



A PROLEGOMENON TO THE RESEARCHERS OF THE HISTORY OF PHYSICAL CULTURE

Stefan Ilić¹

¹College of Applied Sciences &
„Football Academy“ Belgrade

UDK 655.535.4
796/799(091)

SUMMARY

Truth, problems, research

In his search for the truth, every history researcher often encounters the difficulties of methodological nature.

A very complex path, which is, in case of history researchers, more difficult and complicated, due to a number of obstacles, leads to a **discovery of truth**.

However, what exactly is the truth and how much do we need it nowadays, who wants it and is there a desire to discover the truth? These questions are not easy to answer.

What are we faced with and what are **the most common problems in the research of the history of physical culture**? What makes us make omissions, errors and mistakes?

1. Hasting and hurrying to complete the papers, when we, often faced with short deadlines, fail to meet all methodological requirements.
2. Using the information from the papers by other authors is taken for granted, without adequate verification, assuming their reliability, and if the information is inaccurate, it results in multiplying inaccurate information which thus becomes an **inaccurate secondary source** to the next researcher.
3. In our research we are sometimes unable to distance ourselves from our nation, religion and politics and we therefore tend to overestimate the achievements by our own people.
4. We do not always pay enough attention to or we neglect or do not consider the economic, political, historical, cultural and other conditions under which an event occurred as well as their interrelations and their impact on the studied issue.

5. In research we often exclude comparative studies on the development and achievements of European countries and Serbia in all aspects of political, economic and cultural life.
6. Professional and scientific papers' review is easily accepted and taken for granted since, due to the authors' deadlines, we are often under pressure and forced to assess the suggested work without thorough and adequate consideration.

For the aforesaid reasons, we therefore advocate ***a more cautious and more serious approach to the research of the past*** in order to avoid mistakes and inaccuracies.

Correspondence author

Stefan Ilić
stefanilic@hotmail.com

(Reminder and previous notes)

Indocti discant et ament meminisse periti !

*(Let the unlearned learn, and the learned take pleasure in
refreshing their memories)*

1. TRUTH

Plato is my friend, but truth is a better friend.

(Aristotle – a Greek philosopher (384-322 B.C.)

It is known that every history researcher in his search for the truth is often encountered with many problems and especially with the difficulties of methodological nature. A scientific discovery, expressed by a valid synthesis of the research conducted, i.e. a valid scientific result of the studied issue, mostly depends on solving these problems successfully.

This paper presents the notes about some methodological and other difficulties, encountered by every researcher of the past, which are the most subtle and most frequently mentioned and which could serve as a reminder during some stages of their work.

We also know that a path leading to the **discovery of truth** in general is quite complex and in case of history researchers it is even more difficult and complicated due to a number of obstacles, i.e. doubts and dilemmas, omissions and faults.

Mirjana Gros, a historian from Zagreb, dealt with this issue in her book "Historical Science" (1976) stating that ***"in the modern industrial societies which are technologically highly-developed and politically and socially exceptionally complex, a historian faces a phenomenon of widespread neglect and even hatred of history."***

And what exactly is the truth? How much do we need it nowadays? Who wants it and is there a desire to find out the truth? The answers to these questions can be searched and found in the works of many scholars since the earliest times of civilization.

We shall herein mention a few selected thoughts for the occasion:

The Nobel Prize winner **Ivo Andrić** (1892-1975), a Serbian and Yugoslavian writer and a diplomat of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, who was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1961 with the following explanation: *"for the epic force with which he has traced themes and depicted human destinies drawn from the history of his country"* may have given the most complete answer:

„Only ignorant and unreasonable people can believe that the past is dead and forever separated from the present by an impermeable wall.

On the contrary, the truth is that everything we once thought and felt and did has been inextricably woven into what we think, feel and do today.

To bring the light of scientific truth into the past events means to serve the present.

(Signs by the Roadside).

Umberto Eco (1932-2016), an Italian writer, philosopher, aesthetician, semiotician, literary critic, essayist and medieval-age historian, **warned of a danger of the truth spoken, however, it is worth fighting for the truth.** He also said, and not without a reason, that **lunatics and children always tell the truth.**

Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980), a French philosopher, novelist, essayist and playwright, a creator of the philosophy of atheistic existentialism, said: **An intellectual may keep silent and overlook many things, but when it comes to truth and human rights he must raise his voice.**

George Orwell (1903-1950), an English writer most famous for his novels, among which the most popular are "Animal Farm" and "Nineteen eighty-four", as well as for his criticism, political and literary works, said: **There are too many secrets. The truth will always set us free. In the world where everything is a deceit (in a time of universal deceit) -telling the truth is a revolutionary act.**

Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831), a German philosopher and a representative of the philosophy movement known as German idealism, said

that we live in our illusions therefore we are afraid of the truth: **People do not want to find out the truth because they are afraid that it will destroy their illusions.** In addition, he warned that **the fight for the truth makes enemies.**

Alexander Dorin, a Swiss of Serbian origin, has been fighting for the truth today in Switzerland and other countries all around the world as well as against the untruths spread about Serbs and Serbia. Thus he has made a lot of enemies but despite the threats, harassment and being arrested by the Swiss authorities, Dorin still speaks of and writes about Srebrenica events, trying to make the truth known throughout the world.

Petar II Petrović Njegoš (1813-1851) was a spiritual and secular leader of Montenegro and one of the greatest Serbian poets and philosophers, who in regard to the truth said: **Oh, truth, you are so unlucky, everyone seeks you, but no one really wants you.**

Similar to this Njegoš's thought about the truth, there is a **German proverb** saying: **The truth is like holy water: everybody praises it, but nobody wants it to be sprinkled into their eyes.**

Rashomon, a film directed by Akira Kurosawa (1950), based on R.Akutagawa's short story, is known for a plot device that involves various characters providing subjective versions on the same incident. It is a story about the relativity and subjectivity of truth, i.e. how the same event is perceived and experienced by different people, where each version sounds convincing and shows how complex a path leading to the truth is, since **No one perceives the things as the others do.**

The latest about the search for truth:

1.

The most recent research regarding the authenticity of **Marco Polo's** travels and his stay in China, depicted in the book *Marco Polo the Million*, has cast doubt on the truthfulness of anything described therein. A number of references include the following recorded:

„Marco Polo (1254 - 1324) was a Venetian merchant and an explorer who, together with his father and uncle, was one of the first Western Europeans who travelled along the Silk Road to China. Polo presented his journeys chronologically in his book titled "The Million" (The Travels of Marco Polo). The Polos had been living in China for 17 years before they returned to Venice. In a naval battle between Venice and Genoa, Marco was captured and taken to prison where he dictated his book to Rustichello da Pisa. Because all of this some consider Marco Polo one of the

world's greatest explorers, whereas some skeptics regard him as the world's greatest story teller."

In a TV show about the research on whether the book *Marco Polo the Million* was based on a true story (October 2017) an Italian historian pointed out that **there are no revealed historical sources which confirm his journey and stay in China**. A researcher who deals with searching for truth said: ***I believe that there is a grain of truth somewhere ... The grains of truth lead to partial truth – until the evidence is found.***

2.

The article titled "***The history that we know is a lie***" (September 8th 2017) stated that the Piri Reis map from the 16th century depicted the Antarctic without ice although it is extremely accurate (***The map which challenges history*** – it is a world map compiled in 1513 by the Ottoman admiral Piri Reis).

„Approximately a third of the map survives – it shows the western coasts of Europe, North Africa and the coast of Brazil with reasonable accuracy. However, how could the map designed in 1513 depict a continent discovered only in the 19th century? And if the Antarctic was discovered by the civilizations emerged 4 000 years B.C, why were not the areas covered in ice included in the map?

Undoubtedly, the map is trustworthy since its authenticity has been repeatedly confirmed and the author Reis himself stated that it was drawn according to the information contained in the older maps, charts and records, many of which were copied and rewritten again before the destruction of the Great Library of Alexandria in Egypt.

The Piri Reis Map certainly raises doubts about what we really know about ancient civilizations and opens up a possibility for a theory about a forgotten ancient civilization which had capacity, ability, knowledge and technological potentials for traveling to Antarctica even before the icebergs were formed, which is completely opposite to what history teaches us. The ice layers hide many secrets and the ruins of an ancient city have been allegedly found underneath the Antarctic ice."

In 2002, the entire **television team from California** disappeared on this cruel continent. Although their bodies have never been found, there was a strange trace left behind them –a footage and a story about ancient ruins. Afterwards a mission was also carried out by the United States Marines. **Jonathan Grey, an archeologist**, said that the US navy does not want to publish the footage found. And he concluded: ***Our planet is deeply immersed in lies (science, culture, religion).***

* * *

On the basis of everything aforesaid the following question can be put forward: ***What is a mission of an intellectual, especially of a history researcher, a truth seeker?***

If we start from a thought by ***Jean-Paul Sartre saying that an intellectual can keep silent and overlook many things, but when it comes to human rights and the truth he must raise his voice then our duty is not only to find out (discover) the truth, but also to fight consistently for its true place among the untruths (either accidental or intentional), since it is a human right that each man should know the truth.***

Even when I am a minority including one man, the truth is still the truth, Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948) a founder of the contemporary Indian state and an influential advocate of non-violent riots during the Indian revolution, said.

2. PROBLEMS IN THE RESEARCH OF THE HISTORY OF PHYSICAL CULTURE

What are we faced with and what are the most common problems in the research of the history of physical culture? What makes us make omissions, errors and mistakes? What do we sometimes do wrong intentionally or unintentionally, although we know what should be done? Every one of us often asks these questions, but let us search the answers to these questions here in this reminder, where they are not ordered according to their importance and significance, because each of them is equally important and significant.

1. Hasting and hurrying to complete our final papers, when often faced with short deadlines we are aware that we could not meet all the methodological requirements necessary for writing a quality scientific paper. In these cases, scientific papers lose their significance, and they often include some inadmissible methodological and other kinds of errors. Do not haste – complete in a quality way – and then publish.
2. Using the information from the papers by other authors (statements, books, monographs) is taken for granted, without adequate verification, assuming their reliability, and if the information is inaccurate it results in multiplying inaccurate information about specific past events which thus becomes an inaccurate secondary source to the next researcher. For this reason it is necessary to verify each such source constantly. We shall herein present several such examples:

Example 1 – ***Petar Predragović*** was the first graduate teacher of gymnastics in the Principality of Serbia (1862), a gymnastics teacher at the

Gymnasium and the Teacher Training School in Kragujevac since 1871, the manager of the *Gymnastics Teaching Courses for the Primary School Teachers* (in 1872 and 1873) and the author of the first manual titled *Brief instructions on teaching gymnastics in primary schools (1873)*. In the *Memorial of the Gymnasium in Kragujevac (1833-1933)* it was stated that **Petar Predragović – a former postman taught gymnastics**. The creators of the Memorial were not aware of this information; however they read in his personal file that he worked at the Post Office in Belgrade (in anticipation of his teaching job position).

Example 2 – **Nikodije Trujić** (*Physical culture in Serbian schools in the 19th century, 1976*) stated that **“Italian gymnastics”** was introduced to the schools in Serbia. By reviewing the sources used it was determined that this mistake was made due to the author’s ignorance of the European gymnastics systems as well as because he misread the inscription written in Cyrillic *„Изујенска“*, which at that time meant **“Swedish – hygienic gymnastics”**.

Example 3 – **Steva Todorović**, an academic painter, upon his arrival from Vienna (1857) gathered 16 students of the Lyceum and with the approval by the authorities he opened his School of Painting where he taught painting, singing, fencing, and organized physical exercises. The school operated for three years. However, many publications in the field of physical culture stated that Todorović established **the First Serbian Society for Gymnastics and Fighting** although it was not so recorded in any historical source, including even his Autobiography. The source of such an interpretation has been found in the article *“On the occasion of the 100th anniversary of physical education in Serbia” (Physical Culture 7-8, Belgrade 1957)*.

Example 4 – **Svetomir Đukić, a division general**, one of the founders of the *Serbian Olympic Club* (1910) and its director, a member of the *International Olympic Committee* (1912-1948) and the *Yugoslav Olympic Committee* (1919-1941) was declared a war criminal in the daily newspapers Politika – in July 1945 without any court proceedings. However, it was determined that his name was not included in the lists of war criminals of Belgrade, Serbia and Yugoslavia. Unfortunately, at that time it was how the then authorities „fought“ with the opponents and enemies of the newly established regime. General Đukić was rehabilitated in 1990.

Dr Nikiforov, a director of the Historical Institute in Moscow for 12 years, talking in an interesting way about the problem of the inadequate use of historical sources said:

„History is like football, everyone believes they understand it. In order to study and write about history, documents are of crucial importance. Serious historians deal with searching for relevant documents, whereas publicists consider creating an interesting story according to their own recipe the most important. Such

books may be sometimes seriously taken and understood and the references to them may be applied in the future papers. In order to avoid such charlatanism it is necessary to open the archives as soon as possible."

1. In our research we are sometimes unable to distance ourselves from our nation, religion and politics (current social relations) and therefore we tend to overestimate the achievements by our people while neglecting or underestimating the achievements by members of other nations. There is an example of Svetomir Đukić and Franjo Bučar in the Encyclopedia of Physical Culture, prepared and published in Zagreb in 1957-58.

2. We do not often pay enough attention to or we even neglect or do not consider the economic, political, historical, cultural and other conditions under which an event occurred as well as their interrelations and impact on the studied issue. Therefore, the conclusions of such papers cannot bear appropriate scientific value. (Serbia under the Turkish rule, the Principality and the Kingdom of Serbia, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenian and the Kingdom of Yugoslavia).

In this sense the emergence and the development of Sokol Movement have not been adequately researched under the circumstances of the eventually liberated Principality of Serbia (1878), therefore a conflict between the supporters of the Sokol idea and Pan-Slavic unification on the one hand and a part of the gymnastic movement supporters who tended to renew the historical values of the Serbian nation based on the tradition and culture accomplished during its past through these forms of physical exercise, on the other hand, has been sometimes too simplified.

1. In our research we often exclude the comparative analysis of the development and achievements of European states and Serbia in all aspects of political, economic and cultural life. Thus we do not pay attention to the development of European countries since the 15th century, during the period of humanism and renaissance, as well as during the colonial enrichment which resulted in their faster economic and cultural development, by which they also gained other advantages for themselves. During this period of time, Serbia lost its state and was under the Turkish rule for several hundreds of years, which caused all forms of its development to be stopped.

It is therefore understandable that, for instance, the teacher training school for female teachers of gymnastics was opened in Denmark in 1829 whereas in the semi-vassal Principality of Serbia the first secondary school, i.e. the Gymnasium in Kragujevac was opened only in 1833.

2. Professional and scientific papers' review is easily accepted and taken for granted, being often faced with short deadlines by the authors we are forced

to assess the suggested work without adequate and proper consideration. Therefore it happens that we write positive reviews of those papers which include more serious mistakes or errors which puts us in a position of accomplices and “co-authors” of the papers which are not worth such ratings.

* * *

For the aforesaid reasons, we therefore advocate ***a more cautious and more serious approach to the research of the past***, in order to prevent errors and mistakes (either accidental or intentional) which may result in the untruthful presentation of the past events (partially or entirely) or in the inaccurate assessment of the contribution by relevant persons in the field of physical culture.

* * *

Our great scientist ***Nikola Tesla***, in addition to his invaluable contribution to science, has also left us a message about the truth which must be read carefully and deeply considered in order to be fully understood:

„A gift of mental energy comes from the God, a supreme being, and if we concentrate all our thoughts about the truth then we will be in harmony with this great power. My mother taught me that the truth should be searched in the Bible.”

ПРОЛЕГОМЕНА ИСТРАЖИВАЧИМА ИСТОРИЈЕ ФИЗИЧКЕ КУЛТУРЕ

САЖЕТАК

Истина, проблеми, истраживање

Сваки истраживач историје се у ***трагању за истином*** често среће са тешкоћама методолошке природе.

До ***открића истине*** води веома сложен пут, који је код истраживача историје отежан и компликован, због низа препрека,

А шта је заправо истина и колика је данас потреба за њом, ко је жели и да ли постоји жеља да се сазна истина? Питање је без лаког одговора.

Са чиме се срећемо и шта су ***најчешћи проблеми у истраживању историје физичке културе?*** Шта нас то наводи да правимо превиде, пропусте и грешке?

1. Журба и брзина завршетка радова, када често суочени роковима, не одговоримо свим методолошким захтевима.
2. Олако преузимање података из радова других аутора, без довољно провере, верујући у њихову позданост, па уколико они нису тачни

доводимо до мултиплицирања преузетих погрешних података, који на тај начин постају **погрешан секундаран извор** следећем истраживачу.

3. У истраживањима се понекад недовољно дистанцирамо у односу на своју нацију и веру, политику, па стога пренаглашавамо достигнућа припадника властитог народа.
4. Не поклањамо увек довољно пажње, занемарујемо или не узимамо у разматрање економске, политичке, историјске, културне и друге околности у којима се догађај збивао, њихово међусобно прожимање и утицај на истраживану појаву.
5. У истраживањима често изостављамо компаративно праћење развоја и достигнућа европских држава и Србије у свим сферама политичког, економског и културног живота.
6. Рецензирање стручних и научних радова олако прихватамо, веома често притиснути роковима аутора, па смо принуђени да недовољно студиозно оценимо понуђени рад.

Због тога се из наведених разлога залажемо за **опрезнији и сериознији приступ истраживању прошлости**, да би спречили грешке и непрецизности.

Received on 05.09.2017.

Accepted on 03.10.2017.