

## **THE POSITIONS OF MARACANÃ STADIUM IN RIO DE JANEIRO AS THE SUBJECT OF STUDIES AND INVESTIGATIONS – AN INTERNATIONAL REVIEW**

Upon completing 70 years of existence, Maracanã Stadium rises from the past to current times, with the implied status of a symbol for soccer and sports in general, as it has rooted itself in Brazilians' memories and is recognized worldwide. In retrospect, it is a common belief that soccer turned Maracanã into a mythical place due to its origins, as well as to its circular format, capable of receiving large groups of spectators. This turned it into a place for meeting and for creating a communal and inclusive relationship with the population of the city that shelters it, Rio de Janeiro. This mediatic interpretation, which has been going on for decades, has, however, generated the demand for studies and investigations in History, Sociology, Communications, and other fields of knowledge, for scientific appropriation to generate an understanding beyond the mythological sense it embodies.

In fact, still in current and popular terms, Maracanã is aligned with other mythical stadiums in international comparisons, such as the Wembley (London), the Olympic Stadium (Berlin), Lujniki (Moscow), The Coliseum (Los Angeles), La Bombonera (Buenos Aires), or the Pacaembu (São Paulo). In this line of comparison, it is also possible to think of stadiums and sports locations as historical monuments, such as the Colosseum (Rome) or the city-state of Olympia, in Greece, both of which are millenary. As such, these comparative examples can already, on their own, predict that Maracanã will be a historical legacy and, as such, the subject of investigations and museum preservation, and this review study intends to position it in terms of analytical and prospective construction.

### **MARACANÃ AS A PLACE OF MEMORY**

Initially, the intended review requires consulting Sports Geography, a field of academic study described in "Atlas do Esporte do Brasil" (Atlas of Sport in Brazil) (DaCosta, Org., 2006), which included, in the chapter written by Gilmar Mascarenhas (2006) of Rio de Janeiro State University (UERJ), the sources that serve as starting points for studies about iconic stadiums internationally. This source considers as pioneers the Frenchman J.P. Augustin (1995), which identified stadiums by geographic influence – local, regional, national, etc., followed by the Englishman J. Bale (1998), and another Frenchman, P. Boniface (1998), who both examined socioeconomic and geopolitical influences of sports facilities. Particularly, Mascarenhas highlighted the work of John Bale, who has been working at Keele University (United Kingdom) since 1976, as the main author of Sports Geography and, on this subject, of studies about sports facilities, especially those related to soccer, located in his country. In a newer revision, this identification confirms the British author as a seminal source, especially considering his major work, shared with Olof Moen and published in 1995 (1<sup>st</sup> edition) under the title "The Stadium and the City".

In the introduction to this work, Bale interprets space as a manner of defining the sportive game and its practitioners, especially those played with teams, in such a way that each sports modality molds itself to the physical environment and to the landscape. But if space is defined by a stadium with thousands of spectators, the game becomes a ritual, creating emotional ties and a feeling of belonging among its participants, the players and the spectators. There is, thus, a theatrical feeling to the stadiums, which explains, in principle, the social and economic meanings of the stadiums amid the urban scenes that surround them. Considering this, the

aforementioned sports geographer's theorizations explore a plethora of examples from Europe and North America which place the stadium as a central element of modern cities. John Bale's confirmation of common perception, sometimes touristic or mediatic, which places certain stadiums as local or even national symbols, gains, however, another situational perspective among sports historians. This category of analysis includes Lamartine DaCosta, a Brazilian researcher whose theoretical forays in Olympic Studies led him to understand sports facilities as "places of memory", following French historian Pierre Nora with his proposal related to the "lieux de memoire", that is, environments and objects that build identities and evoke memories, simultaneously comprising concrete experiences and the construction of the imaginary.

The proof stemming from DaCosta's theorization supports itself in the case of Olympia, in Greece, where the historical narratives allow us to establish close relationships between the athletic competitions of the Olympic Games and religious rituals, group identification, cultural belonging, and artistic manifestations. This web of connections was reflected on the physical disposition of the location in question, turning it into a city-stadium-theater, with athletic competitions being the backbone of the relationships among its visitors during the Olympic Games in times before Christianity.

Regarding in loco recognition, DaCosta experienced the archaeological traces of Olympia with his Post-Graduate Internship students from various countries in the International Olympic Academy's (IOA) post-graduate program during the 1990s, experiences that were included in a chapter of the book commemorating the International Olympic Academy's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, which was launched in 2011. This study was titled "In Search of a Historical and Philosophical Meaning for IOA at Ancient Olympia" as it was inserted in a philosophical concept of Ancient Greece, later known by the Latin expression "theatrum mundi". This metaphor that was cultivated by pre-Socratic philosophy was communicated as a manner of making comprehensive declarations joining a multiplicity of subjects that apparently described the world.

In summation, the stadiums that symbolize a culture or a time – previously known here as "iconic" – in different international locations, are presupposed as following the city-theater-stadium tradition that was anticipated in Ancient Greece and slowly adjusted to the new times by harmonizing with the large urban centers of modernity. This interpretation, which was inherited from John Bale and revisited by DaCosta through new empirical and theoretical argumentation in 2002 and 2011, was strengthened by the observation of Maracanã stadium in its central role in the city of Rio de Janeiro during the 2016 Olympic Games.

In this disposition, Maracanã Stadium stands out, one of the four poles of the Rio de Janeiro Olympic Games, with a role that went beyond holding competitions, also serving as a concentration point for the installation of the Games – especially as the location for the Games' Opening Ceremony – and as an online reference for the circulation of news and visitors, as mentioned by DaCosta. Basically, the thesis of city-theater-state repeated itself regarding Maracanã-Rio de Janeiro during the 2016 Olympic Games, duly adjusted to the characterization of the digital era, which confirms the existence of a significance as a "place of memory" in the ties between stadiums and the areas surrounding them, regardless of temporal and cultural changes.

**Book: Maracanã 70 anos.**