

Restitution: Oina – Romanians' national game

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Abstract

The game *oina* is a manifestation of social life and is practiced especially by children and adolescents with the purpose of knowledge sharing. *Oina* recalls the main occupation of our ancestors: shepherding. The game was practiced in the old days by boys and girls during the Easter holidays.

Key words: *game, tradition, culture, linguistics.*

Rezumat

Jocul oina reprezintă manifestarea vieții sociale și este practicat în mod special de către copiii și tinerii cu scopul transmiterii de cunoștințe. Acest joc amintește de ocupația principală a strămoșilor noștri - păstoritul și care era practicat pe vremuri de către băieți și fete cu ocazia sărbătorilor de Paște.

Cuvinte cheie: *joc, tradiție, cultură, lingvistică.*

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The linguistic arguments are very useful to the researcher when trying to determine the “age” of a phenomenon. Our dictionaries have explained the “oina” word as coming from Turkish “oyun” (game), “oylamak” (transitive verb with the present form), “oinar”- meaning “to play”, either an unknown etymology from “oi” (sheep), “oinic”- the same thing but in the Persian language or “oicetia”- Romanic word designating an old unidentified town with Slavic and Dacian population; “oicunimon” (Byzantine word for messenger), “oium” (unknown region occupied by the Goths) [1]; there were some

It is very likely that the word “oina” comes from the ages when our Romanian language was still forming, together with other specific words that are not known in the Balcanic languages except in the case of the Istro-Romanians, a fact that argues the very old origin of this game and of its name; Radu S. Corbu, a friend and collaborator of Spiru Haret, in his book “The Latin origin of *oina*”, supported the idea that this word has Latin roots and was linked to the shepherding activities of our ancestors, having a specific national origin [2].

The history of the “oina” game is also an argument for our national continuity in this Carpatho-Danubiano-Pontic space and it is not to be found in our neighbors’ culture [4]. Our point of view sustains that the “oina” game is linked to the shepherding activities, very present in the Dacian space. Historian V. Parvan explained that Dacia was an organic undivided space with little outside cultural influence; the situation remained unchanged, later on, in the whole region of Moldova and in other parts of the country, reflected in the hydro-toponymy also supported by poet Martin Opriz (also a teacher in the Alba Iulia Academy in 1621): “the game is a witness that you have old origins”; It is found not only with the Daco-Romans but also with the Istro-Romanians.

other games using a ball that had an educative and social purpose like our “oina” [2]; a very popular medicine man, Galenus (130-210), made a real treaty in this direction. The ball games were not Olympic and did not look like our “oina”.

“Oinesi” designated in the old times the western inhabitants of the Black Sea shores, mentioned by Dion Chrysostomas, I ct. B.C., and “oinopes”- one of the six tribes of fort Tomis in the Roman period [3].

Like the different variants of the “Miorita” poem, the forms of the “oina” game from Transylvania only bring reachness and no change in the rules of playing. Historian Nicolae Stoica from the Hateg region, in 1763, in an old religious book found by Nicolae Iorga in the town of Ramnic, noted that children played different games including “little ball” – also a name for the “oina” game [2] In a manuscript attributed to Avram Iancu, donated by Rubin Patita from the town of Campeni to the Alba Iulia Museum, we find a description of the “oina” game, named “little ball” again, with Latin words, the youth mentioned as bringing back the ball that was bit by the older ones. In “The History of Moldavia” by Ion Neculce and “Description of Moldavia” by D. Cantemir we also find that the word “oina” was used to denote not only the game, but also lamb meat. In 1852, a group of monks mentioned the “oina” game when they were building a state school in Piatra Neamt, during the reign of Grigore Ghica; Al. Vila, a playwright, in his “Vlaicu Voda” play, also mentioned the game during Vladislav I (1364-13770), local ruler that fought against the Ottomans; Tudor Pamfilie, folklorist, supported the same idea; The “oina” game, very old as it is, has its name from certain places, in the same way as in the

UK, towns like Rugby and Badminton gave the name to the specific sports; Mihail Sadoveanu, the well known writer, witnessed that our national and old game had the age of 25 generations; we can truly say that it is very unfortunate that only football receives such a major attention from sport officials... In 1896 at the first international edition of the Olympic Games, Athens, Romania tried, without success, to present two teams demonstrating the "oina" game, but in those times, team games were not yet allowed in the competition. Our national game stems from the Daco-Roman period, a proof of Latinity and continuity, and is even played near our borders with Bulgaria, Serbia, Basarabia, Northern Bucovina and even in Lvov, Poland; this is part of our national cultural treasure like "doina" singing. Arnold Toynbee's theory about cultural unity and continuity proves to be right even in our case, talking about "oina", "doina", or "dor", purely Romanian words; C. Noica, historian, said that a word is very similar with a tree which cannot be moved easily from his soil under the sun and rains of its country, where it put his roots...

Speaking about the resemblance with baseball, very popular from USA to Japan and Australia, we could assert that they might have the same origin, Romanian maybe; these games have very similar rules or elements (the ball and the rod) and there is an assumption that Transylvanian emigrants, in the 17th century took it to USA; the two elements mentioned are present even on Traian's Column in Rome.

"Oina" with all his names in our regions (like "staying in four corners" for example), is definitely an element of the national and cultural treasure and without it we would surely be poorer.

References

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