

Apsa Traditional and Promotion of Cultural Identities in Burkina Faso

Boureïma Coulibaly¹ & Arnaud Sow²

¹*Institute of Sports Sciences and Human Development, Joseph Ki-Zerbo University, Burkina Faso*
(boureima.coulibaly@gmail.com)

²*Ministry of Sports, Youth and Employment, Burkina Faso (sylvestresow1@gmail.com)*

<https://doi.org/10.62049/jkncu.v4i1.73>

Abstract

Traditional Physical, Sports and Artistic Activities (APSA) are bodily practices present in all communities across cultures in Burkina Faso. Given that each culture has its own habits, its own way of educating the body and mind, the cultural diversity of Burkina Faso linked to the multiplicity of ethnic groups is in itself a richness. To collect these data, we used the questionnaire method and the interview. IBM SPSS Statistics version 25 software, Excel software to process the data obtained from the questionnaire, content analysis were used for documents, interview and focus group. The results obtained show a convergence of points of view according to which traditional APSAs fulfil specific and multiple functions ranging from education to the safeguarding of identity, including training, culture, social, political, economic, patriotism and entertainment. 80.6% of those under 25 surveyed and 95.9% 25 and over also agree that APSAs allow the promotion of their identities. The majority of respondents would like to see public action and political guidance involving stakeholders. Traditional APSAs play very important roles in promoting cultural identities, as they are rooted in these cultures.

Keywords: APSA, Tradition, Promotion, Cultural Identities, Burkina Faso

Introduction

As a result of the industrial revolution of the eighteenth century in Europe, needs were created and human potential in education was born with the rapid evolution in the fields of the economy, science and society. This has led to the emergence of new disciplines such as the branch of sociology devoted to education (Bulle, 2005). The efficiency of the human resource is strongly linked to its production capacity and its level of output. To be effective, you have to be active. This is why more and more, people who are not in the mainstream education system have needs to practice physical activity (PA). The World Health Organization (WHO) on its official page dated October 5, 2022 recalls that the increase in sedentary lifestyle has a negative impact on health, the economy, and community well-being. Thus, these people, for the most part, find themselves in aerobic animation or mass sports sessions by performing modern Physical, Sports and Artistic Activities (PASA) on the margins of the traditional APSAs that remain unknown.

In view of the current situation in which globalism has embarked the communities of the world, it is logical to think that

«The imposition of world culture, which has become widespread and has erased differences, leads to a certain desire to return to the roots. In the mid-1970s, faced with the failure of the modern education system and the lack of usefulness of elite sport, a new trend was born, which wanted to return to the roots, in particular to the traditions of games and movement of the original culture. »(Torki, 2009, p. 8).

Torki starts from the observation that Africa and the Third World have been deculturated and acculturated by the advent of globalization, which has led to an underestimation of local cultural practices. According to him, the apparent superiority of Western culture over African culture is not necessarily related to its importance, but rather due to the enormous means that Europe has used to impose its culture and practices on colonized peoples. Gold

"The Physical activities and games have always punctuated and continue to punctuate the life of traditional African societies, because each in its own culture has them."(Zongo, 2019, p. 1).

Indeed, traditional games and sports are born from the internal practices of different cultures. Depending on the habits, needs and situations experienced by a given society, it is organized to respond to them, to adapt or to minimize the effects that could affect the cohesion of the social group (Parlebas, 2019, pp. 8-16).

APSAs are the emanation of culture and society. However, it is important to know one's culture, to appropriate one's values in order to build the development actions of one's community.

In an effort to establish the relationship between sport and national identities, it was found that " *The identity function assigned to Gaelic football certainly presents a risk of sporting isolation, but an assumed risk*»(Archambault & Artiaga, 2004, p. 40). Since the objective is to imprint their own brand, their identity on the practice of physical activities and sports, it is desirable according to them to adopt practices that suit the local social ideal.

To some extent,

"One might wonder why living together has become an explicitly stated concern, giving rise to conferences, meetings, reasons for training and awareness-raising, when it is precisely the nature of human beings to live with others in good understanding"(Paré-Kaboré, 2013, p. 15).

She points out that the orientation that the community gives in the traditional African social organization places the group first over the individual who is a part of it. Community education, which advocated the transmission of civilization through the generations, aimed to enable the individual to acquire physical, moral and intellectual qualities. For her, this education is done through the transmission of knowledge from generation to generation.

For example, a study that took into account the colonial period found that *"Colonization created hatred and confrontation between populations, resulting in a rupture between generations. This will lead to a significant decline in the practice of traditional APS"* (Beibeny, 1998, p. 22). By defining traditional education as the pedagogy of values, he says that it is a tool for the integration of the child into his society and allows for the maintenance of intergenerational continuity.

However, as soon as values do not suit the social ideal at a given moment, then the crisis intervenes (Fall, 2022). Difference is a source of many resources. Speaking for example of the traditional struggle in the San country, we note that:

«the "San" or the Samo are known by this ancestral practice passed down from generation to generation and which has been the pride of the country since the dawn of time. Embodying the social backbone and cultural identity of the "San", this struggle constitutes an endogenous value of the "San" who make it evolve according to their own vision of development.»(Ouedraogo et al., 2022, p. 67).

The study highlighted the desire for the Catholic Church to recuperate this ancestral San practice and the actions of its reappropriation by the San. This shows how most of the APSAs in our traditions have suffered and continue to suffer the effects of colonization and globalization today. Its disappearance, along with that of other bodily practices, would therefore cause a serious problem in the conservation and survival of the San culture through its APSAs.

The birth in the wake of the National Week of Culture (SNC) during the revolution from 1983 to 1987 with Captain Thomas Sankara, beyond highlighting traditional bodily practices, opened up perspectives for the creation and appropriation of these physical bodily activities of expression.

"But the withdrawal of the guardians of tradition and the attempt to question nationalities in one way or another have been problems posed in the progress of the cultural policy of the National Committee of the Revolution (CNR)" (Andrieu, 2007, p. 2).

When we know that in order to lead a change, we must first change behaviour, we must involve the actors, we must create the conditions for its occurrence, the traditional APSAs seem to us to be well suited to achieve this goal.

Coulibaly (2022) investigated whether traditional and modern physical, sport, and artistic activities serve as elements of social change and community development. With regard to APSAs, it provides the following definition: *"Physical, sports and artistic activities (APSA) are social practices with high added value whose*

dimensions transcend the geographical borders of Burkina Faso.»(Coulibaly, 2022, p. 229). This reflects the breadth of the values that APSAs convey in our societies. It is for these reasons that they are able to play many useful roles in the relationships between individuals. It should also be noted that these APSAs have been strongly affected by globalization with its corollary of global modernism.

To address this reality, the Commission believes that:

«the problem is to ensure that endogenous physical activities and modern sport complement each other and are harmoniously integrated into the process of social change for the overall development of Burkina Faso. »(Coulibaly, 2022, p. 230).

For him, social change would be that social transformation that takes into account new forms of social relations, conditions of life, production and exchange, as well as the influences coming from so-called modern societies on so-called traditional ones. It resulted in the results that the policies that have been implemented in Burkina Faso since the independence era have not been able to bring about change. Her approach used tools such as semi-structured interviews, focus groups, questionnaires and careful document analysis.

We also have the work of Tonyeme, B. (2022) which has been exploited. For him, the question of identities is at the heart of education in general and schooling in particular. The recurrence of this question also raises the question of the adequacy of teaching content in general and of Physical Education and Sport in a specific way. Because of the close link between interpersonal social relations and the socialization process, reflection on identity in an educational and social context facilitates social integration as well as the link between personality formation and relationships with others. It defines socialization as a process through which individuals can appropriate and internalize the social values of their environment. He believes that it is socialization that produces identity. He believes that it is important for Africa to stop copying others and reclaim its own identity in order to drive real social progress. He convinces himself that

« ...In order for the African continent to be able to promote true endogenous and non-mimetic progress, it must know itself in its identity and organize its entire educational system around this identity so that citizens can find their way around it and actively participate in social evolution.»(Tonyeme, 2022, p. 94).

This then takes into account the fact that the implementation and implementation of these activities will be successful taking into account the citizens who have to practice them. In addition, he believes that what characterizes or differentiates a people from others is its identity, something specific to each people.

Based on these elements listed above, we ask ourselves the following general research question: how can traditional APSAs in Burkina Faso participate in social change?

Methodology

Our work is an analytical study. It takes into account anyone who has at least the ability to express themselves clearly without distinction of gender, profession, ethnicity or religion, but also resource persons who have a clear knowledge of traditional physical, sports and artistic activities and their various aspects. This was a quantitatively predominantly mixed type study. The population covered by our study is made up of people of both sexes, with or without paid employment.

We used the non-probability sampling method. The technique used to collect quantitative data was accidental. For the qualitative part, it was a reasoned choice technique because we interviewed people chosen according to their knowledge of traditional APSAs. The people surveyed are people who belong to different social groups in Burkina Faso. The group submitted to the questionnaire is made up of actors, observers and others who have an opinion on traditional APSAs. The interview group is made up of resource persons who have experience in the field of traditional APSAs, who carry out activities to promote traditional physical activities, whether still active or not, those who are interested in issues of cultural identity and those who are institutionally concerned with cultural issues. After counting, we obtained two hundred and eighty-three (283) cards for the children and youth group, and four hundred and thirteen (413) cards for the adults and seniors group. A total of six hundred and ninety-six (696) people were interviewed.

The sample is a representative part of the population. In total, we intend to survey in six (06) regions for this study out of the thirteen (13) in the country. Based on information obtained on the website of the Burkinabe National Tourist Office (ONTB) on July 27, 2023 at 12:34 p.m., Burkina Faso has more than sixty ethnic groups (67 listed) spread throughout the national territory (ontb.bf/burkina-faso).

In order to obtain tangible information and to have fairly convincing arguments on the contribution of physical, sports and artistic activities of the Burkinabe tradition on social change and the promotion of cultural identities, we used the semi-structured interview, the documentary research and the questionnaire. This consisted of one questionnaire sheet for the children and young people group, and another for the adults and elderly group. But the interview guide we used for the interviews had three (03) themes, the first of which was about knowledge about traditional APSAs and their functions, the second about their ability to contribute to the promotion of the different cultural identities of the BF.

At the end of the administration of the survey, volunteers helped us to retrieve the questionnaire sheets that we received and attached to the interview sheets for processing and analysis. Data were processed with IBM SPSS Statistics version 25 and Excel. Descriptive statistics were presented in the form of frequencies and percentages for continuous quantitative variables. As far as qualitative data is concerned, content analysis has enabled data to be processed, in particular through the coding of information or tri-thematic and the processing itself.

Results

The Functions of Traditio's APSAs

The results are divided between the proposed functions: training 4.6%, education 25.7%, identity 27.8%, entertainment 25.7%, health 12.3%, bravery 3.9%. All those who agreed to participate in the interviews also confirmed that traditional APSAs have several roles (translated into meaning in the questionnaire) on which their functions are based.

On the functions of traditional APSAs, all the people interviewed and those in the focus group reported that these bodily practices convey many values and fulfil several functions. In addition to those already listed with the fact sheets, they also spoke of respect, peace, patriotism and protection. For example, a PE inspector and former head of the Burkinabe wrestling federation told us that "*traditional wrestling is practiced, especially before, with great enthusiasm, through it the youth showed their strength, their bravery, in the communities that practice it*". This is in line with the statements of the other participants in

the interviews who went in the same direction by supporting the fact that the traditional APSAs have several values including those of training, health, education, identity, social, entertainment, bravery, political and also economic while insisting on the social value of cohesion.

Another added: *"Archery has values beyond the sporting aspect, especially in the current context. This activity can even be used for protection"* (Interview conducted on July 13, 2023).

The Contribution of Traditional APSAs to the Promotion of Cultural Identities

The majority choice of form of activity that has been highlighted is the danced form, followed by the played form, followed by work, fighting, hunting and fishing come next.

-Children and young people: dancing (44%), playing (20%), working (15%), fighting (16%), fishing (1%), hunting (4%)

-Adults and seniors: dancing (44%), playing (19%), working (18%), fighting (13%), fishing (1%), hunting (5%)

All eight (08) people who agreed to grant us the interviews, told us that the traditional APSAs usually involve all the people of the society with often well-defined and coordinated tasks in order to create a perfect synchronization around the practice. And it is in this same logic that DOH L., who granted us an interview on July 13, 2023, a former practitioner and coach of traditional wrestling, said the following:

"These practices are quite well structured with several actors with well-defined roles: the woman, the man, the youth, the adult, the elders, the customary people, the land chief, the griot, the blacksmith, either for the practice itself, or for encouragement, protection or animation... And the combination of all these roles gives harmony to the thing. »

In this sense, traditional APSAs engage all social strata in practice.

The results of all the children and young people, adults and the elderly on the ability of traditional APSAs to promote their cultural identities are confirmed with 80.6% and 95.9% respectively.

Discussion

The objectives of the study were to highlight the functions of the traditional APSAs of Burkina Faso, to explain the capacities of the traditional APSAs of Burkina Faso to bring about social change within the Burkinabe population and to explain the socio-cultural aspects of the traditional APSAs of Burkina Faso that can enable them to contribute to the promotion of different cultural identities in Burkina Faso.

The Functions of Traditional APSAs

With regard to the functions of traditional APSAs, we had formulated the hypothesis that traditional APSAs perform functions in Burkinabe society. To test this hypothesis, we set ourselves the objective of identifying the specific functions of traditional APSAs, starting from the values transmitted and the meaning of practices. According to our results, children and young people gave 94.7% of their opinions on the

possibility of anchoring values through traditional APSAs, i.e. 268 out of the 283 in this group of under twenty-five (25) years old. Those who say yes are far more numerous.

Adults and the elderly gave 96.4% of their opinions to support the fact that it is possible to transmit values through traditional APSAs. All those who participated in the interview also affirmed that traditional APSAs have many values and that their practice allows these values to be transmitted either by age group or at the family level. They recognise that despite modernity, some traditional APSAs still retain their values today. It is clear that the vast majority of the subjects surveyed recognize that their traditional APSAs have several values on which they act to fulfill functions for the proper functioning of society. This shows that APSAs are elements of very high social importance in view of the very high rates of favourable opinions, all of which go beyond 90%.

In addition, based on our findings on the meaning or functions that citizens gave to the practice of traditional APSAs, we obtained results that all the functions we proposed are functions that traditional APSAs perform within society. This trend is the same among the participants in the various interviews we were able to conduct.

The meanings given to the practice have presented us with results that reflect that several specific functions are recognized for the practice of traditional APSAs, functions that these activities perform in the relationships within the social group. Thus, the functions of the traditional APSAs have been declined in terms of training, education, identity, entertainment (playful), health and bravery.

This is supported by the verbatim accounts of all the subjects with whom we conducted interviews, which added protection, solidarity and patriotism. Some traditional APSAs allow one social group to dominate another, to defend itself, to increase its wealth, in addition to the social function that makes it possible to fluidify the interventions of the members of the group in the overall social organization.

Our results corroborate those from Ouédraogo's (2020) research on the "inter-artiality of wedbindé" where he was able to demonstrate that this dance, which is a traditional APSA, allows the union between daughters and sons of north-central Burkina Faso. In addition, solidarity, humility and respect are cultivated through the inter-artiality and aesthetics that characterize this practice of bodily expression. Neither age, nor gender, nor space are an obstacle. Our results also confirm those of Coulibaly's (2022) research on traditional and modern APSAs in Burkina Faso: elements of social change and community development. It may have resulted in the fact that APSAs perform several functions in the lives of individuals. He noted, for example, its function as an education, a social, recreational and cultural function. This allows us to say that our first hypothesis is true.

The Capacity of Traditional APSAs to Promote Cultural Identities

For the ability of traditional APSAs to induce social change through the promotion of cultural identities, our hypothesis stated that traditional APSAs can induce social change through the promotion of cultural identities. We then set ourselves the goal of describing the capacity of traditional APSAs to induce social change through the promotion of cultural identities.

On Social Functions

To do so, we investigated the forms of practice, the actors, and the capacities to allow the identification and promotion of cultures despite the effects of modernism. The results of our study indicate that 277 out of the 413 people aged twenty-five (25) and over to whom we administered the questionnaire approved the fact that traditional APSAs are conducted through activities that bring everyone together for the most part, i.e. 67%. Thus, we can see through the results that according to adults and the elderly, most of the traditional APSAs that are proposed in our questionnaire are practiced by everyone.

Also, we noted, 187 out of the 283 children and youth said that traditional APSAs are practiced by everyone, a ratio of 66%. This majority that has expressed itself has allowed us to have results that support the integrative and social aspect of traditional APSAs, which therefore takes into account several actors. In fact, 464 out of the 696 respondents considered that several traditional APSAs are collective and integrative activities for children, young people, adults and the elderly. In terms of interviews, all those agreed that traditional APSAs have qualitative social functions. It is important that the conditions for their practice are met and that this practice is well supervised, in particular by the institutions and structures in charge of physical activities and physical expression. Therefore, according to them, it is necessary to allow actors to practice while taking into account the roles played by these practices while adapting them to evolution and modernism.

And from what is established after analyzing the results, the traditional APSAs such as dancing, playing and work are the APSAs that occupy the population more. This is a guarantee of positive social change shared by all members of the community. In this sense, traditional APSAs engage all social strata in practice. This union in activities is a framework for strengthening interpersonal relations, and also a school of training in the adoption of socially appropriate behaviors that can allow a change within society on the basis of the change in attitude of each individual, who remains himself a social being.

In addition, participants in the interviews and focus group added that these activities bring people together around the same ideal, and that they train citizens to adopt good behaviors in order to contribute to social change. This reinforces the possibility that traditional APSAs could have specific functions. When during the interview of July 12, 2023, Mr. Konaté B. told us that " *regarding social change, traditional physical, sports and artistic activities allow for awareness, a return to the roots for a change in behavior to initiate a development based on our traditional values* It is indeed based on the values, the forms of practice, and the layers involved in the execution of these activities. We can then say that the construction of the individual takes into account his bodily practice and from this point of view the APSAs of tradition remain a fundamental element of this construction.

There is a similarity between this information and that of another research for which "*The practice of physical activities and sports allows the actor to change his attitude, perception and to acquire new economic and socio-cultural power.* »(Coulibaly, 2022, p. 234).

In the analysis, we realized that the differences between the proportions of data for the different forms of activity would be justified by the periodicity of these activities. While traditional dancing can be practiced at every event, hunting or fishing can only be practiced at certain times of the season. In an interview conducted on July 13, 2023, our respondent stated that "*some activities are practiced to mark an event, the beginning or end of a season, and they are usually also linked to history*".

Our results could be explained by a certain convergence of views at the level of the two groups we surveyed, i.e. people under twenty-five (under 25) years of age and those of twenty-five (+ 25) years of age and older. This was explained by the data obtained after results on the people who were involved in the practice of these APSAs. Thus, despite the negative impacts of modernism that most noted, the individuals surveyed recognize that if the conditions are right, traditional APSAs can perform social functions.

Promotion of Cultural Identities

The second part of our second hypothesis deals with the promotion of cultural identities. At the end of our survey, we note that 82.7% of children and young people and 83.1% of adults and the elderly were in favour of the fact that traditional APSAs allow them to identify themselves as a social group vis-à-vis others. Similarly, 228 out of 283 children and young people (80.6 per cent) and 396 out of 413 adults and elderly people (95.9 per cent) agreed that traditional APSAs promote their cultural identities. On the other hand, many of them believe that traditional APSAs are an integral part of their culture. For example, among individuals over twenty-five years of age, 85.2% said that their traditional APSAs are an integral part of their cultures and 92.5% said that their traditional APSAs contribute to the preservation of the image of their social groups. The vast majority of citizens agree that their traditional APSAs can allow them to identify themselves in relation to others. These data made it clear to us that the possibility of promoting cultural identities through the practice of traditional APSAs is real.

The results showed that traditional APSAs could participate in the promotion of cultural identities. Indeed, the majority of the subjects who were surveyed as part of this study supported this. This capacity of traditional APSAs is reflected in certain fundamental aspects such as their connection with culture, their ability to allow citizens to identify themselves, the possibility of promoting culture through them and the possibility of safeguarding culture through their practice.

This converges well with the elements described in traditional and modern APSAs in Burkina Faso: elements of social change and community development. In that article, it was stated:

«Participation in traditional bodily practices is easy, its cost is affordable, its social significance is linked to cultural origin, all psychological, supernatural, irrational, magical components, etc. is respected, while it tends to be denied in European sport.»(Coulibaly, 2022, p. 234).

Thus, we can agree with this statement by specifying that despite the difficulties that are opposed to traditional APSAs with the arrival of modernism and sports from elsewhere, they continue to be well appreciated and still keep their place within the social groups of Burkina Faso.

Our results are also in line with the results of research conducted on the warba dance for the safeguarding of the heritage and cultural identity of the Moaga people of Ganzourgou. This research, conducted by a group of researchers, reveals the following: *"It also represents the organization of social life around the head of the family, the head of the village, thus valuing collective identity to the detriment of personal identity. Dancing in circles also conveys the image of infinity.»*(Ouedraogo et al., 2020, p. 109).

Conclusion

The traditional APSAs of Burkina Faso are found in all national cultures. Citizens live them and they participate in the community life of the peoples. Originally, they were socio-cultural referents for strengthening life in society and for privileged means of education at the level of communities at the grassroots level. The national policies of the countries of sub-Saharan Africa, especially most of the texts, should allow the codification of traditional games and sports from our lands to better interest children. So-called ancient bodily physical practices can be rehabilitated to conform to the socialization model and worldview of our societies. Unfortunately, national policies still give pride of place to competitive sports, which are modern and of Western origin.

Based on this observation, we find the need to protect and safeguard physical activities, whether physical or amusing, sporting or non-sporting.

One of the objectives of our study was to identify the functions of traditional APSAs, and then how they could participate in the promotion of different cultural identities.

These hypotheses were verified by two questionnaires, one of which was addressed to those under twenty-five years of age and the second to those aged twenty-five and over, but also by an interview guide, a focus group, audio-visual files and the analysis of documents. The results obtained have shown us that traditional APSAs fulfil several useful functions in Burkinabe society, they participate in the promotion of cultural identities in Burkina Faso. This study could help decision-makers to take useful steps towards the revaluation of our traditional APSAs in order to lay the foundations for a reconnection of populations to their community of belonging and to promote the different cultural identities of our country. This could be done culturally, educationally and athletically.

Beyond the general aspects of traditional APSAs that we have discussed, we believe that further research could look at the particularities of one of these traditional APSAs, or even possible commonalities between traditional APSAs.

References

- Andrieu, S. (2007). The spectacle of national identity. *Journal of Anthropologists. French Association of Anthropologists, Special Issue*, 89-103. <https://doi.org/10.4000/jda.2977>
- Archambault, F., & Artiaga, L. (2004). The Meanings and Social Dimensions of Sport Sport and National Identity. *Sport et société Cahiers français*, 38-42.
- Beibeny, A. O. (1998). *Contribution to the integration of traditional games and sports into the socio-educational system in Mauritania* [Thesis]. CHEIKH ANTA DIOP University of Dakar.
- Bulle, N. (2005). *Sociology of Education*. 1-14.
- Coulibaly, B. (2022). Traditional and Modern Physical, Sports and Artistic Activities in Burkina Faso: Elements of Social Change and Community Development. *Djiboul*, 2(003), 228-241.

Fall, P. A. (2022). Crisis of values and education. *Akofena*, 3(005), 315-324.

Ouedraogo, B., Gouda, S. L., & Palé, A. (2022). From tediè to oudizon in Toma in BURKINA FASO: the reappropriation of an endogenous value in struggle. *Revues.acaref*, 1(1), 66-94.

Ouedraogo, B., Ouedraogo, M., Moukala Mampassi, T. S., Nakou, A. S., & Gouda, S. L. (2020). *Warba dance of the Moose people of Ganzourgou in BURKINA FASO: heritage and cultural identity to be safeguarded*. 014, 97-122.

Paré-Kaboré, A. (2013). Traditional Education and Community Life in Africa: Benchmarks and Lessons for Education for Living Together Today. *McGill Journal of Education*, 48(1), 15-33.

<https://doi.org/10.7202/1018399ar>

Parlebas, P. (2019). Traditional games, sports and host cultures. In *International Colloquium "Traditional Sports Practices and Sustainable Cultural Tourism"* (p. 8-16).

Tonyeme, B. (2022). Identities and Education: Which Education System for Which Development in Africa? *Hermeneia*, 28, 93-109.

Torki, A. (2009). *Sports games between the singular and the universal Elements of dialogue or clash of cultures*.

Zongo, O. C. (2019). *The Social and Cultural Functions of Traditional Physical Activities and Games: The Case of Hunting, Wrestling and Sãane Parties of the Moose of Boulkièmdé in Burkina Faso* [Thesis]. University of Abomey-Calavi.