

## THE COSMOLOGICAL RITUAL OF LOTTERY: VENEZUELAN STUDY\*

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**Abstract:** Since ancient ages the game as competency has always had a privileged space and time in the human being. Greece, Mesopotamia, Rome, the Mayas are true testimonies of the ludic “doing” of the human beings. Venezuelan people, from their side, since many years ago, they have been spending a lot of time and money in gambling games (SÁNCHEZ BELLO 1999); therefore, this behavior is part of their day-to-day and of the “affective-emotional” culture (GREIMAS and FONTANILLE 1995; FABRI 1995) of the country. This study is intended to establish categories of the common strokes of the lottery player, as well as the symbolic-religious relation lying down in this ludic “doing”. The ethnic-semiotic focusing is perfectly adapted to this situational corpus to the repertory of semic entanglement whose positive isotopies gyrate around the religious themes (“to have faith”), and the esoteric matters (“to be lucky thanks to something or somebody”). The negative isotopy corresponds to the opposite semic axle and to the modal value of “Not to have = Not to do” (GREIMAS and COURTES 1979). There has been drawn an emotional map of the lottery player, with this modal classification and category, concluding that the daily “doing” is part of a cultural cosmology within which he dwells.

**Keywords:** ethnic-semiotic, cultural cosmology, Venezuelan lottery

### 1. INTRODUCTION

This research is part of a project called “Social construction of being player”, adscribed to the program identified as “The Semiotic Discourse of Gambling Games and their Contemporaneity”, sponsored by the Council for Scientific and Humanistic Development of the University of Zulia (Venezuela).

This thematic has been selected because the gambling games are very fashionable in Venezuela and Latin America, and people accede to such games through all massive communication media. Likewise, it is easy to acquire them from the sale places scattered all over Venezuela and they are even offered to the auto drivers at the traffic lights stops in most passable corner of each city. On the other hand, people use in their daily “gibberish” expressions related with the vocabulary used for gambling games, and one sample of this daily usage is that the Venezuelan “popular proverbial” has been nourished through those sayings.

Our study is not focused in the economic or sociologic point of view, but ethno-semiotic, in an effort to understand the reasons and influences perceived by the player, when he chooses or buys certain type of lottery. We obtained a repertory of

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semic nucleus surrounding life, death, family and religion, and their “doing” is in principle patterned by the positive isotopy: “faith is needed to win”.

The principal countenance of the work is to have been able to re-elaborate the daily “ludic being” of the Venezuela – and probably in many western countries through a whole cultural cosmology everlasting in the time.

## 2. DEFINITIONS

The word game in the Spanish language, as well as in the English and French languages, has an immense variety of meanings. In this paper we use the meaning related with the lottery. “Game” derives from the Latin vocable “*locus*” and in its verbal form means “recreational exercise submitted to rules in which one can win or lose”. The idea of game implies an activity, an amusement and a distraction performed under certain norms.

On the other hand, “hazard” is fortune, luck, and “stake” is the casualty that comes through luck. Etymologically, the hazard game is presented as the activity, which submitted to rules for the obtainment of a profit or bet, entirely depends on hazard. However, in the stake game, the person defends a position and try to win bidding, that is, placing a stake with an extra amount of money, which is a characteristics different to the purely hazard game. Anyway, it is very difficult to separate one from the other, because the stake can be also submitted to the hazard.

Finally, in the case of the lottery term, its origin is not clear. “Lot” in French language indicates one fraction from a whole which is divided; the word “lotta” in the Italian language means “fight”, while the Teutonic root “hleut” is an object having the form of a disc, which is drawn out for a decision. Meanwhile, “lot” in the English language means a destiny, luck, more or less fortunate. Today, the lottery is a game where the prizes are in “lots of money”, several tickets extracted at random among a great number of them which have been sold (*Diccionario de la Real Academia Española de la Lengua*, 1997).

### 2.1. PREMISES: THE GAMES OF CHANCE

The various lotteries are situated in the category of games of chance and share their characters: these collective bets of chance imply, on the part of the player, to renounce the exercise of will, “they convey a passive submission to luck, an investment of free time reduced to the minimum” (YONNET 1988: 31).

These games are an ideal field for all sorts of superstitions (esoteric, astrological, etc.), that had been consolidating in the course of the centuries under the name of cabala, that is, “the singular numerical baggage that appoints to every aspect of existence a very determinate number” (ARANCIO and CASAS 1995; AULISIO 1994).

Dreams and the imaginary animal also had had an allegoric prism and restlessly have developed the fantasy of men and women. The importance of medieval christi-

anism is essential not only because recreates and reformulates the classic imagery, inherited from the Greeks and Romans and keeper of remote oriental beliefs but also because the occidentals of the 20th century, have assimilated that christianism and medieval imagery (ACOSTA 1995).

This “ludical” theme is focused semiotically because the semiotic is above all, a very peculiar point of view: a perspective that consist in asking in which way things or signs become significance bearers. Thus, the work of semiotic conveys the determination of the criteria that might help to differentiate the diverse kinds of signs and other kinds of significations. It is a “journey” parting from the “how, where and when”.

Goran Sonesson points out that a same sign may play different roles at the same time: an image may represent something, express something, refer to its own material character, allude to something, be a metaphor or constitute another kind of indirect sign. Since semiotic is interested in finding general rules and regularities, it tries to describe these phenomenon as generic functions in a certain kind of signification system in historically existent cultures (SONESSON 1996).

### 3. EUROPEAN ANTECEDENTS

#### 3.1. THE GAME AS PROBABILITY OF CALCULATION

The game understood as games of pure chance, started to be studied as such in the Renaissance. Frédéric Choumette and Frédéric Colard exposed in a schematic form the works which are the bases of the theory of the probabilities handled nowadays (CHOUMETTE and COLARD 1997; MARCUS 2002).

“Selon Norfleet W. Rives, le premier auteur à jeter les bases de la théorie des probabilités fut le physicien et philosophe espagnol Girolamo Cardano. En effet, dans son livre publié à titre posthume en 1663, il exposa le concept mathématique d’anticipation, il expliqua les lois de la répétition des événements, et, enfin, il définit formellement la notion de probabilité comme une fréquence relative (...) En 1654, Antoine Gombauld, dit le Chevalier de Mere, posa une énigme à Blaise Pascal. Il s’agissait de savoir ,comment répartir entre deux joueurs l’enjeu d’un jeu de hasard, lorsque celui-ci est inachevé et qu’un des joueurs a l’avantage sur l’autre’. B. Pascal se tourna vers un mathématicien très connu au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle, Pierre Fermat. Pour Rives, leur correspondance constitue ,les fondements mathématiques de la théorie moderne des probabilités’. Leur solution permet pour la première fois de prévoir l’avenir grâce à *la manipulation de nombre*, et ainsi, il est possible de prendre des décisions en avenir incertain. (...) Ce furent sans doute les travaux les plus marquants en matière de probabilité qu’ait connus le XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle, même si Christian Huyghens, en 1657, proposa le concept de compétition dans les jeux de chance” (subrayado nuestro). (CHOUMETTE and COLARD 1997).

Huyghens also elaborated the notion of “*mathematical hope*” which one century later, Daniel Bernouilli replaced by the principle of “waited profit”. In this paper work it is focused the word hope, not from the mathematical point of view, but from the religious, as an act of faith, an act of hope.

### 3.2. THE GAME AS AN ACT OF FAITH

Even though there has not been able to precisely establish its origin, the Egyptians assure, as indicated by Plato, that the game was invented by the devil named Zeud; posteriori, Saint Cipriano mentioned another devil: Zabulón (SÁNCHEZ BELLO 1999: 18).

This idea is very much present in the myths and in many traditions; we might remember, for instance, that the very Divine subject, God in the Zóhar, a fundamental work of the Jewish cabala, which played with the letters during two centuries before deciding to create the world (FUENMAYOR 1999). In the Greek Mythology there is also found a famous dice game among Zeus and his brothers Poseidon and Hades, who gambled the apportion of the universe as follows: Poseidon won the oceans, Hades the underground world and Zeus, with a mixture of power and stratagems, won the heavens (Goldhill in WILLIS 1993: 132). In the Indian Mahabharata Epopee it is told the Panduyudictira’s adventure, a dice player who lost his fortune, his family and even he gambled to himself (HERNÁNDEZ, DJUKICH, ORTIZ and MARCHESI 2002).

Franco AULISIO (1995) stated the possible origins of the lottery:

“At Rome already took place, in the republic and imperial epoch, random games based on the extraction of numbers, but the lottery in its present form was introduced by the Pope Innocence III in 1670. But Benedict XIII abolished it on 1727, but Clement XII, in 1731, admitted it again under the condition that the amount to be paid to the winners be increased. During the age of August and Nero there exists something similar to the lottery: games which assured different prizes for the acquisition of a ticket. Since then the Roman lottery worked regularly in the Vatican States, up to September 2nd, 1870, when it was absorbed by the Italian State. Some centuries later, seems that the lottery, as it is known at present was organized in Italy by Benedetto Gentile” (AULISIO 1995: 13–14).

Thus, the Church in different epochs and in several countries organized lottery games to collect funds for the construction of their churches and for beneficence affairs.

In Spain, the lottery has a long tradition and it is very famous. An example of the incidence of this type of activity is reflected on the so-called Christmas Toss celebrated on December 22, which is the most important and popular of all games of Spain’s National Lottery. It uses the traditional screen system, it takes some three

hours and is cried out loud by St. Ildefonso School's children; the boy who cries out the winner number receives a scholarship, according to a tradition that has lasted for more than two centuries since March 9, 1771. This mass-media ritual is transmitted through radio and television and has become an event of national interest. "In December 2001, 92% of the country stopped their activities to watch the lottery toss" (MENDOZA and DJUKICH 2001 and 2002).

It is a constant game the life of the social being: to play with the letters, with the creation, to dare with the future, to construct pyramids starting from numerical calculus to choose a number, to dream of the winning numbers in the lottery, to understand the meaning of the coffee sediment to have a lucky number, to read a cigarette filter or to relate the daily events with numbers which have the possibility to be changed in payable to the bearer if they are the winner in the drawing lot.

At Latin America as in many other Western countries, there are legal and illegal games. Among the legal games we have horse races, lotteries, rifles, card games, fairs, bingoes, etc. and among the illegal games there are: cock fights, dices, cards, roulette, etc.; there also are bids on baseball games and horse racing (Swiss banking and horse wager), in the football, boxing, billiard, tennis and auto racing, and any other activities where plays an important role the intelligence, the cunningness or expertness of the parties, or simply the hazard.

Among the lotteries it is also played the "terminal", which corresponds to the last two figures of the three first prizes, as well as the "terminales" with the little animals lottery and all those games count on permanent and fanatical clients.

In Venezuela, since the XVIIIth century, we read that "all the governors except one were players", as indicated by the Margarita's chronicler, Jesús María Subero, in its "Juicios de Residencia" (SÁNCHEZ BELLO 1999: 51). All the lotteries were prohibited in 1974 by a governmental resolution, but they only kept the lotteries of Caracas, Oriente, Táchira (it was created on February 26th of 1926) and Zulia.

On this paper work there are considered the four most important lotteries in Venezuela (Caracas, Oriente, Táchira and Zulia), applying to them approaches of the ethno-semiotic, to know two aspects of the signaled-symbolic process of the lottery player: Why does he play? and Which information is used to choose any lottery game? We have chosen those questions based on Fedor Dostoevski work: "The Players", in which the protagonist (the narrator) Alexei Ivanovic asked to himself:

"Is it possible to approach the game table without feeling contagion, at once, of the superstition?" (DOSTOIEVSKI 1969: 27).

#### 4. STUDY DELIMITATION: THE LOTTERY POWER

To illustrate the apogee of the lottery in Venezuela, we give below an abstract of a previous study performed by DJUKICH, MOSQUERA, RINCÓN and MARTÍN (2002), where it is observed the frequency of the prognostic and results of lottery on the different media. In this way, multiple channels of social circulation are employed: Billboards, regional and national press, radio stations, television and the Internet.

In the Printed Media material from four regional newspapers and two national ones was gathered and daily prognostics are published. In the Televised Media, the sample was taken from six national channels; and in the radio of two regional stations with the heights rating (Period of May–July–October of 2000 and January 2001).

In the televised media 5 prognostic shows are presented, from which 2 are daily aired and 2 are inter-daily. Registering these offers, 51 promotional and invitational to play shows are aired weekly and they are accompanied by horoscopes, dreams, numbers, card readings, the lucky digits by days of the week, etc.

Regarding the results of the lotteries was obtained a total of 26 drawings weekly, that is, that adding both frequencies, the viewer has the “inevitable possibility” of watching 77 lottery shows weekly! (here neither the adds nor the other shows about games and bets have been included) (DJUKICH, MOSQUERA, RINCÓN and MARTIN 2002).

We also carried out a study on the incidence of the gambling games, in as much as values and anti-values, among the Venezuelan children in the family nucleus (HERNÁNDEZ, DJUKICH, ORTIZ and MÉNDEZ 2001). To achieve this, it was applied an inquest among children between 9 and 11 years of age, attending to 2 basic schools run by Fe y Alegría located at Maracaibo.

As a result, we observed that the impact of these games is so strong, that any child finds himself between the disjunctive of “Being a child” or “Being a player”, because the latter category is a part of the environment. There exists a basic value directly related with to be or to have, the child “is” and “has” in as much as the gambling games let him. 86% out of the 150 children interviewed buy lotteries and according to their own statements, they buy tickets for their families who ask them to do so. Some adults gratify children with money for the “favor” performed and that money is spent in the buying of their “own ticket”.

The habit of gambling is formed in the child from the pattern learn at home: on this regard it was found out that the person who plays most at home is the father (with 25%), the mother and the grandmother are in second place (with 17% each one); the grandfather holds the third place (with 11%) and other members of the family also participate in the game, but they appear less frequently (HERNÁNDEZ, DJUKICH, ORTIZ and MARCHESI 2002: 93–114).

This power of the lottery conveyed us to this study.

## 5. THE METHOD

We are trying to find the lexical regularities, that may be characterized by religious, oniric, animal or cabalistic imagery. To read this semic nucleuses, the construction of semantic isotopies are organized; it means the repetition of clasemas all along the significant chain, that ensures the homogeneity of the statement (GREIMAS and COURTES 1979: 197).

This analytical structure is enlarged with the ethno-semiotics when we focus the analysis toward the rituals and ceremonies, and so “l’ethnologie est susceptible de

devenir, ... le lieu privilégié de la construction de modèles généraux des comportements signifiants" (GREIMAS and COURTES 1979: 136). The cosmological view is understood as follow:

"Un discours qui raconte les événements et les actions des hommes dans une dimension mythique (...) qui traite, sous ces apparences figuratives, de problèmes abstraits, engageant le sort de l'homme et de la culture à l'intérieur de laquelle il vit" (GREIMAS and COURTES 1979: 75).

### 5.1. THE MODALIZATION OF THE PLAYER

The player ludic profile is boarded, taking into consideration the categories of his "being" and his "doing" regarding the habits and beliefs that he owns. These two categories are complemented with classifying modality values taken from GREIMAS and COURTES (1979) and LANDOWSKI's model (1999) in regards to the modalization of the "being" in this cultural context.

The statement of the Being corresponds to the instance of the State in the situation, is the permanence, in opposition to the Doing that refers to the change, to the action. This distinction is made "a priori", as a methodological guide since it allows the construction of a syntax with binary readings (GREIMAS and COURTES 1979: 143–144).

Under this premise, this Doing may have a pragmatic and cognitive dimension, and here it is no longer in the level of the syntax, but on the level of the significant, which representation is observable somatically and gesticulatory as in the semantic vestments that the objects allude by the Doing receive. This Doing is modalized by the Knowledge, that the destinatary-player has. Thus, the cosmology "se traduit, par conséquent, tantôt par figurative, tantôt par pragmatique" (GREIMAS and COURTES 1979: 76). In this way, we have two significant axis:

- The "Figurative" Axis: that comprehends the study of the use of numerical figures, colors, drawings and traces and their symbolizations.
- The "Esoterically" Axis: Flowers, magic potions, dreams and nightmares, "appearing" numbers, birthday dates, etc.

### 5.2. THE SAMPLE

The human "luck" is essentially black and white. This is a game of contrasts: it is absent at the beginning but its presence saves situations. Luck, being absent, may be "conjured" to be present; when it is obtained, the human being is happy.

According to this initial situation, we direct the focussing toward the public-player. To attain an understanding of its ludic program, we apply surveys in five cities (Caracas, Maracaibo, San Cristóbal, Valencia, San Fernando de Apure and Mérida), representing the most important regions of the country (by its population and

by its lotteries), to the persons stopping at the kiosks to buy lotteries and we interrogated them about the two above-mentioned questions: Why does he play? and Which information is used to choose any lottery game? The date of the specimen is February, 2002.

## 6. STAGE OF THE ANALYSIS: THE ACTIVE ROLE OF SOCIAL HUMAN BEING AS A PLAYER

*Why does he play:* the answers from 196 persons gave us three basic reasons: They play for fun, as a custom, or by need. (See Chart 1.)

Why do you play?		
	F	M
Fun	46	31
Custom	30	21
Needs	19	21
Others	12	16
Multiple answers:	196	

  

– Its job:	12
– By impulse:	9
– By habit:	7
<b>Total:</b>	28



Made by Djukich de Nery, Project CONDES 1863-00. Maracaibo, June 2002

Chart 1. The Power of Lottery in Venezuela. Reasons to play (Period: Feb. 2002)

Among the results, we observe that the Venezuelan player, interact at all ages, from 13 years to 70 or more; he has predilection for the lotteries, and exerts the largest part of the time to them.

To find out what influences in them to bid, the following question was made: *Which information is used to choose any lottery game?* The answer had two results:

1. Mass media consult: a high number assess themselves through the advices given by the offerers – foretellers of winner number, “repetitional”; this is known as an “official” consultation. They use as guidance: colors, graphs, numerology, horoscope and any other esoteric prognostics.

To give only one example among this gamut of selections, we shall explain the one of the color. In Venezuela there exists a cultural tradition regarding the chromatic code. Up to very recently, electoral suffrage was performed with color cards, due to the high index of illiteracy of the Venezuelan people. So, the Acción De-



mocrática party is represented by the white color; the Social Christianity has the green color; the Socialism Group has the orange color (all of them since 1960).

Nowadays, Chavez party has the red color, and their affiliates used in the 2000 Referendum a card with the format of the “kino”, in which the photo of each one of their 15 candidates showed a number and the tricolor national flag on the back ground. In this color minimalist society, phrases are transformed in logotype and here we observe that objects acquire intention and representation through the image and its color (cf. SONESSON 1998).

The endo-structure of the graphic figure, the geometry, the color, the font, are conjugated as categories of symbolical construction. In this ludical context, the number gives to it a magical power. Colors act upon the soul; they can excite sensations, awake emotion, provoke sadness or happiness (BECKER 1996). The chromoterapists have taken the psychology of color to the limit, just like the graphic designers at the moment of building an add.

Another important consultation is the one based on the Saint Cono Book, publication issued in Argentina, which is historically remitted to the Saint Cono carved statue, taken to the town of La Florida, in Uruguay, by a group of Italian immigrants, who believed he was a miraculous Saint and of good luck. This small book is widely read in Venezuela, because it offers an endless amount of predictions according to the horoscope, the moon, the dreams, pyramidal, squared or triangle calculations, “data from the witch”, from the snake, etc. This signification corresponds to the figurative axle.

This book is a sign of credibility; it is almost like the host was copying with the gesture the Supreme Maker, by placing his hands upon an object or talisman. The synesthesical and polysensorial image acquire more leverage than the words (GREIMAS and FONTANILLE 1995; FABRI 1995; SONESSON 1998; LANDOWSKI 1997).

This is the same situation encountered by Alexei Ivanovic, when he started to learn how to play: “At the beginning, all that mechanism seems to me a real gibberish; I only perceived and distinguished that the bets were made on the numbers, even and odds, and on colors” (DOSTOIEVSKI 1969: 27).

Simultaneous to this consultation, the interviewed player also indicated an infinite gamut of “potential possibilities”, that he may use to bid and this information is shared with the members of the family, friends, co-workers, or even a person who, by chance, comments with him about the “winner” number for that day. This channel of information is denominated “personal” consultation.

2. “Personal” consult: (multiple answers were turn down). Family Means (links): Birthday date (own and of family: 90%), Select jointly with family which number to bid (75%), Consult with parents and co-workers (60%), Calculate a number in the pyramid (42%), Age (at present), Bid according to dreams, Date of decease of close relatives, Numbers of the dreams, Belief that the number shall be the winner at any moment, He only bids on the rest week (bids 7 days and works 7 days). All them between 12 and 15%.

A similar construction experiments Alexei Ivanovic:

“...I started to try fearfully (...). Meanwhile I observed and paid attention; it seems to me that the particular calculus whatsoever has the importance attributed by many players (...). They deduct (...), calculate (...), bid, and loose as well as we do, plain human beings, who play without none of those cabalas (...) the cunning player knows what this caprice of the luck means” (DOSTOIEVSKI 1969: 39 and 184).

## 7. THE COSMOLOGICAL RITUAL OF LOTTERIES

We have some examples for this visionary: on one of the roads of the State of Zulia there is a small church which was constructed because a lottery seller was killed by a car. “Today, in the surrounding communities usually visit that small church to beg the deceased information about the number that could win in the lottery” (FINOL and DJUKICH 1998: 29).

In the funeral ritual, once the small church was constructed, the family of the deceased, place in front of it, oil lamps, flowers and water every Monday, because it is the “the day of the souls”, as per the catholic religion. The oil lamps are to “light” or illuminate the deceased, which is lost (FINOL and DJUKICH 1998: 30). The bidder lights an oil lamp to illuminate his saint, his deceased relative or to himself, in order that his number be the “winner”. If his number wins, have three masses celebrated to the saint and fulfill his “promises”.

There exist people who have planted in their homes a tree named “The Millionaire”; it is a small tree, green leaves, which open in the morning and close in the evening. The falling leaves are gathered by the persons who studied the centre of the leaf (which is rounded) looking for the number that there must be there. That number shall be the one with which he shall bid in the lottery that day and three consecutive days.

On the other hand, each family count with a grandmother or aunt who reads the tea, the coffee waste, the smoke of the tobacco or cigar, and interpret the dreams, light oil lamps, of which have one per each color and for each day of the week. The relatives come to her for consultation.

Among other stake games, we also observe these rituals: In the horse races, the jockeys before they go on their horseback, they place their hard hat by the altar, they light an oil lamp to the Virgin, and ask for “good luck”, that is, that their horse be the winner.

The football players practice the cabala and several rituals before starting the competence; for instance, they keep in their pockets amulets and small Saint cards, they make the sign of the cross twice, one for the earth and one for the heaven (*Infinito* 2002).

The best example in these ceremonies to attain “good luck” is the huge usage of proverbs related with the game. Proverbs and pity sayings reflecting, better than any other expression, how deep roots have the stake and hazard games in the popular feelings. We have chosen from the book published by Héctor Atilio PUJOL (2001)

some of the many proverbs related with the gambling game: As fallen from heaven, in God we hope, to have white card, to have a card under the sleeve. To build house of cards, Third time lucky, There is no bad fifth, Luck is thrown, To play fair, To play high, To play a trick upon, To dream is free, Luck and religion go hand by hand, etc.

As you have been able to observe, there have been organized regularity glossaries of the religious, oniric, familiar and cabalistic visionary of the player, through the semic nucleus (GREIMAS and FONTANILLE 1994; FABRI 1995). We may summarize stating that the player utilizes the figurative axles given by the offerer and he follows the narrative program that (makes him to choose), but we also can assure that the player structures his own narrative program, which flees away from all probability to register. However, we may indicate that he follows four isotopies are the most common: death, life, family and religion. (See Chart 2.)

Isotopies	
Death	Life
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Death 44</li> <li>– Dead 748</li> <li>– Graveyard 98</li> <li>– Brother's death 719</li> <li>– Ill person</li> <li>– Widow 63</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Life 16</li> <li>– Children Playing 194</li> <li>– People 125</li> <li>– Water 168</li> <li>– Raining 126</li> </ul>
Religion	Family
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Church 0</li> <li>– Priest 50</li> <li>– Cross 33</li> <li>– God 43</li> <li>– Lamb 6</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Family 39</li> <li>– Father 1</li> <li>– Mother 10</li> <li>– Uncle 18</li> <li>– Chlidren 9</li> <li>– Parents 11</li> </ul>

Made by Djukich de Nery, Project CONDES 1863–00. Maracaibo, June 2002

Chart 2. The Power of Lottery in Venezuela.  
Frequency of relations between numbers and dreams of Lottery Players (Period: Feb. 2002)

So the “Doing” of the Venezuelan player – and also the Latin American – *adopts* the publicity offers from the massive mean to play the lottery and he *adapts* them as per his own beliefs and “intuitions” at the moment of *choosing* one lottery rather than the other, one number instead of another. This ludic construction is the result of a special form of his “Being”, of his seeing, and of his belief in the world, it is a sentiment, a perception, a philosophy of life, a particular religion which forms part of a global conscious, generalized, Spaniard, modernized. It is the perfect religious syncretism of the heathen opposed to the Christian, what has lasted for ever in all civilizations.

## 8. CONCLUSION: THE LUDIC POWER OF THE HAZARD

The first characteristic of this ethary group is (to wish – to have) money, economic solvency. Furthermore, he is modeled to the “to be able-to do”, related with the economic, to obtain a greater acquisitive “power”, as it is stated in the Venezuelan proverb: “money calls money”, and as well as to reach dreams related with the “power” granted by money. There is also the ludic feature related with the “pleasure” of bidding, with the “wish” to bid, to “know” how to fight with the luck (subject to the alloying, to the possible number of combinations, and to a contest of prognostic), and the hidden wish of challenging the hazard as well as “to dream”, to compete, “to entertain oneself”.

Incorporated to the previous motivational factors is the “wish” as an emotional need, related with the social, which is a combination of “to have to” and “to wish”, which facilitate to meet the friends, and let through the bet, through buying a ticket in group, through the comments on prognostics and bets, through the watching at the bar or restaurant the games retransmitted via satellite in T.V., etc., to share moments of happiness or sadness, depending on the results obtained. This way can be developed the living together, not to be alone, to share (MENDOZA and DJUKICH 2002).

We have built from above categories, a type of ludic speech referred to the player of lottery in Venezuela, with two general isotopies: the positive, which turns around the religious matter (“to have faith”), and to the esoteric matter (“to be lucky thanks to something or to somebody”); and the negative, which correspond to the opposite semic axle and to the mode value of the “not to have – not to do”, but always (to believe in the good luck). The drawing of this emotional chart of the Venezuelan lottery player shows his daily “doing”, which is a part of a polysensorial cosmology, within which he dwells.

The human being has gambled always and will keep challenging the hazard, appealing to the rationality and also to the irrationality. He has also believed in the foretelling powers of the oniric, in the cabala, astrology and in the “qualities” of nature elements (fauna, flora, climate, color etc.). This is as a collective subconscious of the human kind, which is depositary of all experiences of this planet, from which the individual subconscious obtain materials, dreams, advices, premonitions. This synchronism and this concatenation, temporary – space, among other things non-interrelated apparently, what make the universe as a whole, and immerse us in the occult, and that we have tried to build through the perspective of the social being as a player.

Far behind there are the times when moralists, theological and psychologists discussed with vehemence about the kindness or wickedness of the gambling and bids. Also those psychological discussions related with the cultural level of the countries, for their tendency to hazard games have no longer sense, but it would be remarkable for the agrapha societies.

As truly stated by Cueto, “those classic explanations interpreting the game incitements now are senseless” (CUETO 1992: 47). He makes reference to the explanation about the behavior of the player for the profit from money. He writes that:

“At present, hazard and bid games are lived and explained as crowd casualties, (...). Lotteries, “quinielas”, bids are phenomena which pass over the private speech, of the money or psychological awards, to augment the ambit in the spectacular fact, of the show for multitudes. To bid means, in first place, to be part of that gigantic organized ritual around the fortune goddess, and where what is important is great ceremony of the own multitudes, over passing every week the collected amounts, breaking audience indicators, hitting the statistics of participation. (...) The mythical loneliness of the player is scarcely a brief literary thought. The true social event of these industries, more or less institutionalized by the stake games is their massing augment” (CUETO 1992: 46–47).

However, we do not completely agree with this author, because we have observed that through all centuries, the different societies have gambled and played to the Fortune Goddess. In other words, if the postmodern, technical and materialist society of today is thrown down, any type of new society initiating its construction shall have a ludic and a gambling column of stone.

Merrell has stated that there are in general two types of games, the finite games and the infinite games. The finite games – football, tennis, basketball, pocker, stock exchange, religion and rites, etc. – have the objective of winning or surmounting. The only objective of the infinite game, in turn, is to be perpetuated (MERRELL 1999: 84).

The gambling games are incorporated to the cultural dynamics of our country; their roots are so deep that they already form part of the *infinite* game of the culture of Venezuelans. Therefore, the gambling games are not simple finite games, where the player has as principal expectance to win and to obtain the wished reward, but they rather are a complex, symbolic and ritual net which forms part of the family and communitarian life, and of their culture.

In fact, all universal and Latin American literature ratifies this ethnographic. We quote some classic texts:

(a) Bids

– In the Maya mythology, the mythic narration of the twin heroes is kept in the Popol Vuh, sacred book of the Maya Quiché. As the twins continuously disturbed the masters in the Hell playing with the ball, there were invited to play against the gods in their hellish kingdom. The twins were the winners using great magic powers and of transformation. In Chichén Itzá, the players winning the ball game, decapitate the losers.

The winner shall be the one who is most astute, even though he plays tricks. “The Hedgehop and the Hare” by Aurelio Espinoza, Spaniard popular tale; “The first Sword and the Last Broom” and “The Work of Francisquito and his Occupation as a Thief” by Italo Calvino, Italian popular tales, and “John the Strong who Killed Five Hundred”, European popular tale.

(b) Riddles and Predictions

– Most of the riddles are impossible to be resolved, unless if by a fortuitous causes, information is obtained through a helper. The Saba Queen plays riddles to Salomón: “Saba Queen Visit”. (It is found in the First Book of Kings, 10, 1–13.)

## (c) Pacts

– The most famous pacts in the tales are the pacts with the devil (the father or the relative of the hero makes a pact with the devil, about a bet or in a card game, and when he loses, he decides to deliver his son to the devil when he reaches the adolescence). “The Fortuneteller” and “The Magic Science, Afanasiev’s version; “White Flower, the Devil’s Daughter”, Antonio Rodríguez Almodóvar’s version, Spaniard popular tale. “Florentine and the Devil”, couplets of the Venezuelan popular legendary-tales (HERNÁNDEZ, DJUKICH, ORTIZ and MARCHESI 2002).

Finally, the publicity massiveness is of recent data, to bet to everything is an old human and social tradition and its entailment with religious matters is very strong. We have tried to demonstrate that Venezuelan as well as Latin American, has in his cultural roots a mythic-Christian pleasure for the game, which is the result of a symbiosis between his polytheist beliefs and the religious monotheism brought by the Spaniards. “Everybody must belief in miracles” was the phrase of a Spaniard millionaire lottery winner (*Infinito* 2002).

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