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AN INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL LOGICAL ANALYSIS OF SANT MATEU TRADITIONAL GAMES PLAYED IN THE XX CENTURY

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Abstract

Nowadays traditional games are disappeared of our streets and places. Social changes don't help to keep the traditional games and the ludic culture: streets are paved; the number of children for family is fewer; technologic develop; and so on. Young people prefer other activities to spend their free time as sports, music, video games, social media. These activities and the social changes are modifying the ludic culture and the traditions of the people in the Maestrat Region and in other places in Spain. In this article we present a study about the traditional games and festive activities in a town called Sant Mateu (Spain). We studied these using visual sources, writing sources and, principally, oral sources. In order to find the ludic culture, we designed a questionnaire with internal and external logical questions. Internal logical asks about rules and regulations of the games and external logical asks about the social and cultural elements. With this questionnaire, we interviewed 48 people (26 men and 22 women) from 30 to 85 years. We interviewed people individually although, sometimes, we used discussion groups and workshops. Thus, after research, we found that the main source is the oral source. Visual sources and writing sources contributed with little information. It is so because until after middle XXth century people didn't use usually them. We obtained 124 traditional games which have been played during the XX century: 61 games were played by 1st generation; 18 games by the 2nd generation; 35 games by the 3^d. Moreover, we found 10 games that were played in festivities. In conclusion, we may establish that research of ludic culture is necessary to find and protect this intangible heritage, to know the relationship between people and traditional spaces of the games. With the qualitative information of this study, we wrote a book about the ludic culture and traditional games of the Sant Mateu town. This book was edited by Onada Editions and it's called in Valencian languages "Els jocs i la tradició lúdica de Sant Mateu al segle XX" (Ortí, 2011). Translation to English would be: "Games and ludic tradition of Sant Mateu to XX century".

Key words: ludic culture, traditional games, oral sources, questionnaire, praxeology.



Introduction

Ludic culture is a cultural diversity of game's elements. With this concept we integrate plays, jokes, games, sports, toys, wrestling, board and ball games, and dances.

Also we find some works as popular games, autochthonous games and traditional games although they aren't the same. Popular games are games very common and known by a lot of people. Autochthonous means the origin place of the game, although is too difficult to know with certainty the origin of the game. Traditional game means are games as such has been transmitted of generation to generation using, usually, oral sources.

The characteristics of the traditional games are: integrate motor and non motor practices; transmit values and rites; using native language; they are democratic although, sometimes, they discriminate by gender; they need that we preserve them and protect them for the next generation; and, some traditional games change a traditional sport for surviving. For example, in Catalanian Region we found a lot of varieties of the *bitlles games* (skittles games). A lot of towns had their local variety and it was impossible to organize a tournament between the different towns. Finally, there born one skittles games for all. With this variety people could organize a common tournament for all cities. With this unification of the rules, traditional games changed to sport but *bitlles game* survived. Similar case, it has been the ball-hand game *pelota* in Euskal Herria (Spain), according to Usabiaga (2011)¹:

“In the *Pelota Vasca*, as in the majority of the ball games, it has evolved from a traditional structure (variable) to a standard structure. This sportsmanship has changed some game characters, like rules structure and institutionalization of the game. We have passed from a changing structure with a rich develop and where the players agree this to an others structure standard or semi-standard sports.”

In the cultural means of traditional games, we find the study from Ortí (2013), in which daily expressions, refrains and proverbs that use traditional games in Valencian language².

Some traditional games have a multicultural diffusion, due to the fact that they are represented in migration, commercial, cultural and social exchanges, tourism, technological tools, stamps and postal cards, etc. So, when we learn some activities outside of autochthonic culture, we are talking about the acculturation process. According to Kylasov, (2019) “the development of a network of trade routes played a decisive role in shaping a common typology of traditional sports and games”³. If the

¹ Usabiaga, O. (2011): “El deporte frente al juego de pelota: el proceso de deportivización en Euskal Herria” en II Congreso de Pelota a Mano. Federación de Pelota Valenciana. August 23th 2019 retrieved from: <http://altorendimiento.com/el-deporte-frente-al-juego-de-pelota-el-proceso-de-deportivizacion-en-euskal-herria/>

² Ortí, J. (2013): “Els jocs en la llengua: expressions, dites i refranys quotidians que utilitzen els jocs tradicionals”. Barrull, C. i Espuny, E. (coords) Els jocs en la història. Catarroja: Ed. Afers. (2013) Pp. 416-422.

³ Kylasov, A.V. (2019) “Traditional sports and games along the Silk Roads”. International Journal of Ethnosport and Traditional Games, (1), 1–10. DOI: <https://www.doi.org/10.34685/HI.2019.1.1.006>



cultural knowledge is transmitted from the family and the same society, then we understand this process as natural and call enculturation.

From some decades ago, we found a lot social and cultural changes which have modified the ludic activities of the people: pavement of the streets; a lot of cars and motorbikes in the streets; appeared to the technological tools as TV, radio, mobile phones, video games, computers, social media; number of children for family fewer; children occupied in multiple extracurricular activities in their free time as, training sport, playing music, learning English; and so on. All these changes have produced that the traditional games are missing and it's a problem because when they will be disappeared, people won't remember them.

Parlebas (2001) developed the motor praxeology to study the motor action. In it we can find internal and external logical. Internal logical "appears in the rules of game code and they have a corporal precise behaviour"⁴.

Related to praxeology, Ortí (2010a) explains "internal logical establish the characteristics of the game, function and relations between the players and the rules develop"⁵.

Together to internal logical we find the external logical. "The relation between the motor activities and the culture and social environment where practices are developed is called etnomotricity. It studies games external logical" (Parlebas, 2001)⁶. External logical offers socio cultural information from games and sports.

For studying the ludic culture, we can use several approaches (Ortí, 2010b)⁷:

- **Visual sources.** These consists of all the information that we can find using the images and the directly observation. For example, observation like people are playing, looking photographs, analysing paintings and pictures and so on. Pieter Brueghel (1525–1569) painted *Children's games* in 1560. In this painting we can find about 80 children games. It's an example about paintings and games. Other case is the photography. The photographs weren't used en masse for the people until the last quarter of the XX century. For this reason, is difficult to find photographs of people playing to the ancient games.
- **Writing sources.** Sometimes we can find information in writing sources like books, letters, newspapers, magazines, journals... In these case, this information is more qualitative because we can find descriptions about the internal logical (rules and regulations of the games) and external logical (socio cultural elements). Some examples of these are the books "*Días geniales o lúdricos*" wrote by the Spanish Rodrigo Caro⁸ (1573–1647) in 1626 or "*Le vie très horrible du grand Gargantua*" wrote by the French François Rabelais (1494–1553) in 1534.

⁴ Parlebas, P. (2001): *Léxico de praxiología motriz*. Barcelona: Paidotribo. P. 303.

⁵ Ortí, J. (2010a): *Els jocs i esports tradicionals d'arreu del món a través de la filatèlia*. Doctoral Thesis. University of Barcelona. P. 182. Published in TDX: August 23th 2019 retrieved from: <https://www.tesisenred.net/handle/10803/1279>

⁶ Parlebas, P. (2001). *Ibid.* P. 227.

⁷ Ortí, J. (2010b): "A la recerca de la cultura lúdica d'un poble. Estudi a la població de Sant Mateu". *Boletín del Centro de Estudios del Maestrazgo* núm. 83, pg. 54-64.

⁸ Caro, R. (1978) *Dias geniales o lúdricos*. Madrid: Espasa-Calpe.



- **Oral sources.** With interviews to the expert and older people, we can find information about the games played in the past. Sometimes this information isn't exact or it has some mistakes. For this reason, is interesting to make discussion groups and workshops. Using them, we can share the information with the participating people and they can enrich or modify this information.
- **Audio-visual sources.** We can find some examples with the dances but it's difficult to find about the traditional games.

Hypothesis of our research is that older people had many games for occupying their free time and with the social and cultural changes these games are disappearing. We think the young people don't know the games played for the older people.

Main *objective of the research* was to find the games played in the town of Sant Mateu during the XX century.

Sample and study context

Research was developed in the Sant Mateu. This town is located in the north of Valencian Region (Spain).

Oral sources samples were 48 people from 30 to 85 years old and gender distribution was 26 men and 22 women. People were interviewed alone or a small group. We were interested in people that they had played in the XX Centuries. For this reason, we classified the people in 3 categories:

- 1) people had played to 50's;
- 2) people had played from 50's to 70's;
- 3) people had played from 70's to 90's.

These categories integrated three generations: grandfathers, fathers and children. People were selected for two reasons:

- 1) people had interested in the intangible heritage of the town;
- 2) proximity to the researchers.

Procedures

For developing the research, we created a questionnaire with internal and external logical variables.

Logical internal information that we searched in our questionnaire are:

- **Protagonist.** With this we search what the players were doing. Inside this variable we could find different possibilities like: individual psychomotor; individual socio motor (one player against one player, one player against everybody, everybody against everybody); socio motor of cooperation; and, socio motor of collaboration and opposition.
- **Material.** In this variable we were searching materials that the players use and how they use them. We could find these possibilities: without material; with only one material for individual uses; with only one material for collective uses; with one material for individual uses and one material for collective uses; more than one material for individual uses; more than one material for collective uses; more than one material combining an individual and collective uses.



- **Space.** In what space the players were playing. In this variable we could find these options: without uncertainty; irregular typology; space delimitation with lines, limits, zones or areas; irregular typology with space delimitation.
- **Time of Game.** When did the game finish? In this variable, we have to difference game and play. Play can be to considerer a part of the game. For example, in the hide-and-seek game, a play finish when player that has to find the others, find all the players. In this variable we want to know about the game and not about the play. So we could find these types: without uncertainty; doing a specific task; obtaining a specific number of points; temporal limitation; attempt limitation; and, others.

Besides the internal logical information, we did some questions about the external logical because it offers the information about sociocultural elements. We think this information is very important because it helps us to know the culture where the game was played.

External logical variables that we introduced in the questionnaire are:

- **Gender.** With this variable we wanted to find what gender had game players. This variable had these options: men, women, and, mixed playing.
- **Age.** It integrated age of the players. We could find these options: 1st childhood - from 0 to 2 years; 2nd childhood - from 2 to 6 years; 3rd childhood - from 6 to 12 years; youth - from 12 to 17 years; adulthood - from 18 to 64 years; older people - more than 65 years; and, intergenerational.
- **Rituality.** Sometimes games have some rituality. For example, some games are played in the holy week; other held in the Patronal feast; and so on. In our questionnaire, rituality could be familiar, local communities, religious and extraordinary. Options that did not have rituals were also installed, or information about it was lost.
- **Weather.** It's possible that some games are played in a specific weather. In this case, in our questionnaire, we presented 5 options: hot, cool, rain, diverse and unknown.
- **Space.** Some games need a specific playing space game. In this variable we created these options: private interior, public interior, urban exterior, public exterior, familiar rural exterior, natural rural exterior, water environment and unknown. For example, if the people play in the forest is a natural rural exterior; if they play in a football ground is public exterior.

Ortí (2010a) offers more possibilities for creating questionnaires using the internal and external logical elements⁹.

Furthermore, of the questionnaire with the oral sources, we used visual sources and writing sources. Between the visual sources we stand out photographs from the

⁹ Ortí (2010a). Ibid.

Culture Department of Sant Mateu Council, Local Party programmes and regional newspapers.

Results

Using different sources, we found 124 games distributed:

- 1st Generation: 61 games
- 2nd Generation: 18 games
- 3rd Generation: 35 games
- Festivities: 10 games.

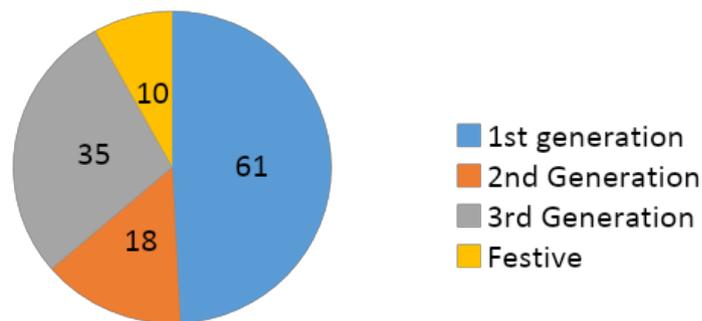


Figure 1. Games distribution by generations

In all the case, if one generation played the same game that in the before generation, we put it in the most ancient generation. So, 2nd generation shared some games with the 1st generation. 3rd generation shared not many games with before generations.

In the interviews, we found that in the 50's and 60's modern sports such as *football* and *bicycle races won importance*. With it, some traditional games, for example *pilota a mà* (pelota game) or the *mirles* (skittles), weren't disappearing. Case of the *pilota a mà* (pelota game) is very significant because Sant Mateu had 3 *trinquet* (pelota court) for playing this game. It indicated this game was important and popular but in the 60's game lost the importance, all the pelota court closed and the game disappeared.

Studying the games protagonist, an internal logical variable, we found individual socio motor was the most popular option in the traditional games with 53.2%. It was same in the three generations because in they exceed the 50%.

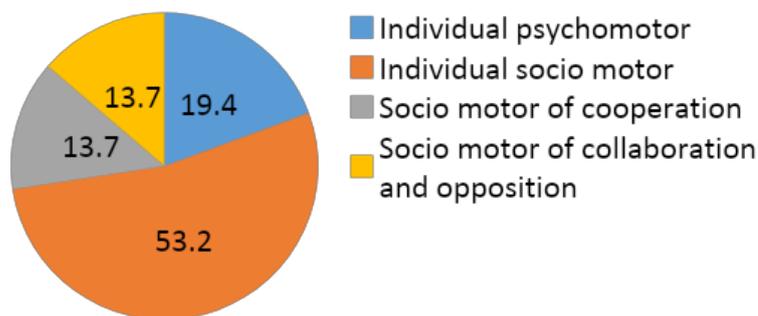


Figure 2. Games distribution for protagonist

Related with the variable space, in the internal logical analysis, we found the space without uncertainty is the most common in the three generation with 52.4% in total. It corresponds a games played anywhere and they didn't need lines, limits, zones and areas. Secondly, we found the space limitation with 40.3%. In this case games had lines, limits, zones or areas. Space delimitation was the second option in the three generations.

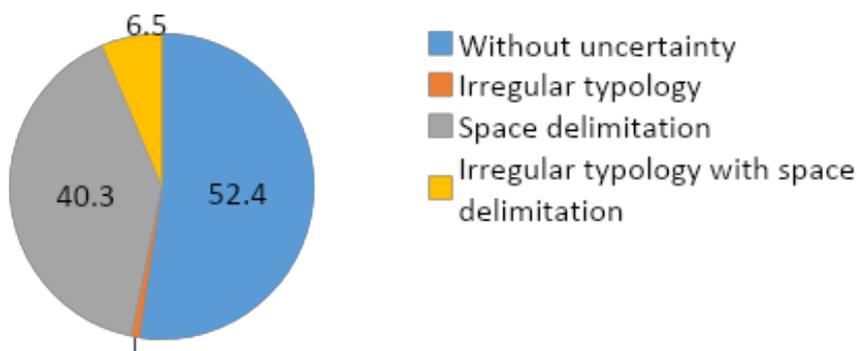


Figure 3. Games distribution for games space.

Related with the material for playing, we found that option without material is the most common (39.5%). Also we found a lot games that used only one material for collective used (32.3%). They were so in three generations. We didn't find any game with more than one material for collective used.

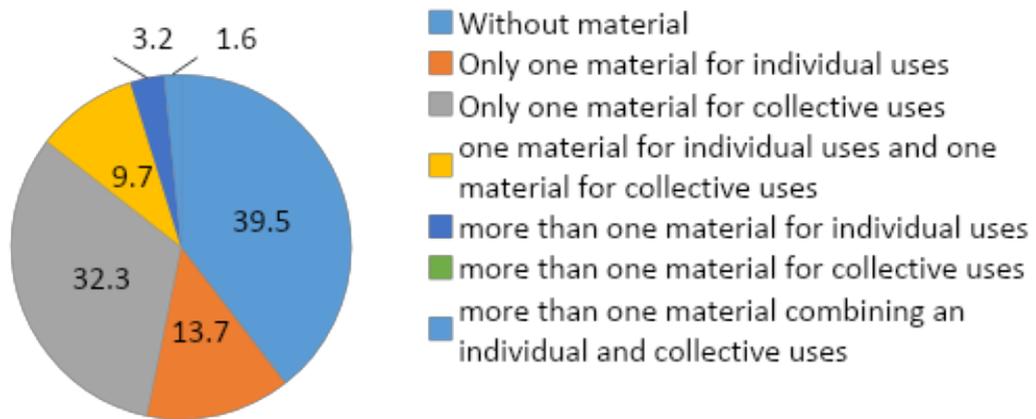


Figure 4. Games distribution by materials

Analysing when the game finished, we found traditional games were mainly without uncertainty (62.9%). It means players finish the game when they are tired or not wish to carry on, because of the predictability of winning a particular participant or team. In the others option (10.5%) we found some games where players bet, in a lot of cases, your own game material. For example, marbles, coins, trading card... In these, game finished when players lost their materials.

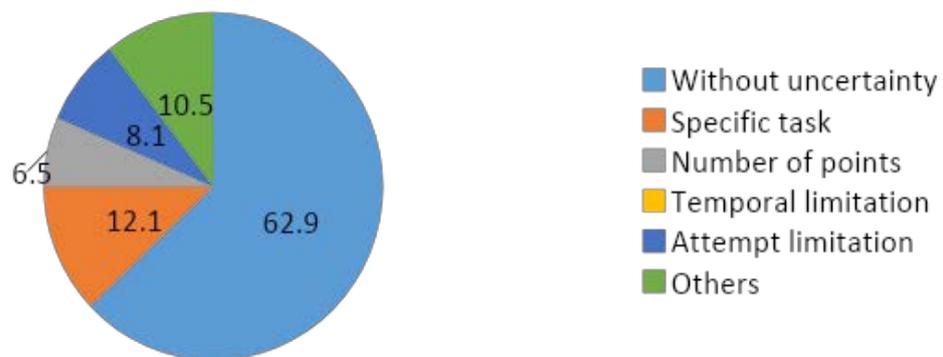


Figure 5. When the games finish.

In relation with external logical, concretely with gender of the players, we found that 46.8% (58 games) were played by boys and girls mixed. We found 37.9% games were played only by boys (47 games) and 9.7% (12 games) were played only by girls.

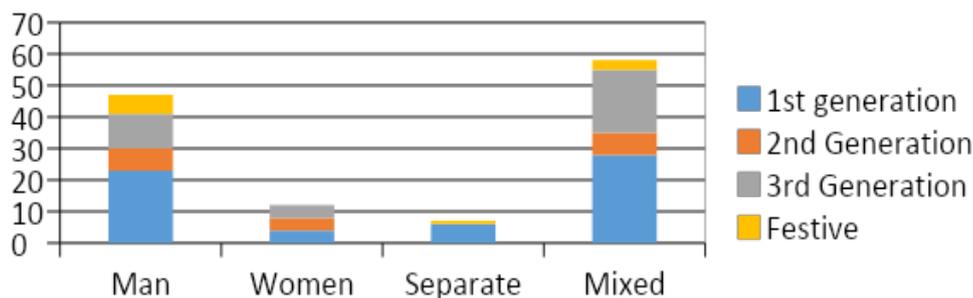


Figure 6. Games distribution by gender.

Related with the age of the player, we found a lot of games played by childhood 46.8% (58 games). Next option, games played by different generation with 37.1% (46 games). We didn't find any games played only by older people. We have to explain that initially in the questionnaire we divided the childhood in three options but when we interviewed people we found some difficulties for using each option, especially with the 2nd childhood and 3rd childhood. For this reason, we grouped them in one only option.

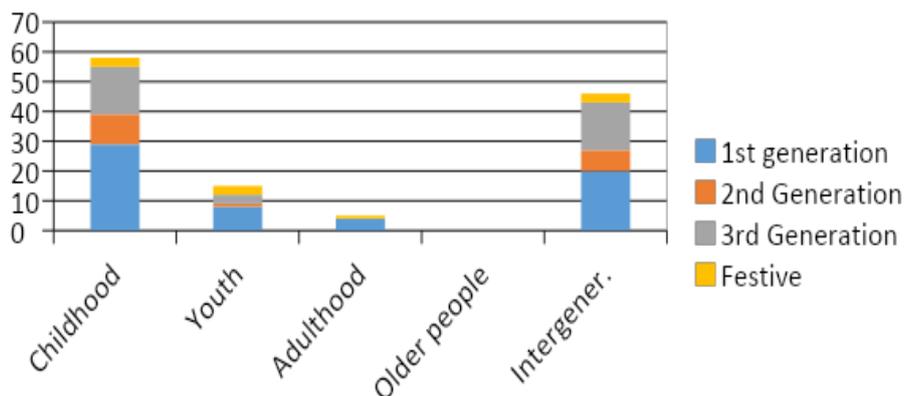


Figure 7. Games distribution by age.

Related with the space of play, we found that urban exterior was the space preferred for playing (84.7%). Urban exterior was streets and squares of the town. We only found 3 games (2.4%) that they were played in a specific installation (public exterior). In this case, we found *pelota game* could play in a public *interior* although was put in the public *exterior* option because in Sant Mateu we discovered 3 *pelota* court. Two of them were exterior and one was interior.

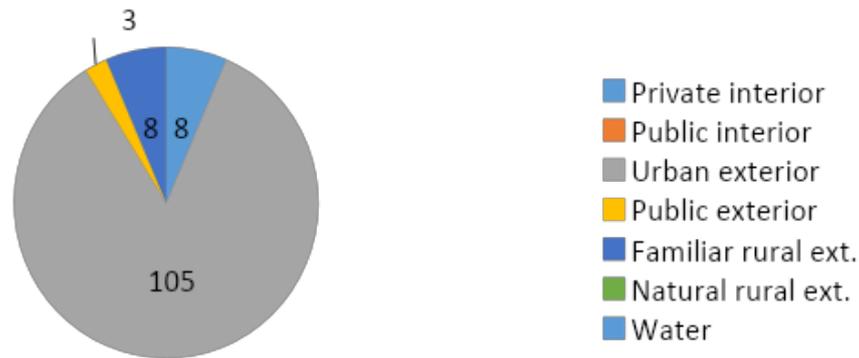


Figure 8. Games distribution by game place.

Related with the weather, we didn't find information about this variable. Oral sources were incapable to put games in different weather.

Conclusions

Main source to find the traditional games in Sant Mateu was the oral source. Others sources didn't offer a lot information about games and their description. In the Local Party programme, we could find information about some activities, schedule and place where they were played during the festivities, but they didn't explain rules and socio cultural elements.

Related with games, we concluded first generation, people played to 50's, had a big variety of ludic activities of traditional character. They were explicated from the ancient periods for the oral transmission because we didn't find write sources such as books, Local Party programmes and so on with games descriptions.

Second generation continuous playing to some games of the first generation but the apparition of the modern sports caused that some games disappeared. In that time, also appeared some technological advance and people began to use them during their free time with sedentary activities such as watching TV's, listening radios and so on.

A lot of games of the third generation weren't characteristics of the town. Although we didn't delve into study, we found a lot of these games were played in a region. It's possible because in Sant Mateu we found a Primary school. In this school arrived students of the near small towns in the region and students shared games. Also, we found some modern sports and pre sport games but they didn't interest in our study.

Player participation preferred were individual socio motor. It's possible because in this games typology wasn't necessary a specific number of players. They could be playing with few or many players. It's common in streets games where people found them for playing. A lot of these games were played without material or with only one material. In the past, people hadn't money and they could buy material for playing. For this reason, players preferred games without material o with only one material for collective used.

Games hadn't an ending so people left to play when they wish or for external causes. It's represented in internal logical study.



Boys and girls, in the three generations analysed, played mixed although in the first generation we found a lot of games played only by boys. It's an evidence of separate gender in the society rules of those decades. In other generations weren't so many different.

Space preferred for playing was outside and especially urban exterior. Usually the players played in the street and place. In 1st generation also found some games played in the rural places. Nowadays families don't want to children go too far of the house. It could indicate we didn't find too games played out the town.

In conclusion, we would like to encourage the study of games and ludic culture in order to preserve for future generations information about this intangible cultural heritage.

Recommendations

In the future, we have to go in depth in the study of the ludic culture because it is in disappearing process. It's necessary to study more external logical elements and connection them with social values. Also it will be interesting to compare the results of this study with similar studies in different places. The study of works on games is of particular research interest. Such studies will help to avoid terminological inaccuracies.

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