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Analyzing the Concept of Play as Civilization: A Case Study of the Concepts of Play and War in the Phenomenon of Varzajang

Hosein Solati*

Abstract

Original and pure play is one of the main foundations of civilization. Accordingly, the native people of the north (specifically, its plains area) call the organization of a bloody fight between two bulls "play." Relying on natural attitudes and preserving Varzajang under such titles as the necessity of preserving historical tradition, protecting culture and identity, and the importance of "native play," they insist on its continuation. However, during the last few centuries, this unusual culture has undergone tremendous changes with the transformation of social structures, while its main core, "fighting," has remained. In this regard, some sociologists and academic researchers, in support of its economic development to attract profits and financial gains for the host, and also by referring to the social solidarity function of this tradition, emphasize the removal of existing obstacles and believe that this phenomenon provides a favorable opportunity for the expansion and attraction of tourism.This research, using a phenomenological approach (highlighting the intentional component in its method) and drawing on two years of lived experience among Varzajang activists, relies on the categories of play according to Caillois and Huizinga's perception of play. It investigates the perception of this phenomenon among the people of Rasht and seeks to answer the central question: Is "Varzajang" a game or a war? The result is that the reality of play, "open coherence," and discussion of hidden social layers are important and necessary. Therefore, in adopting a judgment concerning ethical norms, we must all be concerned with the public interest in society. However, the phenomenon of Varzajang can be considered play to the extent that it is a natural movement (as opposed to a compulsive motion). Once it becomes violent and vicious and distances itself from the elements of play, it is undoubtedly no longer play or civilizing.

Keywords: Civilization; Play; War; Varzajang; Bullfighting; Phenomenology.

* PhD in Political Sociology, Islamic Azad University, South Tehran Branch, Tehran, Iran.
hossein.solati1361@gmail.com

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