



8th Gaetano Cozzi Prize for studies on the history of games, 2024

MARLY TERWISSCHA VAN SCHELTINGA

“Out of love for the poor and in hope of profit”: early modern lottery players and their reasons to play the Haarlem lottery of 1607

Treviso,

14th November 2024

Citation

As its title indicates – *“Out of love for the poor and in hope of profit”: early modern lottery players and their reasons for playing the Haarlem lottery of 1607* – the study by Marly Terwisscha van Scheltinga examines participants’ motives for participating in a Dutch lottery in the early 1600s. Distinguishing features of the work include the author’s choice of sources and her overall approach. As regards the former, she draws mainly on lottery rhymes, short texts that participants submitted when they bought their lottery tickets. As regards her approach, it is based on comparing the results of research into why people play the lottery now and why they did so four centuries ago, in order to identify similarities and differences. The comparison is then related effectively to insights drawn from social theory.

Aspects of the historical context examined include the role played by the forms of advertising used by the lottery organisers. In common with many other lotteries in the Low Countries and elsewhere in the early modern period, the aim of the Haarlem lottery was to collect money for charitable purposes, and for many decades this feature was emphasised by local lottery organisers. The study therefore sets out to identify the extent to which a lottery’s declared charitable intent was the reason why people chose to buy tickets; it also considers how compatible the practice was with the Protestant ethic.

Analysis of the lottery rhymes shows that the motives of players in the early modern period were not unlike those of players now, except for the fact that today’s lotteries do not, in general, have a charitable intent, whereas lottery publicity that highlighted this in early modern times could lead to some success. In examining the motives of players in the early modern period, the author also takes account of the player’s gender (though she finds that the factor had no particular impact) and the number of tickets he or she bought. In relation to this latter point, it seems that those that bought a more-than-average number were more likely to have been motivated by charitable aims and less by the hope of winning a prize.



The subject of this study is especially dear to the Fondazione Benetton Studi Ricerche, which a few years ago organised an exhibition and published a catalogue, curated and edited by Gherardo Ortalli, on *Lotterie, lotto, slot machines. L'azzardo del sorteggio: storia dei giochi di fortuna* (Lotteries, lotto, slot machines. The luck of the draw: a history of games of chance). The study sets out to present significant examples of the interwoven connections between ludico-recreational practices and the historical framework of reference, including fundamental dynamics such as religious propaganda and sensitivity, and the economic prosperity of a young nation such as the Low Countries, which at the time in question was engaged in carving out a front-line role in world trade. Another specific and substantial aspect of the study is its exploitation of a source such as the lottery rhymes with the opportunities they offer to try and understand the mentality and motives of writers without ignoring the rhetorical constraints that govern their composition, just as they do for texts of any other kind.

The study submitted to the competition is the first to be produced by an ongoing research project that holds promise of further insights and developments.

For these reasons the Selection Board for the eighth *Gaetano Cozzi Prize for studies on the history of games* has decided to award the 2024 Prize to the study by Marly Terwisscha van Scheltinga and to recommend that her work be published in the forthcoming issue no. 30 of the journal *Ludica. Annali di storia e civiltà del gioco*.

The Selection Board, comprising members of the Scientific Committee
of *Ludica. Annali di storia e civiltà del gioco*:
Gherardo Ortalli (chairman), *Alessandro Arcangeli*, *Maurice Aymard*,
Élisabeth Belmas, *Peter Burke*, *Piero Del Negro*, *Thierry Depaulis*, *Angela Fabris*,
Christian Jaser, *John McClelland*, *Alessandra Rizzi*, *Bernd Roeck*.