

Between the elite and the people: the sport in the 19th-century Rio de Janeiro (1851–1857)

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Abstract

This article aims to discuss the sporting experiences underway in Rio de Janeiro between the years 1851 and 1857. As a starting point of the time frame, it was considered the moment when the first associations of horse racing and rowing were founded in the city. The ending point refers to the creation of Petropolitano Jockey Club, the last initiative before there was a period of stagnation in the promotion of sporting events. We tried to address the peculiarities of the involvement of various social groups in the phenomenon. As the practice was closely associated with notions of civilization and progress, we infer that this research can help us better understand the relationship of these different strata with the initiatives of adherence to the ideas and images of modernity in the capital of the country, which could be observed at that period. To fulfill the objective, we used as sources the publications edited in the city, taking into account that the press began to take on the role of public arena and an opinion leader. At the end, we concluded that, in this period, one of the key dilemmas of the shaping of the sports field can be observed, as it had occurred with other entertainment practices: the need to create strategies to attract and involve a larger public, without abandoning the distinction mechanisms.

Keywords: history of the sport; Second Empire; Rio de Janeiro.

Entre a elite e o povo: o sport no Rio de Janeiro do século XIX (1851–1857)

Resumo

Este artigo tem por objetivo discutir as experiências esportivas em curso no Rio de Janeiro entre os anos de 1851 e 1857. Como data inicial do recorte temporal, considerou-se o momento em que estavam fundadas as primeiras agremiações de turfe e remo da cidade. A data final refere-se à criação do Jockey Club Petropolitano, última iniciativa antes que houvesse um período de recesso na promoção de eventos de esporte. Procurou-se abordar as peculiaridades do envolvimento dos diversos grupos sociais com o fenômeno. Como a prática era muito associada a noções de civilização e progresso, inferimos que essa investigação pode nos ajudar a melhor entender o relacionamento desses distintos estratos com as iniciativas de adesão ao ideário e imaginário da modernidade na capital do país, observáveis naquele momento. Para alcançar o objetivo, como fontes, utilizamos periódicos publicados na cidade, tendo em conta que a imprensa começava a assumir o papel de arena pública e formadora de opiniões. Ao fim, concluímos que, no período, observa-se um dos dilemas-chave na conformação do campo esportivo, a exemplo do que ocorria com outras práticas de entretenimento: a necessidade de gestar estratégias de atração e envolvimento de um público ampliado, sem abandonar os mecanismos de distinção.

Palavras-chave: história do esporte; Segundo Império; Rio de Janeiro.

Entre la elite y el pueblo: el deporte en Rio de Janeiro del siglo XIX (1851–1857)

Resumen

El presente artículo tiene como objetivo discutir las experiencias deportivas que estaban en curso en Rio de Janeiro, entre los años del 1851 y 1857. Se consideró como data inicial del recorte del tiempo el momento en el cual las primeras agremiaciones de turf y remo de la ciudad se fundieron. La data final se refiere a la creación del Jockey Club Petropolitano, que fue la última iniciativa previa a un período de recesso en la promoción de eventos deportivos. Se intentó abordar las peculiaridades de lo envolvimento de diversos grupos sociales con el fenómeno. Debido a la práctica ser muy relacionada a las nociones de civilización y progreso, deducimos que esa investigación puede ayudarnos a comprender mejor la relación de esos diferentes estratos con las iniciativas de adhesión al ideal e imaginario de modernidad en la capital del país, que son observables en aquello momento. Para que el objetivo sea alcanzado, fueron utilizados, como fuentes, los periódicos publicados en la ciudad, llevándose en cuenta que la prensa estaba empezando a asumir el rol de arena pública y de formador de opiniones. Al final, se concluyó que, en el período, se observa uno de los problemas esenciales en la conformación del campo deportivo, como ocurría con otras prácticas de entretenimiento: la necesidad de gestar estrategias de atracción e involucramiento de un público mayor, sin dejar de lado los mecanismos de distinción.

Palabras clave: historia del deporte; Segundo Imperio; Rio de Janeiro.

Entre l'élite et le peuple, le sport à Rio de Janeiro du XIXe siècle (1851–1857)

Résumé

Cet article vise à discuter des expériences sportives en cours à Rio de Janeiro, entre les années 1851 et 1857. Comme le délai de la date de début, il était considéré comme le moment où ils ont fondé les premières associations de courses de chevaux et d'aviron de la ville. La date limite se réfère à la création du Jockey Club Petropolitano, dernière initiative avant qu'il y ait une période de stagnation dans la promotion de manifestations sportives. Il a cherché à répondre aux particularités de la participation de divers groupes sociaux avec le phénomène. Comme la pratique a été étroitement associée aux notions de civilisation et de progrès, nous en déduisons que cette recherche peut nous aider à mieux comprendre la relation entre ces différentes strates avec les initiatives d'adhésion des idées et de l'imagination de la modernité dans la capitale, observables à l'époque. Pour atteindre l'objectif, telles que les polices, les périodiques d'utilisation publiés dans la ville, étant donné que la presse a commencé à prendre le rôle de l'espace public et de formation des opinions. A la fin, nous avons conclu que il a été un des principaux dilemmes pour façonner le terrain de sport, comme cela qui a eu lieu avec d'autres pratiques de divertissement: la nécessité de stratégies pour attirer et impliquer un public élargi sans autorisation mécanismes de distinction.

Mots-clés: histoire du Sport; Second Empire; Rio de Janeiro.

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In the first half of the 19th century, the precursor sports competitions of Brazil were held in Rio de Janeiro. Even if one cannot speak *stricto sensu* of a structured field,¹ these initial experiments had already had many of their constituent elements. It was even possible to note the outlining of two modalities, turf and rowing, around which some differences were established, not only linked to the dynamics of the practices but also to the different social groups that were engaged in them in a more or less intense way.²

What brought together the initiatives of the two modalities was the pretension to emulate certain symbolic parameters of the European “civilized” world.³ The founding of the Racing Club in 1849 and of the Marine Recreational Society in 1851 were seen as auspicious signs that the country was progressing.

These associations emerged at an important moment in the Brazilian history. After a very turbulent period, marked by difficulties to consolidate the independence, which were felt both in the First Reign (1822–1831) and in the Regency Period (1831–1841), a greater political and economic stability began to develop with the ascent of Pedro II to the throne (1841).⁴

About a decade later, the consequences of this process became visible. The 1850s were a watershed in the history of the country.⁵ A better structuring of the State and the engagement in modernization initiatives were noticeable. Gradually, the idea that Brazil should stand out by the adherence to ideas of civilization and progress, even if the domestic difficulties and contradictions, such as the existence of slavery, made the limits of this intention explicit.

In the context of the economy, one can note both the consolidation of the commercial sector, stimulated by the good results in the agro-export sector, as some diversification, including the first industrialization attempts.⁶ In the sphere of politics, this was a moment of relative stability, in which the power and the leadership of the Conservative Party stood out.⁷ In the cultural scene,

¹I'm working with the idea of sports field as suggested in Pierre Bourdieu, “Como é possível ser esportivo?”, *In: _____, Questões de sociologia*, Rio de Janeiro, Marco Zero, 1983, p. 136-163. Basically, I consider the perception of the author about its constituents (representative bodies, own technical staff, autonomous calendar, market around it), as well as his thoughts on the structure of the distinction strategies surrounding the sport.

²Victor Andrade de Melo, *Antes do club: as primeiras experiências esportivas na capital do Império (1825–1851)*, vol. 49, Projeto História, São Paulo, 2014. In press.

³The sport, in many ways, dramatized and helped to shape a set of values and images related to the ideas and images of modernity. For more information, see: Georges Vigarello; Richard Holt, “O corpo trabalhado – ginastas e esportistas no século XIX”, *In: Alain Corbin (org.), História do corpo*, vol. 2, Rio de Janeiro, Vozes, 2008, p. 393-478; Victor Andrade de Melo, *Cinema e esporte: diálogos*, Rio de Janeiro, Aeroplano; FAPERJ, 2006.

⁴José Murilo Carvalho, “A vida política”, *In: _____, (coord.), História do Brasil Nação (1808–2010). A construção nacional (1830–1889)*, vol. 2, Rio de Janeiro, Objetiva, 2012, p. 83-130.

⁵Sidney Chalhoub, “População e sociedade”, *In: Ibidem*, p. 37-82.

⁶João Antônio de Paula, “O processo econômico”, *In: Ibidem*, p. 179-224.

⁷José Murilo Carvalho, *op cit.*

there was an increased search for ties with the European continent,⁸ a process that was enhanced by the great presence of foreigners, who worked in a wide variety of businesses, and better possibilities of communication, with the installation of the telegraph and the emergence of more effective and faster navigation alternatives, thanks to the use of steam vessels.

In the capital of the Empire, impacts of these changes were clearly felt, including initiatives concerning the better organization of public services: sanitation, water supply, lighting, health care system, and transport infrastructure.⁹ Rio de Janeiro was definitely consolidating as the most important city in Brazil, the main center for the entry of different products and people from different nationalities, as well as a propagator of fashions and habits.¹⁰

In this scenario, the development of a more intense public dynamic was perceptible, and it manifested itself even in the better structuring of a market surrounding the amusements. In the capital of the new nation that was consolidating, the civil society was organizing and making itself also recognizable in the context of entertainment, which was rapidly enlarging, contributing to reinforce and expose the contradictions and ambiguities around the initiatives of adopting new civilizing parameters. There were many observers that reported this new development in the newspapers: “the amusements are so many that a person has no time for changing *toilette*, or regretting, before taking part in them, the new versions of the sins from the day before. Happy life!”¹¹

The club was one of the novelties that arrived from the civilized countries and was established in the changing capital, one of the expressions of appreciation of the public activities of sociability. They were political, literary business, philanthropic, as well as amusement-related groups, including the dancing societies¹² and sports associations.

Considering this context, this article aims to discuss the sporting experiences in progress at Rio de Janeiro between 1851 and 1857. As a starting point of the time frame, we considered the moment when the first associations of horse racing and rowing of the city, the Racing Club and the Marine Recreational Society, were founded. The ending point refers to the creation of Petropolitano Jockey Club, the last initiative before there was a period of stagnation in the promotion of sports events, only resumed at the end of the 1860s.

⁸Alfredo Bosi, “Cultura”, In: José Murilo Carvalho (coord.), *História do Brasil Nação (1808-2010)*. A construção nacional (1830-1889), vol. 2, Rio de Janeiro, Objetiva, 2012, p. 225-280.

⁹Sidney Chalhoub, “População e sociedade”, In: *Ibidem*, p. 37-82.

¹⁰Lilia Moritz Schwarcz, *As barbas do Imperador*, São Paulo, Companhia das Letras, 1998. In the case of the sport, it should be taken into account that, over time, even if the influence of the capital was remarkable in many localities, there were also other important distribution centers, other cities that exercised some regional interference.

¹¹*Novo Correio das Modas*, 1853, p. 63. A publication that came after *Correio das Modas*, designed to address a wide variety of social affairs, also offering to the female readers, its target audience, many amusements, whether in the form of literature, or in the form of word games and puzzles. This story was written by D. Sallustio, general writer and responsible for the column “Chronicle of the Fortnight”.

¹²Victor Andrade de Melo, “Educação do corpo — bailes no Rio de Janeiro do século XIX: o olhar de Paranhos”, *Educação e Pesquisa*, vol. 40, n. 3, 2014, p. 751-766.

Specifically, we intend to address the peculiarities of the involvement of the different groups with the phenomenon. As the sports practice was closely associated with notions of civilization and progress, we infer that this investigation can help us better understand the relationship of the different strata with the initiatives of adherence to ideas and images of modernity in the country's capital, which could be observed at that period, and examine the social relations in the time frame under consideration.

In this study, given the context, we will consider as members of the elites those that not only held the economic power but also the ability to exert political and cultural influence. The people traditionally associated with the possession of land, usually involved with the agro-export activity, were part of this stratum, as well as those responsible for the major new businesses that were being created in the city, in the financial, industrial, and commercial fields. One can also mention the high-ranking military men and first-rank politicians, even if they did not integrate the groups mentioned earlier.

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The lower classes were constituted of people of low socioeconomic status, manual labor workers, and employees in lower hierarchical positions of enterprises of various natures. We must also consider a large number of slaves that related in different ways with the members of this stratum. We should remember, moreover, that “the high percentage of free black and mulatto men in the population distinguished the Brazilian slave society compared to others from the 19th century”.¹³

We must also take into account the forming of an intermediate stratum, constituted by certain independent professionals, specific groups of civil servants, employees in management positions in industrial and commercial companies, junior military officers, and small business owners. Using the words of Fabiane Popinigis, who dialogued with a study from Brien Owensby about the middle classes, “In the mid-1850s, these people would, according to him, have found a way to distinguish themselves from the lower classes, but also, and above all, to assert themselves before the elites”.¹⁴

This group, which was increasingly socially visible, even regarding political activity, was very important when it came to expanding the consumer base,

¹³Sidney Chalhoub, “População e sociedade”, In: José Murilo Carvalho (coord.), *História do Brasil Nação (1808–2010)*. A construção nacional (1830–1889), vol. 2, Rio de Janeiro, Objetiva, 2012, p. 42.

¹⁴Fabiane Popinigis, *Proletários de casaca: trabalhadores do comércio carioca – 1850–1911*, Campinas, Editora da UNICAMP, 2007, p. 55.

a relevant aspect in the constitution of certain practices, including the sports. On the other hand, as it occurred with the lower classes, this group was also seen as suspicious by the elite concerned with maintaining its privileges and prominent position. It is noteworthy that, although there were glaring divisions between the social strata, spaces began to be created in which, in various forms and degrees, and within limits, there were points of contact and interfaces.

To fulfill this objective, we used, as sources, publications edited in Rio de Janeiro in the period under consideration, taking into account that, in the course of the 19th century, the press began to take on the role of the public arena and an opinion leader.¹⁵

It is worth clarifying that we consider what was published not as an expression of the truth but as representations created from a certain point of view. When necessary, to the extent that we believe it has some potential for clarification, we have mentioned the peculiarity of the newspaper/magazine and the author of the information used. Part of the consulted material is, in fact, advertisements from the clubs themselves or very brief notes about the events.¹⁶

At a first moment, we will discuss the representations of the sports shown in the publications, notably the construction of the idea that it was a useful amusement, a usual argument in the consolidation of the sports field throughout the 19th century.¹⁷ Later on, we will discuss the constitution of the public that attended the events, as well as the tensions established around them.

We will also address an important dimension in the organization of the sports field, the understanding about who could or could not participate more directly in the competitions, a key element to define the strategies of distinction. Finally, we will discuss the case of Petropolitano Jockey Club, considering it as a turning point, a summary of the dimensions surrounding the formation of the sports phenomenon at the time.

In search of a useful amusement

The first horse races in 1851, organized by João Guilherme Suckow,¹⁸ who had leased the hippodrome of the Racing Club,¹⁹ received special attention of Manuel Antônio de Almeida, responsible for the *Pacotilha* column in the

¹⁵For more information about the 19th century press, see Marialva Barbosa, *História cultural da imprensa: Brasil. 1800-1900*, Rio de Janeiro, MauadX, 2010; Paulo Knauss *et al.* (orgs.), *Revistas Ilustradas: modos de ler e ver no Segundo Reinado*, Rio de Janeiro, MauadX, 2011.

¹⁶The publications were consulted in the Brazilian Digital Newspaper Library and in the National Library. For the analysis and interpretation of the material, we took into account the suggestions of: Tania Regina de Luca, "História do, no e por meio dos periódicos", *In: Carla Bassanezi Pinsky (org.), Fontes históricas*, São Paulo, Contexto, 2005. p. 111-153.

¹⁷Victor Andrade de Melo, "Temos apaixonados para o mar e para a terra: representações do esporte nos folhetins (Rio de Janeiro: 1851-1855)", *Revista Brasileira de Educação Física e Esporte*, vol. 27, n. 4, 2013, p. 553-566.

¹⁸A Prussian that arrived in Brazil in 1824, integrating troops at the service of the Empire, and got involved with the creation of public transportation companies and livestock auctions. He was also a farmer and horse breeder.

¹⁹The hippodrome of the Racing Club was called Fluminense Hippodrome. It only held one activity of this association, but hosted an important part of the development of Rio de Janeiro's turf, remaining active until the 1920s.

newspaper *Correio Mercantil*.²⁰ By strongly praising the event, including for being common in other nations regarded as civilized, the chronicler observed that: “Rio de Janeiro lacked undoubtedly a place for recreation, a gathering point for its inhabitants to meet at daytime now and then, because, for gatherings at night, theaters and little theaters, and public balls of all genres abounded.”²¹

The journalist of *Marmota na Corte* was even more emphatic applauding the novelty. For him, “it was the first time that such equestrian entertainments had a regular character and similar to the ones of England.”²² In his view, the initiative should receive government stimulus, press encouragement, and support from all those committed to the nation, given its importance. This was not merely an amusement, but a practice that suggested the progress of habits: “No one is unaware that the public amusements are an absolute necessity for the people, as convenient for the morality as for the politics.”²³

Over the years, it is possible to note that there were similar understandings about rowing, also praised for being a British cultural symbol. A journalist suggested that “Among the amusements in which the English manner is employed, the boat race deserves special mention.”²⁴ Another chronicler inferred: “We are an essentially importer people; no wonder, therefore, that the boat races were imported from England.”²⁵

The connection to the European continent was clear. It was about emulating what was best in civilized countries in a newly independent nation that wished to present its adherence to the idea of progress. The sporting events were celebrated as one of the hallmarks of a new moment for the Rio de Janeiro society that wanted to abandon the colonial past and prepare for an auspicious future.

Thus, it became common to praise the sports competitions: “Last Sunday, much of the population of this capital rushed to enjoy a performance as entertaining as it is new among us: the horse races at the Fluminense Hippodrome.”²⁶ For the chronicler, the event was “varied and bright, especially for those that were in the galleries, surrounded by the most gentle beauties of the Court, and looking at the field, where the crowd undulated and grew at all times”.

To see, be seen, seek emotion, become enraptured, take heart publicly, appreciate the swift and the quick: the mobilization of these senses around the sports activities met the desires of a society that occupied the public scene. This was narrated by the chronicler of *Diário do Rio de Janeiro*:

²⁰In this section, the main events of the city were commented. Almeida was the author of a well-known work, *Memórias de um sargento de milícias*.

²¹*Correio Mercantil*, 15 e 16 de junho de 1851, p. 1.

²²*Marmota na Corte*, 17 de junho de 1851, p. 1. Paper of fashions and varieties. It expressed the ambiguities surrounding the changes in the Court, bringing together advanced and conservative positions.

²³*Ibidem*.

²⁴*Diário do Rio de Janeiro*, 28 de setembro de 1861, p. 1. This newspaper was one of the first in the country to run daily, characterized both by the emphasis on the commercial and advertising potential and by adopting an editorial line that defended the country's progress.

²⁵*Correio Mercantil*, 1º de outubro de 1861, p. 1. This publication had a prominent role in the Second Reign. It had a liberal and activist political profile, unlike the more moderate *Jornal do Comércio*.

²⁶*Ibidem*, 21 e 22 de setembro de 1851, p. 2.

Beautiful girls, distinguished gentlemen, followed with a frantic curiosity the races of the generous horses, which moved with lightning speed in the immense semicircle of the square, and arrived, inebriated with enthusiasm and glory, at the end of the track, where they were frantically cheered by curious spectators.²⁷

If the sport was considered beneficial because it elaborated new alternatives for social gatherings, other advantages were also suggested. This was the case of an alleged importance of turf for the development of a national race of riding horses:

The first races were nothing but trials, but with them the country already made some profit; since then, horses of race have appeared. If the illustrious Town Council decides to reward the horses of the country, we believe that this institution provides very good services.²⁸

It would still take a few years until the relationship between sports, physical activity, and health became well acknowledged. Since those early days, however, there were hints in this direction. For D. Sallustio, for example, it was a “manly exercise that develops the physical forces and completes the education of the young man that does not want to resemble those effeminate men that often embarrass the descendants of Adam”.²⁹ One can apprehend the mobilization of certain masculinity parameters that were associated with an active and bold social attitude, desirable for the men who should lead the nation to progress.

For those that brandished these arguments, one should not only think about the economic gains linked to the animals but also how the modality could benefit the individuals involved, contributions that supposedly dated back to ancient times, which should serve as an inspiration for a regenerating process:

A horse race has something heroic that reminds us of the games and fights of the Antiquity, of the days when men were more robust and agile in the body, and firmer and more unshakable in the beliefs of the soul. It is a good thing that this kind of distraction is becoming a habit among us and fighting the sloth that this weather unnerves us with.³⁰

In the case of rowing, given its characteristics, the question of physical performance was even more pronounced. *Marmota na Corte* ironically pointed out this aspect when narrating the story of an alleged duel fixed between two individuals. Upon discovering the incident, the families of those involved mobilized the police to try to prevent the catastrophe. On reaching the place, rather than with pistols drawn, they found them in boats: “... This duel is lawful, said the Chief of Police, so I must only be a spectator, and applaud the triumph.

²⁷ *Diário do Rio de Janeiro*, 11 de dezembro de 1853, p. 1.

²⁸ *Marmota na Corte*, 6 de fevereiro de 1852, p. 2.

²⁹ *Novo Correio das Modas*, 1854, p. 192.

³⁰ *Ibidem*.

The signal sounded, and the two boats left as two spadefish”³¹ The men had a new way to solve their conflicts, new alternatives for public showing.

Throughout the century, moreover, this kind of challenge was common. Boat owners cast in the papers a call for dispute with another vessel. The provocations and the arrangement of the date came next. On the appointed day, usually a great audience watched the duel with enthusiasm.

In fact, as in horse races, the number of spectators was usually large in the nautical activities. They were one of the most valued amusements of the moment, having as a stage a place that, at that time, was even further away from the central region, soon associated with a new lifestyle under construction, “Botafogo remains the *rendez-vous* of the elegant society of this Court. [...] A boat race, a popular ball and fireworks over the clear waters of the bay! What a magnificent spectacle!”, said José de Alencar, in the “Running pen” column, published as the *feuilleton* section in *Correio Mercantil* from April 22, 1855.

Finally, a common aspect in the representations about the sport was the argument about its alleged symbolic and material contribution for the society and for the individuals. From this perspective, this was not a mere entertainment, but a useful amusement.

An expanded (and excited) public

The highlight of the first horse races of 1851, from the point of view of the chronicler from *Correio Mercantil*, Manuel Antônio de Almeida, was the enthusiastic public that was present, people of various profiles and social strata, married and single, some rich and others not so much, men and women, young and old, and even the royal family.³²

Noting that there were about 5,000 people at the hippodrome,³³ the chronicler showed great optimism: “it seems that the new merriment transplanted from Europe was a hit in our land, and already became a habit in our country”³⁴ For him, the Rio de Janeiro society, which would no longer tolerate “the barbaric bullfights, nor the outdated horse tournaments with ringlets”, “without a doubt embraces with pleasure and adopts the horse races”³⁵

This was actually a normative and optimistic view. The bullfighting would still persist for many years, even if criticized,³⁶ and it would take a little more for the definitive consolidation of the sport in the city.³⁷ A civilizing expectation, a

³¹*Marmota na Corte*, 16 de março de 1852, p. 3.

³²*Correio Mercantil*, 15 e 16 de junho de 1851, p. 1.

³³It is not easy to confirm this estimate. In other cases, there are even divergences between the chroniclers. Anyway, it is worth considering that the desire of the journalist was to express that many people attended the event.

³⁴*Correio Mercantil*, *op cit*.

³⁵*Ibidem*.

³⁶Victor Andrade de Melo, “Uma diversão adequada? As touradas no Rio de Janeiro do século XIX (1870-1884)”, *História*, vol. 32, n. 2, 2013, p. 163-188.

³⁷*Idem*, “Das touradas às corridas de cavalo e regatas: primeiros momentos da configuração do campo esportivo no Brasil”, *In*: Mary del Priore; Victor Andrade de Melo, *História do esporte no Brasil: do Império aos dias atuais*, São Paulo, Editora da UNESP, 2009, p. 35-70.

project of evolution of habits from an exogenous model can be seen clearly in the chronicler's perspective. And the sport was mobilized for this.

A journalist, while recognizing the success of the horse races, showed concern with the difficulty for the poorest to attend the show, "It was not long ago that we were lamented the lack of any kind of entertainment in the capital; [...] At present, we have no reason to complain; entertainment abounds greatly, but it is true that it is out of the reach for the poor"³⁸

Manuel Antônio de Almeida had already shown similar concerns. For him, strategies should be compiled to enable a greater presence of this social stratum in sporting events and even the ticket prices should be reconsidered. They cost 1\$000, and it was necessary to pay 1\$000 more to sit in the bleachers.³⁹

It was about emulating what was best in civilized countries in a newly independent nation that wished to present its adherence to the idea of progress

In fact, the entries for the horse races were no more expensive than what was usually charged for most amusements at the time.⁴⁰ However, there were other costs to be considered, such as food and transport, which had a more noticeable impact in the case of rowing competitions, held in places more difficult to reach:

The boat race, so commented by the lovers of boat gambling, has not paid for itself, and why? We do not have another explanation but the one that applies to all other similar enterprises in our country. All these amusements do not cost less than a thousand *reis*, in addition to other expenses of transport, food, and clothing.⁴¹

This chronicler also calls the attention for the need to provide "adequate" amusements for the poorest. In his point of view, without them, they could seek "other distractions, often at the expense of morality and public peace". Therefore, similarly to what supposedly occurred in "civilized countries", he suggested that the government should take interest in this task. The concern blended some humanism with intentions of control and order.

In any case, if the entertainment satisfied more the elites and the middle stratum that were forming in the capital, the new scenario also concerned the poor, either because some possibility of participation opened up or because popular spaces would also be created.

³⁸*Marmota na Corte*, 6 de fevereiro de 1852, p. 1.

³⁹*Correio Mercantil*, 12 de junho de 1851, p. 4.

⁴⁰For a comparison, see Victor Andrade de Melo; Fabio de Faria Peres, *A gymnastica no tempo do Império*, Rio de Janeiro, 7 Letras, 2014.

⁴¹*Marmota na Corte*, 10 de fevereiro de 1852, p. 2.

These aspects also help us understand the growing concerns about the expansion of entertainment alternatives, even because, as we saw in the previous section, it was not about valuing any kind of amusement, but only those who could be considered useful for the nation's needs, even if this was, more than anything, a discursive strategy.

There were, in fact, symbolic issues that complicated dealing with the matter. The sports competitions were a public arena, where the elites could identify themselves and show off, demanding, therefore, strategies for separating the public, which, however, was in fact an important element. The challenge was to combine the dimensions of popularization and distinction.

A fact allows us to apprehend well these tensions. On November 1, 1852, the Boat Race Society, despite having published in the newspapers a series of announcements, held an event with access restricted to members, away from the coast and of the reach of the general public, obliterating the view of the audience using a line of boats in which were only people with invitations.

This attitude was widely criticized and shook the credibility of the association. For a journalist, "The public of this capital has just been a victim of the most revolting injustice!"⁴² The procedure of the Boat Race Society seemed absurd to him. The same irritation tone can be felt in the point of view of the chronicler from *Correio Mercantil*: "We went to Rome, we saw the Pope, we went to Botafogo, we did not see boat races"⁴³ According to his stance, the attitude of the club was unworthy and disappointing: "The people of this capital did not deserve to be treated with such contempt, blocking those that were in the ground from enjoying the amusement"

Another journalist recalls that there was great expectation with the event: "The cause was tempting: the city was almost deserted. Transports were hired for fabulous prices and a crowd of 5,000 to 6,000 people, if not more, was there, crowding the beach of the smiling cove"⁴⁴ The attitude of the club was disrespectful and a deception: "Poor people! How are silly you are for trusting anyone!"

The statutes of the Boat Race Society, in fact, suggested restrictive attitudes. Those interested in joining should have their names approved by the board and pay an entrance fee of 12\$000, plus a monthly payment of 2\$000.⁴⁵ The issuing of invitations for people that were not authorities (such as ministers and diplomats) could be forbidden. The members could only take their families to the events, defined as "those who live under the same roof and are subordinated strictly to the head of this place".⁴⁶

This type of procedure was usual in other associations. The difference is that the boat races were held in public spaces, which made them more available to those who were not members. That was a problem to be solved by the

⁴²*Marmota Fluminense*, 5 de novembro de 1852, p. 1. The paper gave sequence and had a profile similar to *Marmota na Corte*.

⁴³*Correio Mercantil*, 2 de novembro de 1852, p. 1.

⁴⁴*Idem*, 3 de novembro de 1852, p. 1.

⁴⁵*Idem*, 19 de outubro de 1852, p. 2.

⁴⁶*Ibidem*.

managers. In the controversial episode of 1852, responding to the suggestion of a reader that “the society should reconcile its recreation with the desires of everyone”, the board reinforced the idea that its event was “especially devoted to guests of the society and its members; the conveniences of these should be its main target”.⁴⁷

The bad impact was such that is difficult to even get information on the progress of these boat races. According to what noted the chronicler of *Jornal do Comércio*, a paper usually more aligned with the interests of the elites, there was much celebration among those that attended the races, accommodated in the boats that left the Pharoux Pier and anchored in the Guanabara Bay. Among those present, there were a lot of people involved with trade, especially those linked to English and Portuguese enterprises, and notorious people from the Court, among which were the Emperor and the Empress, ministers, foreign diplomats, and the commanders of the Brazilian Armada and of the foreign ships stationed in Rio de Janeiro.⁴⁸

The facts of 1852 had long-term repercussions. On the occasion of a sailing event in 1853, people soon suspected another attempt to alienate the public was underway, since it was scheduled for a day when many amusements were planned and the chosen location was *Saco da Ponta do Caju*,

a cramped place, which cannot contain all the people that are going there to watch. If the boat race was on the side of the city from the Ferreiros Island, it would offer a wide field for all fans of such beautiful amusement. God grant this is not a 2nd edition of the Botafogo boat race!⁴⁹

The pressures to broaden the access seem to have had some effect. The model adopted in this 1853 boat race was the one that ended up consolidating. The members, family, and guests attended the competition in vessels where there was music, refreshments, and good food. After the races, in some house, in the headquarters of the club that organized the competition or some sister association, there was a festivity ranging from just a drink to lunches and even balls. The population would spread along the coast, being able to watch the competitions, since the streak was set up near the beaches; the party was also intense.

For those who had a little more resources, there was still another option: to buy a ticket to some vessel that offered its services in the newspapers, such as the steam boat *Hercules* (3\$000).⁵⁰ With an even cheaper ticket (1\$000), the *Nitheroy* and *Inhomirim* Company stressed: “For greater convenience of the passengers, there will be refreshments, candy and ice cream aboard, comfortably sold by one of the best pastry chefs in this Court”.⁵¹ The diversification of the profile of the public corresponded to an expansion of the market.

⁴⁷ *Jornal do Comércio*, 29 de outubro de 1851, p. 2.

⁴⁸ *Periódico dos Pobres*, 4 de novembro de 1852, p. 5.

⁴⁹ *Diário do Rio de Janeiro*, 22 de novembro de 1853, p. 2.

⁵⁰ *Idem*, 17 de maio de 1855, p. 5.

⁵¹ *Correio Mercantil*, 29 de setembro de 1861, p. 2.

In spite of this new organization, for many years, persisted an understanding that the turf welcomed better the large set of the population than the nautical activities. The shape of the hippodrome, even if there was entrance fee, favored a greater presence of people from various social strata, accommodated in different places according to the financial profile. Furthermore, Suckow always conceived the racecourse also as a business, unlike the people involved with rowing. Since it had to be profitable, its doors were more open.

In turf, however, there were also initiatives to promote more restricted races. This is the case of the only event organized by the Fluminense Jockey Club (1954). In the horse races, the animals were conducted exclusively by horsemen that competed without pay or money prize, “elegant and distinguished gentlemen-riders, who rode the fast runners, and belonged to the most distinguished families of our society”.⁵²

In this event, as a chronicler was keen to extol, organized “by distinguished young men, who invited all that is elegant in Rio de Janeiro society to illuminate the gathering and attend to their private amusement”,⁵³ the public was composed entirely of guests and family, the “cream” of Rio’s elite. The ambiguity in the approach of the newspapers was clear. If, on the one hand, some chroniclers demanded access for the poor, on the other, they celebrated an event of a very elitist nature.

Regardless of the profile of the initiative, some presences were always desired and celebrated in sporting events, such as the royal family. The activity only began when the Emperor arrived, who, incidentally, constantly attended the competitions. It was an appropriate situation for the monarch to show off to his subjects, even more because it was a practice regarded as civilized, valued in the countries that inspired Brazil. Likewise, this attendance was seen by the agents in the field and members of the public as a sign of distinction and recognition.

The presence of women was also much praised. The sports tribunes were, in fact, one of the first public spaces where they were welcomed, an expression of the changes by the Rio de Janeiro’s society underwent. Sometimes, they even played a prominent role, such as handing the award, an activity that until a few years before would have been inconceivable. Let us see how a newspaper refers to one of these occasions: “Mr. Carvalho was the winner and received from a delicate little hand the cup of gold, which was the prize of the race; but for him, without a doubt, the greatest prize was a smile full of kindness and a flower pulled away of a fragrant bouquet”.⁵⁴

Besides being the result of women’s demands, such presence was also framed by masculine values. The women gave a family character to the event and had to behave according to strict codes. Anyway, we can see a relaxation in the habits, expressed even in a lighter way to dress and behave; or, at least it was represented that way on many occasions:

⁵²*Novo Correio das Modas*, 1854, p. 192. The gentlemen-riders were also, in many occasions, the owner of the horses.

⁵³*O Jornal das Senhoras*, 11 de junho de 1854, p. 186.

⁵⁴*Correio Mercantil*, 11 de dezembro de 1853, p. 1.

they charmed by their clothing and their beauty, with a kind of candor becoming even more remarkable with the face framed by a gray ornate hat with red flowers in the inside that enhanced their beauty, and another woman that, despite the simplicity of her dress and yellow silk hat, attracted everyone's attention.⁵⁵

In fact, an opportunity for public meetings between people from both sexes was created, which until then was rare. Soon, the sports competitions as well as other amusements, even if entirely controlled, became a place for flirtation. In *Periódico dos Pobres*, in the satirical column "The Court for Witty Young Women", where a supposed judgment of D. Eufrasia of Perfect Love is narrated, the character states, "it is now that I flirt more than ever, I do not miss events, balls, theaters, tours, I dance the *schotish* like no one else, and appreciate a boat race as the best thing there is. A boat race is certainly a delight"⁵⁶

This novelty caused expectations, criticisms, and concerns simultaneously, even because sports activities came to rival more traditional social activities. A chronicler suggested, facing the fact that there was little female presence in the festive Mass of Saint Tereza, held in 1851, in the temple of the Third Order of Carmel:

The church, galleries and sacristy were only enjoyed by men, while we see our patricians get all hot and agitated because of any ball, horse race and other celebrations where one does not get an uplifting and beneficial recreation such as the act of religion.⁵⁷

Despite the tensions surrounding their participation, the women celebrated these new occasions, trying to understand what was going on in the world of sports. In *Jornal das Senhoras*, a publication designed to educate the female audience, directed by a feminist, Juana Manso, a reader says she likes the races, "a place where I cannot be serious even if I want to, I laugh a lot and have fun at the expense of the gentlemen and their racing horses,⁵⁸ especially those that want to be knights and do not know how to ride a horse". About the boat races, she notes that "those that win are covered with glory, and those that lose are washed with sweat and anger".

There were indeed many novelties surrounding the new practice that was forming in that city full of alternatives.

Between amateurs and professionals

During the 1850s, the organization of sporting events required a complex logistics. One had to manage multiple aspects, starting from the place for the competition, a most considerable concern in the case of turf. While the nautical activities used the coves, for the horse races it was necessary to build at least a basic structure.

⁵⁵*Correio Mercantil*, 13 de junho de 1852, p. 2.

⁵⁶*Periódico dos Pobres*, 20 de outubro de 1853, p. 1.

⁵⁷*Marmota na Corte*, 17 de outubro de 1851, p. 2.

⁵⁸*O Jornal das Senhoras*, 15 de fevereiro de 1852, p. 53.

For the chronicler of *Correio Mercantil*, besides the fact that it was located in a very beautiful and pleasant place, the Fluminense Hippodrome was well installed thanks to the actions of Suckow, who reformed the track and built a comfortable grandstand.⁵⁹ The narrator made only two provisos concerning the inaugural event — the size of the horseshoe-shaped track, which caused difficulties for some horses, and the food: “everyone was satisfied, but not with the restaurant, where all that was eaten and drunk was for an exorbitant price.”⁶⁰ The chronicler of *Marmota na Corte* also criticized the “tent of Mr. Neuville” for the “glasses of water costing 80 rs, the exaggerated prices of the food and the bad service.”⁶¹

Neuville was one of the firsts to offer a more refined food service in the city. His enterprise, located in the Palace Square, was a center for the new things that occurred in the capital. In light of the problems in the hippodrome, he apologized in the newspapers, recognizing that he failed to adequately prepare for such a large number of consumers.⁶²

A common aspect in the representations about the sport was the argument about its alleged symbolic and material contribution for the society and for the individuals

For the September horse races of that same year, the replacement was announced: “Mr. Angelo was hired to provide 1st quality meals and refreshments for the respectable public.”⁶³ The new person in charge distinguished himself for the services offered in Itália Hotel⁶⁴ and seemed to have pleased “by the warm hospitality used to captivate all those who seek him, without taking advantage of the opportunities to pluck the ducklings. Besides the reasonable prices, everything was good and served promptly.”⁶⁵

It was not in fact easy to handle everything that surrounded the necessary infrastructure for holding races: enough space for parking the cars and accommodating the horses, facilities to receive the public, a place for food, and everything related to the competitions. The costs to maintain the racecourse were high, with the awards and the ornamentation expenses not always covered by the ticket sales, registration fees for the competitions, as well as possible rent of the Hippodrome to private parties.

⁵⁹*Correio Mercantil*, 15 e 16 de junho de 1851, p. 1.

⁶⁰*Ibidem*.

⁶¹*Marmota na Corte*, 17 de junho de 1851, p. 1.

⁶²In general, the event would begin at 10 am, had a lunch break from 12 to 2 pm, then resuming until 4 pm.

⁶³*Correio Mercantil*, 10 de setembro de 1851, p. 3.

⁶⁴Located in the Constitution Square (now Tiradentes Square), it was one of the major hotels of the capital in its time. It became known for being the site of the first carnival balls of the city.

⁶⁵*Marmota na Corte*, 16 de setembro de 1851, p. 1.

On one occasion, when a reader publicly requested Suckow to promote races once again, ensuring that there were public expectations for this, the manager replied that he had already invested a lot in the Fluminense Hippodrome, being “almost discouraged to overcome the obstacles that I have found”.⁶⁶

The difficulties did not concern just the peculiarities of the organization. One of the complicating factors was to account for a public transport that could take those interested to the hippodrome, which was located about five kilometers from the central region. In addition, because of the rains, the road to the racecourse would several times become impassable.

The problems also referred to the specificities of the modality. Since the first races, there were discussions about the regulation, including who could participate in the competitions. It is possible to see that it is even easier to find evidence of the names of horses and owners. In the races of 1851, for example, took part, among others, Orestes, from Suckow’s son; Pluto, from Mr. Brandão; Malacarina, from Mr. Maia; Sultan, from Mr. José Monteiro; Kaleb, from Mr. Thomaz Land; Sam Sly, from Dr. Costa; and Loterie, from Mr. Ferreira.⁶⁷

With the exception of Land, a foreigner that settled in Petrópolis, was the owner of an important hotel and gave good contributions to the national agriculture, it is difficult to know who were the owners exactly, but some observations can be made: the majority was composed of Brazilians; possibly well-known people in the city; probably members of the national elite, linked to the agricultural businesses or the emerging urban bourgeoisie.

We also found some information about the gentlemen-riders, who should be “light and elegant as zephyrs”,⁶⁸ always taking care of all the details involving their participation in the competitions. But it is really hard to find something out about the jockeys, the horse conductors competing for cash prizes and/or receiving payment to race representing the owners of horses, but it has not been possible yet to discern the degree of professional relationship. Their names were rarely disclosed. Unlike the gentlemen-riders, they were probably from the lower classes.

Let us analyze two characters of the races held in December 1853. One was the gentleman-rider Alba Carvalho, “a student of the fourth year of the Court’s medical school”.⁶⁹ In the competition the student participated, welcomed by the public as the great hero of the day, six other amateurs took part, all “dressed in elegant green jackets and riding horses of their property”.⁷⁰ According to a chronicler, among those that applauded him the most were his colleagues from medical school, “the class of the children of Hippocrates”.

⁶⁶ *Jornal do Comércio*, 24 de junho de 1853, p. 2.

⁶⁷ *Marmota na Corte*, 17 de junho de 1851, p. 1; *Jornal do Comércio*, 20 de junho de 1851, p. 3.

⁶⁸ *Correio Mercantil*, 18 de agosto de 1851, p. 2.

⁶⁹ *Idem*, 9 de dezembro de 1853, p. 1.

⁷⁰ *Idem*, 11 de dezembro de 1853, p. 1. The papers did not announce the names of all the participants, only of the winner.

At the same occasion, “a small tanned demon, as Desdemona’s lover, four feet tall and dressed in blue, was proclaimed the first Jockey of the hippodrome to the sound of thunderous applause”:⁷¹ he was Balbino (or Albino), a black or mulatto boy, of about 13 years old, who won the six competitions he took part in. We need more studies, but we are introductorily inferring that the horse races were one of the first social spaces in which black and mulatto men played a leading role.⁷²

The procedure to be adopted by the jockeys was still being defined, in spite of copying much of English and French turf. Anyway, these characters were beginning to have some prominence. Their importance became clearer with the experience of Fluminense Jockey Club (1854), in which only gentlemen-riders participated.

Despite some praise for the event, it is possible to apprehend that the competition was very weak from a technical point of view. However, certain sectors of the elite thought it possible to promote races only with gentlemen-riders, not depending on the jockeys; the fact is that, without them, and without the general public, the spectacle lost much in quality and charm.

In the case of rowing, the issue of amateurism was more explicit. The statutes of the Boat Race Society, reckoned, in the article 22, that “No sloops belonging to the clubs may be admitted to the races if these clubs are not affiliated to the society and their crews are not members”:⁷³ This restricted the possibility of participation and defined the acceptable profile for the rowers, who under no circumstances received cash prizes.

Much of the rowers were foreigners, mainly English, but some were also German, French, and Portuguese. In the same way, many military men from the Armadas of Brazil and of other countries that were stationed in Rio de Janeiro got involved in the competitions.

The civilians formed more or less formal associations. Take, for example, the participants in a boat race held in 1855: “The Albion drove by Mr. Holy, and manned by British amateurs; the S. Jorge, drove by Mr. Lazaro and manned by Brazilian amateurs; the Argos, of six oars, drove by Mr. Camacho and manned by Portuguese amateurs [...]”:⁷⁴

We have come across some clues about a group of English men, called British Rowing Club, and of the Portuguese men, which managed to approve a statute and elect a board of directors constituted by the Commander Antônio Manoel da Fonseca, Joaquim Augusto da Cunha Porto (a trader and collector

⁷¹*Correio Mercantil*, 11 de dezembro de 1853, p. 1.

⁷²We must not forget their participation in musical groups as a possibility of social prominence. See: Mauricio Monteiro, “Música e Mestiçagem no Brasil”, *Nuevo Mundo Mundos Nuevos*, fev. 2006. Available from: <<http://nuevomundo.revues.org/1626>>. Accessed on: August 6, 2014; Martha Abreu; Andrea Marzano, “Entre palcos e músicas: caminhos de cidadania no início da República”, *In*: José Murilo Carvalho; Lúcia Maria Bastos Pereira das Neves (orgs.), *Repensando o Brasil do Oitocentos: cidadania, política e liberdade*, Rio de Janeiro, Civilização Brasileira, 2009, p. 123-149.

⁷³*Correio Mercantil*, 19 de outubro de 1852, p. 2.

⁷⁴*Idem*, 17 de maio de 1855, p. 1.

of works of art), José Ferreira dos Santos Cardoso (an influential merchant and active member of the Portuguese colony), and the notorious pharmacist Nuno Freire Dias Salgueiro. The founding ceremony was held at the Royal Portuguese Reading Office and the presidency was offered to the Minister of Portugal in Brazil.⁷⁵ It was one of the most important associative initiatives of Lusitanian people established in the country.⁷⁶

There is evidence that there many commerce workers involved. On more than one opportunity, since the first boat race (the one of 1851), the participation of the category was mentioned. The peculiarity of the sector was even considered in the choice of dates for the events, since “they could not be distracted from the commercial activities.”⁷⁷

This group deserves special attention. Other studies have detected their involvement with other modalities, such as bullfighting,⁷⁸ dancing,⁷⁹ and gymnastics.⁸⁰ Popinigis⁸¹ identifies that, in fact, it was a very mobilized category, having actively participated in the political and cultural scene of the Court, including by integrating various associations.

One must bear in mind that they did not form a homogeneous group. There were different positions and roles, notably a clear distinction between those who worked in the “high trade” (linked to the import and export) and “low trade” (the most popular being stores, of groceries).⁸² It is possible that the rowers were more linked to the upper economic stratum: they needed to have possessions to be able to be part of the clubs, as well as some free time to participate in trainings and competitions.

The profile of those responsible for organizing the boat races is also worth mentioning. One of the most prominent organizers was the Marquis of Abrantes, an important personality of the Empire, involved with the sport since the first initiatives. He, with a group of notables, such as the advisor Bernardo Nascentes de Azambuja and the Armada officer Theotônio Meirelles da Silva, met a few times with the Emperor to communicate the promotion of nautical events, seek his support, and invite him to watch the events.

Also noteworthy is the participation of sea and land war captains Francisco José de Mello and Antônio Felix Corrêa de Mello, of the frigate captain Raphael M. de Moraes Valle and lieutenant commander Antônio Affonso Lima. Even because of the nature of the professional activity, while Army

⁷⁵*Jornal do Comércio*, 28 de abril de 1852, p. 17.

⁷⁶Victor Andrade Melo; Fabio de Faria Peres, “Associativismo e política no Rio de Janeiro do Segundo Império: o Clube Ginástico Português e o Congresso Ginástico Português”, *Topoi: Revista de História*, vol. 15, n. 28, Rio de Janeiro, 2014, p. 242-265.

⁷⁷*Jornal do Comércio*, 27 de outubro de 1851, p. 2.

⁷⁸Victor Andrade de Melo, “Uma diversão adequada? As touradas no Rio de Janeiro do século XIX (1870-1884)”, *História*, vol. 32, n. 2, 2013, p. 163-188.

⁷⁹*Idem*, “Educação do corpo – bailes no Rio de Janeiro do século XIX: o olhar de Paranhos”, *Educação e Pesquisa*, vol. 40, n. 3, 2014, p. 751-766.

⁸⁰*Idem*; Fabio de Faria Peres, *A gymnastica nos tempos do Império*, Rio de Janeiro, 7 Letras, FAPERJ, 2014.

⁸¹Fabiane Popinigis, *Proletários de casaca: trabalhadores do comércio carioca – 1850-1911*, Campinas, Editora da UNICAMP, 2007.

⁸²*Ibidem*.

officers were more involved with the turf, the Armada officers boosted the rowing. In both cases, the occupational and personal interests were blended with a speech of contribution to the nation (especially with the assumption of possible contribution of the sport to the development of the races of horses and boat building).

Petropolitano Jockey Club

Even if it did not have its headquarters in the neutral city of the Court, the case of Petropolitano Jockey Club deserves attention for being one last initiative of organizing competitions before a period of stagnation that would last until the transition of the 1860s and 1870s. It is also a good example of connection between the sport and the moment experienced by the capital in all its aspects, including political.

*If, on the one hand, some chroniclers
demanded access for the poor, on the other,
they celebrated an event of a very elitist nature*

In a story about Petrópolis, published in *Correio Mercantil*, in September 1856, when narrating the beauty of the city, the remarkable commercial structure and the good structure of tourism and leisure, a chronicler observed: “There is a well organized society under the name of Petropolitano Jockey-Club that has already had two races crowned with the most brilliant success.”⁸³

In July of that same year, in fact, a statement from Petrópolis Racing Society was published, informing about the races that would take place in the month in question.⁸⁴ The person that signed as secretary of the club was a certain G.T.L., probably the aforementioned Thomaz Land. The president was the physician Thomaz José Porciúncula, an important politician and local personality. In a further announcement, it is possible to identify a curious mix of names: “Last Sunday in Petrópolis, a club jockey named Petrópolis Racing Club was created.”⁸⁵ The experience occurred in Rio de Janeiro created an expectation and a model for other initiatives.

By March 1857, five races were held, all with the presence of important personalities of the Court, some including the royal family. Most of the competitions were exclusive for gentlemen-riders. Horses belonging to José Pinheiro de Siqueira (a local politician and trader of the sector of carriage

⁸³*Correio Mercantil*, 13 de setembro de 1856, p. 3.

⁸⁴*Idem*, 17 de julho de 1856, p. 3.

⁸⁵*Idem*, 24 de julho de 1857, p. 1.

rental), João Pedro Villa-Real (a military man and a naturalist), Ricardo Narciso da Fonseca (a politician very devoted to the construction of the city), Luis Jacome de Abreu e Souza (an entrepreneur and one of the most renowned riding teachers of the Empire), and the Count of Herzberg (a Prussian, married to the daughter of Suckow, one of the most important supporters of the national turf), among others, were involved.

From March 1857 onward, with the election of a new board, the association became more structured, deciding to build a hippodrome in the Fragoso region near the Raiz da Serra Gunpowder Factory, next to the Railroad station.⁸⁶ At that time, the club was presided by the aforementioned Thomaz José Porciuncula, having as vice president Luiz Jacome de Abreu e Souza.⁸⁷

The new hippodrome, far from the capital, was reachable by steamer (which left the Pharoux Pier toward Magé) and train (which left the Mauá Port and reached Fragoso). The route was considered a nice ride. Thus, some newspapers have suggested that the activities of the Petropolitano Jockey Club would become one of the most fashionable amusements of that time.⁸⁸

This expectation was connected to the moment experienced by Petrópolis. The development of the city was accentuated by the new possibility of transport. Since the transition of the years 1840/1850, when it became one of the headquarters of the imperial government, the town had been growing fast. If, at first, the Emperor spent the summers there, fleeing the heat and epidemics, at the end of the monarchic period, he would practically have settled in the city.⁸⁹

Many families of the elites built residences in the city, which became “a kind of European village, and a place where everyone lives as if they were in civilization”.⁹⁰ In this scenario, for a reader that signs Zancuí, “The Jockey Club seems to us worthy of the highest praise for having built a racecourse in the best conditions for that useful amusement, with all the improvements recently introduced in England for similar establishments”.⁹¹ The horse races would be one more sign of the local progress.

Some chroniclers expressed the hope that the initiative would succeed for what it could represent to the “Brazilian civilization”, similarly to what was happening in France and England, and for the possible contributions toward the horse breeding: “Thus, may the Jockey Club of Petrópolis have better future than the hippodrome”.⁹²

The first race on the new racecourse was scheduled for August 1857. Five competitions were planned for jockeys (with money prize) and one

⁸⁶We could not identify where the old races were held.

⁸⁷The board was also composed of José Pinheiro de Siqueira (the Treasurer), Augusto da Rocha Fragoso (the Secretary), an entrepreneur involved with the modernization of the national economy, and Ricardo Fonseca Narciso (an Attorney).

⁸⁸*Correio Mercantil*, 24 de julho de 1857, p. 1.

⁸⁹Roderick J. Barman, *Imperador cidadão*, São Paulo, Editora da UNESP, 2012.

⁹⁰Lilia Moritz Schwarcz, *As barbas do Imperador*, São Paulo, Companhia das Letras, 1998, p. 239.

⁹¹*Correio Mercantil*, 27 de junho de 1857, p. 2.

⁹²*Diário do Rio de Janeiro*, 16 e 17 de agosto de 1857, p. 1. On that occasion, the hippodrome was inactive for having suffered a fire.

for gentlemen-riders (having as a prize a silver cup).⁹³ The Regulation was trying to settle all the doubts and ensure the highest possible fairness in the competitions.⁹⁴ The number of planned penalties for those that infringed the rules is also worth mentioning.

Despite these concerns, a member of the association suggested that it should be clearer that the race for amateurs should be exclusively for gentlemen-riders,⁹⁵ which is an evidence of certain tensions in the definition of those participate, repercussions of what was happening in the capital, a clash between horse racing organization models.

Faced with the dispute, an anonymous person, signing as “a hick member of the Jockey Club that does not know anything foreign”, judged the view as unworthy and a lack of support for the initiatives of the Jockey Club, a misguided gesture at a time when it would be necessary to have the support of everyone that appreciated the turf. He also criticized the use of the term “gentlemen-riders”, which had no translation into Portuguese:

Jockey Club! And we have been at the verge of not entering this institution only because we did not understand that it was about horse racing! Nothing: when it comes to confusion that is enough. Let us before talk clear Portuguese, it is the best way to understand each other, if we walk in good faith.⁹⁶

In fact, in the early days of the turf, the excessive use of English terms was a cause of estrangement from the public.⁹⁷ The Petrópolis debate, however, seems to be more of a consequence of the internal tensions of the modality, between two people that we could not identify.

It can be noticed that a sector of the capital was mobilized to attend the inaugural event, which tended indeed to be less popular, since most of the inhabitants of Rio de Janeiro had difficulties to reach Petrópolis. A curiosity is that there was a greater segmentation of tickets — the cheapest, to watch the event standing, were sold at 1\$000, while, to see the show sitting on the grandstands, there were two options: second class for 2\$000 and first class for 3\$000.

The announcements of Petropolitano Jockey Club were always accompanied by reports of the railroad about the special options of transport: three timetables of round trip, with prices ranging from 3\$000 to 7\$000. Here an observation is valid: half of the prizes of the races were offered by the railway company of Mauá, a central organization in the country’s modernization process. By the way, it did sign up a mare that was crowned victorious. Its name could not be more expressive: Locomotive.

⁹³*Diário do Rio de Janeiro*, 18 de julho de 1857, p. 3. The award was exposed in the establishment of the acknowledged goldsmith and jeweler Xavier Berard, in Ouvidor Street (*Correio Mercantil*, 11 de agosto de 1857, p. 3).

⁹⁴*Correio Mercantil*, 19 de julho de 1857, p. 3.

⁹⁵*Idem*, 23 de julho de 1857, p. 3.

⁹⁶*Idem*, 30 de julho de 1857, p. 3.

⁹⁷Victor Andrade de Melo, *Antes do club: as primeiras experiências esportivas na capital do Império (1825-1851)*, vol. 49, Projeto História, São Paulo, 2014. In press.

In the hippodrome, a system of flags communicated the time of train departure.⁹⁸ Part of the audience, however, did not need to worry about that because they had a residence in the city or used the inns in the region. One of those announced: “To make the amusement of the races in Fragoso more complete, the public will find in this hotel all the necessary comforts, such as food, ice cream, refreshments etc.”⁹⁹ There were even some extra cars from the center of Petrópolis to the hippodrome to transport those that were interested.

The expectations, however, appear to have been frustrated. For Leonel de Alencar, who dedicated a *feuilleton* almost entirely to comment the event, the turf was a type of activity that should be characterized by luxury, ornamentation, and good taste, “an amusement offered to the elegant society”. In this sense, he has not shown great enthusiasm for the races of Petrópolis. For him, despite the efforts, everything seemed too prosaic: “they were far from those of a fashionable Jockey Club”.¹⁰⁰

The initiative to promote a more “selective” event, using a different strategy from the one adopted by Fluminense Jockey Club, failed. It was not about promoting a session only for guests. On the other hand, the public did not show up, because of the difficulties to arrive at the hippodrome.

Thus, even with the support of certain sectors of the elites, the initiative rendered financially insolvent. At the period that it was best organized, including with the construction of a hippodrome, Petropolitano Jockey Club interrupted its activities. Only in 1864, seven years later, a new turf event would be held in the city.

Conclusion

In November 1852, an anonymous person suggested that the turf and rowing were two “diametrically opposed” amusements, although there were many members in common.¹⁰¹ For him, in spite of this, it would not be appropriate for the clubs to “make war”. They should cooperate mutually so that they could survive: “Do they think that in this capital there is so little money that two associations would not progress due to lack of members and that, therefore, it is necessary to kill one of them?”

There were, in fact, differences between the groups committed to the organization of turf and rowing initiatives, even if the public, from different social strata, attended the events of both without distinction. In the promotion of horse races, one can note a greater participation of elite members linked to agricultural exports, while those that were operating the new urban businesses, especially commerce employees, were more connected to the nautical activities. In the first, there was a greater presence of military men, while the men from the Navy were involved with boat races.

⁹⁸*Correio Mercantil*, 2 de agosto de 1857, p. 3.

⁹⁹*Idem*, 19 de agosto de 1857, p. 3.

¹⁰⁰*Diário do Rio de Janeiro*, 30 de agosto de 1857, p. 1.

¹⁰¹*Correio Mercantil*, 21 de outubro de 1852, p. 2.

Even with distinctions, there were common aspects in the outline of the two modalities. The protagonists of both celebrated the involvement with the sport as an adherence to ideas of civilization and progress. The public man, a new attitude that materialized in mid-19th century, needed mechanisms for identifying and defining the spheres of responsibility in a society that began displaying many facets. The sporting events fulfilled that role well.

The celebration of modernity brought, however, new challenges. If the social base widened, how to establish the distinction? If the amusement was being valued, how to guarantee, at least discursively, that it was connected with what were considered the nation's needs? How to arrange control mechanisms of the lower classes and the middle strata that were more clearly part of the great social concert?

The rowing and turf activities expressed well these tensions and doubts. The associations of the first worried more with distinction mechanisms, which may seem curious from the perspective of the dynamics of their events, held on the beaches and promoted by people from the new businesses. In the horse races, there were also gentrification initiatives; however, due to the space organization and profit purposes, they were felt in a different manner.

This debate materialized on two themes: Who could compete, only gentlemen-riders or also jockeys?; Who could watch the events: only guests or also the general public? The answer was given by the own dynamics of the sports field. The attempts to exclude the common people, differently in each modality, threw the associations in deadlock, leading to the interruption of the initiatives. The public was not just a detail but a key element in the success of the practice. For the sport to remain alive, it would be necessary to find new strategies to keep it between the elite and the people.

The future sporting associations, from the end of the 1860s onward, would show that they learned this lesson. But that is a subject for another study.