



## **THE ORIGINS (Theme #1)** ((29/03/21))

The earliest historical notification of handball games dates from 2000 BC in Egypt. The priests of the temple of Osiris in Thebes were depicted on the tombs hitting a ball with the hand. Such iconographic evidence is also found in America where ball games (Ulama or Pok-ta-Pok) were an integral part of pre-Hispanic culture. More than 700 courts have been identified from Arizona to Nicaragua. In some cases losers could pay with their lives for loss of a game.

Alexander the Great (450 BC) is credited with spreading the game of ball in Europe. Around the year 1000, as Europe emerged from the Dark Ages, mention of concept of a ball and a wall became more numerous in the manuscripts. In France, the game of palm (jeu de paume) became popular both with the aristocracy and the common people. The exercise consisted of receiving the ball and pushing it back with the palm. The game was first played with bare hands, then with a glove; then a rope or rattan was tied around the hand to bounce the ball with more force. So far there is no mention in any of the sources of a ball bouncing against a wall. The game played was a hand-tennis game and it is still played in some European regions.

The original ball used was made of tightly coiled pieces of fabric sewn together and this would have given little bounce against a wall. The tennis game with the addition of bigger gloves eventually became the game of tennis. Henry VIII, maniac of this game, had a land built in Hampton (England) which is still in use. We also speak of a ball game in the book Don Quixote (1610) by Cervantes.

Around this time, the game with a hand being used to hit a ball on a wall is first mentioned in Scotland in 1427, with King James I. He became so addicted to handball that he ordered to his men to block a window which interfered with his ball games in the basement of his castle. This cellar window was the king's escape route in times of danger. The assassins came to assassinate the king, and since the window was blocked, the king had no way to save himself from his assailants. He was therefore killed on his own handball court. Exactly 100 years later, Galway City officials banned playing ball games against the city walls and this is the first mention of a game involving the bouncing of a ball on a wall in Ireland. From 1600 the mention of a ball hitting a wall became more frequent, especially by church authorities who were concerned with the custom of playing ball against the walls of the church. Soon the venue of rubber would change everything...

**Theme 2 : Basque pelota**

## VIDEOS AND PICTURES



Aztcs and Mayas



Égyptians

<https://youtu.be/8LsE6LQDryQ> (Ulama game - description)

<https://youtu.be/jKvQjgC9sIY> (Maya, Pok-ta-Pok game)



Palm game Henri the VIII court (Hampton, UK)

Please write to us some words on how and why you got involved in playing handball and we will share your experiences with other