

The Franco-Spanish relations through the prism of football (1922-1968). Circulations, imaginaries, diplomacies

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« Kopa is not an easy player to 'see'. It is like with some great works of art [...]. In Kopa's game, there are almost always a few classy gestures to admire, which prove decisive later on. This was again the case with the two fantastic deep passes, precise, measured and exact, which provided Mateo and Gento with marvellous opportunities to score. » (Carlos Pereo, Mundo Deportivo, 31 mai 1957, p.5. AFP picture)



« The game of FC Barcelona, a club that has become openly professional, has been a revelation for spectators. No more theatrical attitudes from the Catalans, no more big gestures towards the sky, no more hair-pulling, no more multiple calls, between partners, from one end of the field to the other! » (Gabriel Hanot, Miroir des Sports, 16 November 1926, p. 362. Photo Agence Rol/BNF)

Presentation of the research topic and its issues

- A research at the crossroads of the social history of representations, the history of international sports relations and the history of Franco-Spanish bilateral relations.
- The aims are analyse the circulation of footballers players, the imaginaries formed on both sides of the Pyrenees and the influence of representations linked to the world of football on diplomatic relations.
- The analysis will focus on the mechanisms of construction of stereotypes, clichés and images conveyed by one concerning the "Other": the vision of Spain and the Spanish people in France, and that of France and the French people in Spain from the football games.
- This investigation also aims to understand how football fueled the 2 countries diplomatic relations.

Sources and working methodology: a three-level analysis

- On the first level : to measure the diplomatic stakes between France and Spain by studying, among other things, the state of their relations during the period of this study by through institutional bulletins, transnational sports organisations, diplomatic and bureaucratic sources.
- The next level corresponds to the analysis of the image and the journalistic discourse delivered to citizens and nationals by the national media : press, radio y television.
- The last level aims to understand the reception of these discourses, and therefore, the effects of the media discourse about Spain of the French people and symmetrically.

Conclusion and perspectives

- This historical investigation aims :
 - * To develop the history of Franco-Spanish interactions on a political and cultural level through a popular spectacle.
 - * To enrich the historiographical debate on international sports relations and more particularly diplomacy through football.
- An academic challenge : build a bridge between researchers in sports science, contemporary history and Iberian studies