

Topic: Education through games

Learning to hunt through board games

Mg (Dnda) Stela Maris Ferrarese Capettini

Introduction:

Until a few decades ago, when I spoke with European and Asian researchers about the games of South American indigenous peoples, they often expressed surprise, since—thanks to the ethnographic work of Steward Culin—they were only familiar with the games of certain indigenous peoples living in North America. A similar situation to that in South America existed among the indigenous peoples of Central America and the Antilles.

Despite this, records made by some travelers and priests during the time of the European invasion and colonization, as well as other texts written by some indigenous people at the beginning of the 20th century, attest to the existence of these play practices.

It is possible to attribute this lack of information and/or dissemination of games and toys to the disinterest in the subject on the part of anthropologists and archaeologists who, in the words of Langley and Lister (2018), were not interested in children's activities for two reasons:

(1) children are not important because their activities do not make significant contributions to communities and societies as a whole, and (2) children are unknowable in non-mortals contexts, since their behavior leaves little material trace: their history is archaeologically silent” (Baxter (2005b) in Langley and Lister, 2018, p. 1).

And, on the other hand, because everything that anthropology could not explain was defined as a “ritual” object or practice. That is, any object that today is identified as a toy was not thought of or perceived as such at that time and was considered an object used in rituals:

applying the adage “it is ritual” to any object or pattern in the archaeological record that cannot be explained as economic or technological activities has long been commonplace in archaeology” (Langley and Lister, 2018, p. 1).

Over the years, systematic research through literature and fieldwork led to the discovery of records of various games, including board games. The study of one of these games references a confrontation between an animal—the puma or jaguar—and people, who are generally aided by dogs. The study began with data found by researcher Aranda in the early 1980s in the northern Patagonian region known as Cerro Policía. According to the elders, this was a game they had played since childhood and had learned from their parents. During the same decade, in collaboration with Dr. Gambier, a similar game was found in the Albardón region of San Juan province, Argentina. Further discoveries continued in Patagonia and the northeastern part of the country thanks to the work of agronomist Martínez Crovetto, who was also interested in this topic. At this point, we wanted to expand beyond Argentina's borders due to information indicating that similar games existed in Peru, Bolivia, and

Brazil. However, we encountered a limitation: some researchers, far from questioning the originality of North American Indigenous board games, did question those of the South American region, suggesting that these games had been brought by Europeans. One detail that raises questions about these claims is that these games appear to share a common origin but have been modified through oral tradition. In this regard, we can cite various sources that support our assertion: among the oldest, dating back to the conquest and colonization of the southern tip of the continent, are the records of priests who accompanied the conquistadors, such as the case of Father Olivares. He was one of those who recorded board games and compared one of them to the game of Goose, noting that “Besides games of agility and dexterity, the Araucanians also had others that we could call recreational, and which they played only rarely” (Rev. Olivares, p. 42 in Matus 1920, p. 5). In his writings of 1776, Abbot Molina also refers to board games among the Chilean Mapuche.

Furthermore, the conversation recorded in Guamán Poma's texts between Atahualpa and his jailer also serves as an example to reinforce our position; in this exchange, upon seeing the game shown to him and inviting him to play, Atahualpa refers to its similarity to a game of his own people, which I have already analyzed in a related study. In this text, I highlight them as a useful tool for understanding the board games I will present below, as part of the practices of early human groups who traveled from one territory to another in search of animals for food and clothing, and who may have used them as a method of teaching their children to hunt and defend themselves against animals.

This theory may be reinforced or possibly confirmed by a recent publication by the American anthropologist Madden, who notes that:

The findings suggest that dice, games of chance, and gambling have been a persistent feature of Native American culture over the past 12,000 years, with the oldest dice appearing at Late Pleistocene Folsom sites in Wyoming, Colorado, and New Mexico. Surprisingly, these Pleistocene dice are millennia older than their oldest known counterparts in the Old World. These findings suggest that ancient Native Americans possessed a basic practical understanding of chance, randomness, and probability and, consequently, were pioneers in humanity's emerging understanding and practical application of these concepts (Madden, introduction, 2026).

In a conversation with the researcher, it emerged that there are game boards at some sites in New Mexico, and since these were drawn—and still are drawn—on the ground, this may be the reason why there are no records. These game boards and the ways the games were played would support an interesting theory that hunter-gatherers taught their children to hunt in this manner. I will have more updates as my research continues, given that the archaeologist's data is recent.

Among the more recent texts are the writings of Magrassi (1975), who recounts that, when he saw elderly men playing the game during his research among the Chiriguano Chané people, he immediately identified it as a possible way of teaching children to hunt. This practice was also recorded in the narratives of Pati, a centenarian Tehuelche woman, in the year 2000. Making these board games known, which I believe may once have simply been teaching methods, allows us to highlight other elements of the indigenous cultures of this part of the American continent while also situating play among humans

as an ancient teaching and learning method that values its role in today's society, which considers it merely a part of early childhood.

The Hunting System

Records of humans hunting animals date back approximately two million years. The evolution of some hunter-gatherer groups toward other hunting methods left traces of those origins in various settlements, while the groups that have continued to live by this way of life to the present day have made it possible to study and document it.

Magrassi, when he observed Guaraní elders in northeastern Argentina in the 1970s, playing the yagua board game (familiar with the hunting systems of South American hunter-gatherer peoples), proposed that the pieces represent the confrontation between animals and humans during a hunt for food or a hunt for a puma stalking the village, and that these were primitive methods of teaching such actions for group survival. This teaching also aimed to instill caution to avoid being attacked by the animal. With the disappearance of hunting due to the adoption of Western lifestyles, this practice continued to be used by the elders as a game before eventually falling into oblivion due to the advance of modern life.

The hunting methods used by Patagonian hunter-gatherer peoples—whether for food or to eliminate threats to human life—are

similar. In the memory of the elderly woman Pati, recollections of hunting among the Tehuelches of the far south of Argentine Patagonia emerge:

We'd go out on foot to hunt guanacos (...), we'd all go out hunting; we kids were the ones who scared the guanacos (..) ... How did we hunt them? We'd corner them, or all the kids would form a circle around them, we'd form a circle and drive them in... the older ones were the ones who drove them in. The guanacos would be cornered, and we'd act as a corral to keep them from getting through... There were so many of us, and with our shouts and the fences, we'd corral any number of them. (...) ... many say... nooo! ... how can you hunt... you need lots of dogs, lots of dogs. (in Aguerre, 2000, p. 122).

To hunt the lion, they used a long spear... it has a long shaft and at the tip, a sharp stone point to drive into it... in the area here near the ribs, as if cutting a groove, they "stabbed it with a knife... one person approaches on foot... the horse is very afraid of it... One approaches on foot, and once the dogs have cornered the lions, one approaches... The lion doesn't do anything unless you have it really cornered; then it might run over you... The lion doesn't trample... the lion is very cowardly... but it is treacherous... if you turn your back, it'll slap you... you had to hunt a lion or a cat... return home with game; otherwise, it wasn't worth it—you wouldn't come back... Everyone got a skunk... a cat... a lion skin... lion ribs or shoulder... (p. 131).

The practice of killing pumas and foxes to prevent them from eating sheep, goats, or chickens continues to this day, albeit with modern firearms.

Furthermore, the presence of the dog as a human companion in the game may be a modern representation of a joint activity for which there is evidence dating back to around 8,000 B.C., as González Venanci (et al., 2025) notes: "In historical times, its use is recorded as a pack animal, a hunting assistant, and a guardian."

The fact that children were encouraged to learn to hunt through games of marksmanship, as documented by Gusinde (YEAR) and González (1910), allows us to consider that these board games may have served as a teaching method for such activities, pitting pumas and foxes against humans who had to try to prevent these predators from killing their animals or themselves.

The War Between Humans and Animals: Who Wins?

War is not a game (Bateson, 1991), but the board game pits two players against each other, with one becoming a warrior, another a hunter, and the other the prey—but who is hunting whom?

On numerous occasions, when thinking about games in an attempt to reconstruct humanity's playfulness—especially that of children—I have asked myself: When did humans begin to play? When did a game board become a symbolic space or a way to teach hunting strategies, and how did survival methods evolve into play?

It is difficult to pinpoint a date; simply, by studying these games, it is possible to make an approximation of an activity with a dual function: entertainment and preparation for adult life (Gross, 2007).

The Animal vs. Human Confrontation in Board Games

Across South America—from the Andean region of Bolivia to the southern tip of Argentina and south-central Chile, following the course of the Andes mountain range, and from the Mato Grosso region in Brazil to the northern part of southeastern Argentina—board games have been discovered that appear to share certain similarities. In all cases, dogs led by a person try to catch a lion or puma while the predator attempts to kill the dogs so that the hunter is left defenseless.

The Lioness Game

In villages in the Department of Iglesias, located in the northwest of the Argentine province of San Juan, archaeologist Gambier (1981) discovered a game known as “la leona.” In 1989, I visited the area to research the game's rules; there, he told me that the villagers did not want to teach it to outsiders, which is why we could only watch them play—a game played exclusively by men. Over the years, they eventually taught the rules so that the game could be included in schools as part of recreational diversity and thus endure over time and within the community.

In conversations with the villagers, they explained that they had played it since childhood, which led us to consider its intergenerational transmission dating back to very ancient times, given that the area's population is indigenous.

The ancient hunter-gatherer cultures of the country's Northwest region date back to around 10,000 BCE (Michieli, 2007) and later became part of the Andean core dominated by the Incas; similar games have also been found in Bolivia and Peru.

How to Play

The design of the “La Leona” game board is a small triangle bisected by a line that divides a square—connected to the triangle at one of its vertices—into two equal parts. (Photo No. 1).



Photo N° 1 La Leona (reconstruction MJE. Photo de la autorun).

The lioness is placed at the top of the triangle, and the twelve dogs are arranged as follows: ten are placed on the two bottom lines of the side opposite the triangle, and the other two—one at each end of the square on the line immediately following the previous ones—leaving the center lines empty.

The objective of the game is shared: while the dogs try to trap the lioness to prevent her from eating three dogs, she tries to eat them and thus win the game.

The lioness starts the game by moving first. Her first three moves can only be forward or sideways, and starting with the fourth move, all players can move in any direction, always alternating between the lioness and the dogs, and always moving along the lines and landing on an intersection.

The lioness “eats” a dog by jumping onto the dog immediately adjacent to an empty space.

If she is surrounded by the dogs, they win the game; however, if she eats three dogs, she wins the game, as some villagers explain that with nine dogs, the lioness cannot be caught. Other villagers say that the lioness must eat all the dogs to win, and that is how they play it.

The Game “La Yagua” or “The Tiger and the Dogs”

A game known among the Chiguanos-Chane and Guaraní peoples living in Brazil, Paraguay, Bolivia, and Argentina (in the NEA region). In the 1970s, anthropologist Magrassi and his team discovered this game among the Chiguanos-Chane living in Argentina (Photo No. 2); they note that it was also called “The Tiger and the Dogs,” while other groups refer to it as “La Yagua.” The teacher and researcher Rodas explained this latter name to me in 2009.

Magrassi’s account notes that in the past it was played only by men, with women having only recently begun to participate. He also wonders whether it is merely a game or a way of teaching hunting, reflecting on the matter:

In the past, it may have been part of how young boys learned the role of the hunter. The game is not played for or toward any specific goal, but simply for the pleasure of playing, demonstrating skills in control, thinking, memory, and concentration. It is a contest, a battle or struggle, a competition where the key lies in precise control (1985, p. 4).

This observation was made some 40 years ago in a socio-geographic area largely isolated from the rest of Argentine society, where a hunter-gatherer lifestyle persisted, and it allows us to consider Magrassi's argument, similar to that put forward by Gambier in another part of the country, where the game was being lost in terms of its origins and transmission into the past.

He supported this argument by drawing on the knowledge and writings on the subject of play by the anthropologist Métraux and the priest Furlong, who noted that "If it is true that there is nothing new under the sun, this truth is fully confirmed today with regard to games (...). But what may surprise some the most is that to confirm this assertion (regarding our indigenous peoples and their own games), there is no need to consult the annals of the Germanic, Gallic, or Visigothic peoples, since, as far as the Americas are concerned, our indigenous peoples were familiar with games and sports. Although they had different names, they existed long before the discovery of the Americas.

How to Play

The board is drawn on the ground. The two players divide the roles between themselves: one yagua (puma or American tiger) and twelve dogs, which they call yamba in their language. The starting position consists of ten dogs lined up on the two lines opposite the triangle, with dogs number eleven and twelve placed at the far left and right ends, leaving the central area of the board open. Stones or seeds can be used interchangeably to play the game.

The dogs' objective is to corner the yagua so that it is at the hunter's disposal, while the yagua's objective is to eat the hunter's dogs.



Foto N.º 4 Tablero según Magrassi, MJE (Foto de la autora)

The game is started by the yagua. Pieces are moved one at a time. In the account cited by Magrassi (1985), it states: "At the start of the game, moves are always forward or to the sides, but as the game progresses, pieces may also move backward. Always in the direction of the marked lines or paths" (p. 4). The way to do this is to jump over a dog that has an empty space next to it. The dog that has been "eaten" is then removed from the board.

The game ends when the jaguar is immobilized, with the dogs winning, or when the jaguar has eaten three dogs. Magrassi (1985) states that whoever plays as the dogs "can continue playing, but will invariably lose: with nine dogs, or fewer, one cannot hunt a jaguar" (p. 4). As can be seen, this game is similar to that of the lioness.

Yaguareté Kora

A Mbya-Guaraní game that has recently been revived as a tradition by a group of young people from some communities in the Argentine province of Misiones, calling it yaguareté or korá, chivi kora (the jaguar's pen) (Photo No. 3).

How to Play

The fifteen dogs are placed around the board, and the jaguar is placed in the triangle, which serves as its den. The jaguar goes first, followed by the dogs one at a time; turns alternate between the jaguar and the dogs. During the game, the jaguar can move in all directions, but the dogs cannot move backward; however, they can enter the triangle to try to achieve their objective, which is to surround it so it can be captured.

According to these rules, the jaguar wins if it is not immobilized, and the dogs win if they manage to surround and immobilize it.

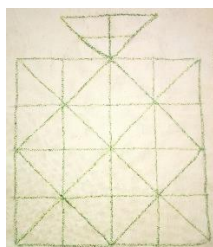


Foto N° 3 Yaguareté Kora MJE (Foto de la autora).

Trapial Kuzen Game

The Patagonian territories that became the provinces of Santa Cruz, Chubut, Río Negro, and Neuquén in the mid-20th century have a history—like all of the Americas—of fluid borders marked by the territorial domains of the peoples or groups of different ethnic origins who inhabited the region since approximately 12,000 years ago. Throughout the region, there are records of this board game (played by the Mapuche and the Günün a Kuna or Tehuelche) under the name Trapial Kuzen or “The Dogs and the Lion”; it was played on boards with two different designs depending on the region, as documented by Martínez Crovetto in 1969.

In the area around Lake Huechulafquen inhabited by Mapuche people, in the province of Neuquén, this game was rediscovered in the 1960s through the recollections of Don Vicente Cañicul, who taught him how to play it.

How to Play

A large square is drawn on the ground and divided into equal parts; from the center of this square, a line is drawn connecting it to the smaller square.

Fourteen stones are used to play the game; these are the dogs or trewa and are placed on the two lines of the sector opposite the one where the other square is located, along with a larger stone, which is the lioness or zomo trapial, or the lion or trapial (Photo No. 4).

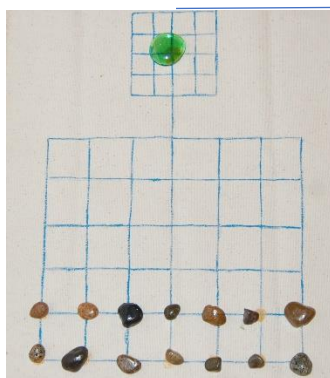
The game is started by the lion or the lioness. Players take turns moving one stone at a time:

The pieces can be moved, one at a time, along the horizontal or vertical lines and placed at their intersections (...)

Movement is from one square to an adjacent one. The dogs and the lion can move forward, backward, or sideways. (...)

The objective of the game, for the dogs, is to trap the lion in its den or on any side of the board and prevent it from moving, but they lose if the lion manages to cross its double line. (...) The "trapial" can capture a "trewa" if it is not backed by another piece behind it,

(...) it can capture an opposing piece forward, backward, or sideways. When the lion devours a dog, it passes over it and lands on the square behind it, depending on the direction from which it came (Crovetto 1969: 8–9).



Posición inicial

Foto N°4 . Reconstrucción del dibujo del tablero (1969, p. 8 MJE, Foto la autora).

The lion or lioness wins the game when it manages to outrun the dogs and reach the end of the board; but if it is cornered anywhere on the board or in its own den, it loses.

Version 2

It was played among the Günün a Kuna people living in the border area between the provinces of Chubut and Río Negro. Mr. Tomás said that in the past it was also played by the Araucanians (referring to the Mapuche). The game had disappeared by that time, and he remembered it from his childhood.

How to Play

The board is drawn on the floor and consists of a square with three internal divisions and diagonals running from one end to the other and connecting to the center; a triangle is drawn (Photo No. 5). To play, twelve stones are used to represent the dogs and one larger stone to represent the lion or lioness.

To start the game, the lion moves first, followed by one of the dogs. Moves can be made in any direction.

The lion eats a dog if there is an empty space next to it; conversely, the dogs will try to trap the lion in a square or in its den so it cannot cross its line.

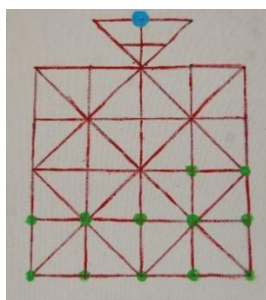


Foto N.º 5 Reconstrucción del dibujo del tablero (1969, p. 8) MJE (Foto de la autora).

A similar design was discovered in the 1980s by archaeologist Biset. It took several decades to conduct a study of this practice because, although photographs (Photos No. 6 and No. 7) provided by architect Juárez were available, it was never possible to determine the exact location where the practice took place. In 2023, thanks to the Mogni–Molinari couple, I was able to obtain information about the practice in the area of the Molulco and Mogotillos streams (which is part of a large complex of stones engraved at different times). Near the location of the stone in the Cajón del Curi Leuvu area, they encountered a shepherd coming down from the mountain. When I asked him about it and showed him the photograph, he told me that he didn't play it himself but had seen older people—who have since passed away—playing it. “They would draw it on the ground and call it ‘the lioness,’ and he described how it was played: one person played with the ‘puppies’ and the other with the ‘lioness,’ and you had to jump; they played for a drink (usually chupilca or wine).”



Foto N.º 6 compartida por Juárez



Detalle del tablero Foto N.º 7

Similar Games in South America

There was no mention of it in the records from Chile's IX Region either, but I did find a text by Manquilef (1914) describing a board game called komikan, played by the Mapuche people. I also found another text by Matus (1920), who identified it as an ancient Mapuche game. Este (1920), for his part, states that he saw it being played among “the Indians of the Valdivia interior, but I was unable to clarify this matter with them because they refused to give me details. However, I believe it is of interest to present the layout of a game of this type, even though it is very well known to our children” (p. 10) (Photo No. 8).

According to Matus, the game is played as follows:

The game is played with twelve small stones representing the dogs and one larger stone representing the lion. The dogs must always move forward and try to trap the lion by forming two rows. The lion can move forward or backward at any time and in any direction (...)

Every time the lion encounters a lone dog that is not protected by another, it eats it, jumping on top of it and taking the vacant spot. When it encounters two dogs with an empty space between them, it can eat both.

For their part, the dogs advance with great care and discipline, trying to immobilize the lion.

The playing area is usually marked out on the ground (p. 10).

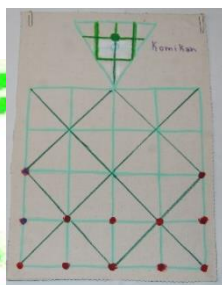


Foto N.º 8 Tablero según Matus (1920, p. 10) MJE (Foto de la autora).

Manquilef (1914), whose text is written in Mapudungun and translated by Lenz, describes the game by the name komikan chil, or “The Little Lion,” as a translation of “eat it all.” The Little Lion, he says, is the name Chileans gave it when they incorporated it into their recreational activities, and the name “Eat It All” represents the struggle between two forces; during the long, leisurely nights when it was played, it gave rise to Mapuche satires about a person who eats their partners and simultaneously becomes:

Araucanian women believe that there is a being similar to a man who must end up with a woman. (...) Hence the connection with a widower who courts a woman. The comparison of widowhood to devouring a female prey. According to the author, in a community where a widower repeatedly asked a woman out, the dialogue that ensued was as follows:

W: “Komikan peno ta eimi?” (translation: “Aren’t you the komikan?”) (Manquilef 1914: 31 and 135).

From this, it follows that in the past, this game served some moral purpose for the people. Likewise, as a recreational activity, the author classifies it as part of domestic games with social and educational purposes (Ferrarese 1997).

Although he does not draw the board, he describes it in such a way that I have been able to reconstruct its design. He states that a square must be drawn with sixteen internal squares totaling twenty-five points, or that there are three horizontal and three vertical lines. He explains that “in the center of any side of the square lies an equilateral triangle, more or less, joined perpendicularly by its midpoints” (Manquilef, 1914, pp. 104–31). Twelve small stones represent the dogs and one larger stone represents the komikan. According to his explanation, the board used is similar to the gūnüne a kuna board, although he does not specify that the triangle has lines inside it, which makes it resemble the board in Photo No. 5. The way it is played:

2.- Take 12 stones and place them in two lines opposite the tower (which we call the triangle), and place a stone on either side of the third stone from the bottom.

3.- These 12 stones are called “little dogs” and must surround a large stone that extends from the tower.

This large stone is called the “komikelu,” the one that eats everything.

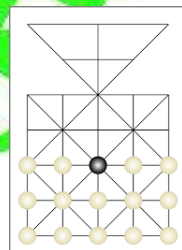
4.- The puppies’ mission is to surround the komikelu, and the komikelu’s is to eat them. It can eat a puppy as long as there is no other puppy at the previous point.

5.- The komikelu must try to eat all the puppies. A player is considered successful if they do not lose any puppies ((13) 87 and (31) 105).

With regard to the term “comican” and given the similarity of the practice to the “trapial kuzen” among the Argentine Mapuche, Martínez Crovetto sought to inquire among the local inhabitants about its origin and practice; however, they stated that they were unfamiliar with that term, leading him to conclude that “among the Araucanians of Patagonia, the ‘trapial kuzen’ seems to have been widely used by adults, mainly men (1969, p. 9).

Adugo

The Bororo people live in the Brazilian Amazon, occupying their own demarcated lands in the state of Mato Grosso and in the Santa Cruz department of Bolivia. I learned of their existence while researching board games with the help of researcher Fassheber, who explained it to me via online communication on Facebook (2020). Their board is similar to some of the variants found of the komikan; the only differences are the placement of the tiger or jaguar (Drawing No. 1) and the role played by the triangle in the game.



Dibujo N.º 1 <https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adugo>

The Taptana, or The Fox and the Sheep

The Bolivian-Peruvian Andean highlands is a socio-geographical area that has been in contact since approximately 15,000 BP, constituting “an entire cultural unit of the Bolivian-Peruvian territory, both in space and over time” (Murra 1983 in Huarita 202, p. 51). Myths and games related to the agrarian world and its oracles have emerged there.

Among them, the researcher found a game called chaku or vicuña rodeo, which Garcilaso de la Vega recorded in 1609; the activity took place at a certain time of year, after the breeding season, in the presence of the Inca, and consisted of chasing vicuñas across a wide plain to catch them (during this playful activity, they also used to catch other animals) (Huarita 2021). This form of play reminds me of

what Pati described to Aguerre (2000) as being practiced by the Tehuelche in Argentine Patagonia and also bears some resemblance to the game under study.

However, in the Usuma area, Department of Oruro, Bolivia, I find the game *taptana*, or “the fox and the sheep” (Photo No. 9), which is described as a game of mental dexterity related to the annual agricultural cycle and played primarily by men:

This activity has been observed during the months of September and October (the planting season for quinoa and potatoes), mainly on grazing lands in Qalaquta ura, Kullcha, and Tara-tara Pampa in the lower Sayañas. In these areas, shepherds from various families drive their flocks to graze, while the parents cultivate the land in the upper and middle sayañas. The Michiqkuna play “fox and sheep.” (...) The game is significant in relation to the agricultural cycle; thus, if the fox wins three consecutive rounds, it is believed that there will be either an abundance or a shortage of food, which necessitates performing rituals of supplication to Piucha Juana. It is a good omen if one manages to fill all 8 points of the triangle that forms the 371-square grid. According to accounts, in the past this game represented a herd of llamas, and the pieces distributed across the 15 squares of the board signified a group of livestock, selected from each row: the ñawpas (adults), followed by the maltas puytas (young), then the uñas (calves), and finally the males. It was considered a good omen to bring one or two from each group into the corral; but a bad omen if only one or two groups out of the total number of tokens were brought in. It also signifies a good romantic omen for the player who wins the fox token (p. 369)

It states that the larger square has sides measuring 40 cm and is attached to a triangle divided into four parts. To play, the children gather 15 *haqhas* (small dung balls) to represent the sheep or lambs and one larger one, or a stone, to represent the fox. The fox is placed in the triangle and the sheep at the opposite end within the square. As in all games, they are positioned at the equidistant points where the lines meet. While the fox tries to eat as many sheep as possible to win, the sheep try to surround it within the larger square without letting it return to its hiding place, or they try to position themselves at the seven intersection points of its hiding place, preventing it from entering and thus winning the game.



Fig. 66: Disposición de las fichas *haqhas* en el tablero *taptana*.

Huarita (2021) identifies it as a game originating in the Andean world prior to the arrival of European colonizers and argues that it has always been part of the agrarian worldview of the peoples who make up the societies of the Altiplano. In this regard, he states that:

if the fox wins three consecutive turns, it is believed that there will be either abundance or scarcity of food, which implies performing rituals of supplication to Piucha Juana. It is a good omen if one manages to fill the 7 points of the triangle that forms the pen. According to accounts, in the past this game represented a herd of llamas, and the pieces distributed across the 15 squares of the board signified a herd of livestock, selected from each row: the ñawpas (adults), followed by the maltas puytas (young), then the uñas (calves), and finally the males. It was a good omen to bring one or two from each group into the corral; but a bad omen if only one or two groups out of the total number of

pieces entered. It also signifies a good romantic omen for the player who wins the fox piece (pp. 370–371).

This story, which has been passed down from generation to generation in the Andean world of the Bolivian-Peruvian Altiplano, attests to the pre-Hispanic origins of the game, since throughout that region, both in games and in narrative, “agroecological indicators, the agricultural cycle, and festive rites converge in the representation of the fox as the sole element recreating the life and agricultural cycle in the.

La leonera

The only reference we have to this game, played in the Peruvian region that forms part of the Peruvian-Bolivian Altiplano or the Andean world, comes from the researcher Paz (in Solar and Hoisting, 2006), who states that he played the game known as la leonera (which can be seen in the petroglyph shown in Figure 8 of Photo No. 10) during his childhood, just as it is played today and using the same board described by Huarita (2021). Therefore, we agree with Huarita that it is the same game and not a derivative of the backgammon brought from Europe to the South American continent.

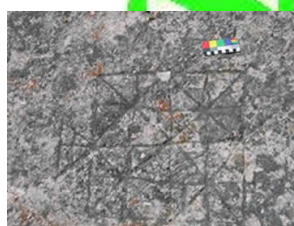


Foto N.º 10 Fig. 8: Petroglifo en la superficie plana de un afloramiento rocoso en Suero y Cama, Espinar.
Extradido de <http://www.rupestreweb.info/litograbados1.html>



Dibujo N.º 2 (Huarita 2021, p. 82 Fig. 14. Uso autorizado por el autor)

Conclusions

Based on the analysis of board games from the southern tip of the continent, I believe that their origin and spread may have begun in a specific region of South America, which, thanks to new revelations from anthropologist Madden’s research, are now shedding more light on the games and toys found among the earliest human groups that migrated across the continent. This allows us to consider that these modern board games, which have come down to us through existing records of, among others, the

travelers and priests who arrived with the conquest, and the research that facilitated their recovery, appreciation, and revival, may have originally been a way of using play to teach children the organization of the hunt, a tradition whose intergenerational transmission continued for millennia. Later, with the changes in lifestyle brought about by evolution, it is possible that it simply remained a game for entertainment.

These are linked to them based on the studies of Romero (1943), who considers them part of a mythical connection between hunting and the game, characteristic of pre-Hispanic peoples

In some areas, as lifestyles evolved, these games became part of the educational curriculum; in the Andean world, for example, they are still taught today in their two versions: tending sheep (Huarita 2021) or hunting the puma (Romero 1943). Similarly, the interpretation of taptana as alquerque (Castro Terán, 2014) may have led to confusion when interpreting the game taptana/the fox and the sheep/the lion's den and its board (the confusion may stem from translations of the Inca expression "similar to" as "equal to" in relation to alquerque, whose board, format, and objective differ from the hunting games described here from the peoples of Argentina and are related to games from other South American regions with which they have remained in continuous interaction for centuries, a factor that has shaped the relationship between these games.

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