenth century: conflicts between horse racing and rowing practitioners, related to dates of events, clubs' working dynamics and competitions, meanings of the practice, creation of a market around the sports, debates about the appropriate profile of the audience and practitioners. Those issues would be key in the final shaping of Rio de Janeiro's sports field.

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