

CHILDREN'S GAMES IN SOMOGY COUNTY

Magda SZAPU

Directorate of Somogy County Museums, Rippl-Rónai Museum
H-7400, Kaposvár, Fő u. 10, Hungary

While the first collection of children's games in Hungary is associated with the name of Áron KISS,¹ the first monograph on games of Somogy County was undoubtedly written by Ferenc GÖNCZI.² Although GÖNCZI's book did not appear until after his death, in 1949 under the title of *Somogyi gyermekjátékok* [Children's games from Somogy]³, the material he had collected and worked up had been ready for printing since 1937.⁴ If the work had appeared at that time it would almost certainly have been the pioneer among the county monographs, preceding even the important works on the subject by Árpád LAJOS and Mária KRESZ.⁵

GÖNCZI's volume of children's games was not without precedent. The museum

¹ KISS, Áron 1891/1984. For his work *A magyar gyermekjáték-gyűjtemény* [Collection of Hungarian children's games], KISS collected several thousand games from 48 counties with the help of 214 co-workers between 1885 and 1887. Although it appeared relatively late, this summary work preceded the similar major German and English works.

² GÖNCZI, Ferenc (1861–1948), teacher, school inspector, ethnographer and museum founder, moved to Somogy County in 1912 and worked here until his death. As a school inspector, he travelled around the countryside for years visiting village schools. Following his collections in the Muraköz, Göcsej and Hetés regions, he collected objects of museum value in Somogy County, and dealt with the outlaws of Somogy County and the life and education of peasant children. He published his findings in independent works; his legacy and material concerning Somogy is preserved in the County Museum.

³ The book was published in 1949 by the Scientific Institute of Transdanubia, edited by Zoltán Pál SZABÓ. The publication contains games with song and text, classified into 26 groups. It gives the melodies and a description of the game. The volume begins with 81 counting out rhymes and their variants. These are followed by 12 whirling games, 21 walking games, 6 two-step games, 14 games of going around, 29 tag and chasing games. Then come 7 games of driving, 24 of hiding, 14 of breaking through a line, 5 pledge games, 11 games of standing in a ring and entering a ring, 99 games of calling into a ring, followed by 2 games of throwing out and 17 of pulling down. Among the round games, we find 5 involving holding the skirt, 4 of various types, 11 guessing and seeking games, 5 seated games and 18 miscellaneous games. There are 13 games requiring physical strength and skill, many (57) ball games, 11 stick throwing games, 5 games involving driving a blade into the ground, and finally 8 button games. The book contains a total of 414 games and 72 scores.

⁴ GÖNCZI himself refers to this fact in the foreword of *Somogyi gyermek* [Children of Somogy]: GÖNCZI (1937: 8).

⁵ LAJOS, Árpád: *A magyar nép játéakai* [Games of the Hungarian people]. Magyarságismeret. Budapest, 1940. Id. *Borsodi játékok* [Games of Borsod County]. Miskolc, 1957. KRESZ, Mária: *Gyermekélet és játék Sárpilisen* [Life of children and games in Sárpilis]. In: Tanulmányok egy sárközi falu társadalmáról [Studies on the society of a Sárköz village]. Budapest, 1942. 45–62.

founder and ethnographer spent thirty-five years travelling around all parts of the county. As a school inspector he maintained extremely close relations with teachers in the county and, being a teacher himself, his sense of vocation led him to turn his attention to questions of the life and education of peasant children. From 1923 for fourteen years he surveyed the towns and villages of the county, first with a questionnaire, then after this proved unsuccessful,⁶ in person. During his collecting in the field – work that lasted six years – he “studied objects” during the day and in the evenings conducted interviews with the local people. He visited Hungarians, Croats and Germans and collected from Catholics and Calvinists. He found selfless helpers in the villages of Somogy (the pillars of the village – priests, teachers, notaries – helped his work selflessly), whose names he lists in the foreword.⁷ He was also accompanied on his tours by Sándor GÖNYEY ÉBNER, Photographer of the Museum of Ethnography in Budapest, who made an irreplaceable photographic record on the theme of child-raising and customs.⁸ In his collecting work, GÖNCZI not only studied the question of bringing up children (having children – the problem of one-child families, the harmful consequences of restricting the number of children; childhood – breastfeeding, clothing, teaching the child to walk and speak, healing, superstitions, training the child for work), but also recorded descriptions of several hundred children’s games in 250 villages.⁹

GÖNCZI naturally incorporated the material on Somogy published by Áron KISS in 1891¹⁰ into his games monograph which appeared in 1949, as well as the collections of the great predecessor, Béla VIKÁR, who was born in Hetes (Somogy County).¹¹

Thirty villages and 90 communications from Somogy figure in the large, com-

⁶ GÖNCZI (1937: 5). In 1923 GÖNCZI sent out in the county a questionnaire consisting of 170 points. However, only 15 villages replied to this very detailed questionnaire.

⁷ GÖNCZI (1937: 9–11).

⁸ GÖNYEY’s photographs were taken between 1925 and 1930. The negatives are stored in the Museum of Ethnography in Budapest, while the archive prints are among the treasures of the county museum’s photography collection. For a detailed list of the photographs, see SZAPU (1996: 262–263).

⁹ GÖNCZI’s former colleague, the artist István Z. SOÓS, did illustrations of 104 children’s games but unfortunately no trace can be found of them.

¹⁰ KISS, Áron 1891/1984. This work, which is also of international significance, is divided into the following main sections: games of adults with infants, sayings, counting out rhymes, games. The games section is divided into games of singing and dancing, games with text, games of movement, sport-type games and games using implements. Somogy County was also included in this collection; most of the Somogy material was games of singing and dancing.

¹¹ VIKÁR, Béla (1859–1945) was a versatile scholar, outstanding folklorist, linguist, translator and science administrator. He first collected in Somogy in 1890. He spent five weeks in twelve villages, collecting tales, songs, ballads and children’s games which he published in a separate volume: (VIKÁR, 1905). He was the first in Europe to use Edison’s brilliant invention, the phonograph to collect ethnographic material. VIKÁR’s international prestige grew steadily and it was as a world-famous scholar that he made his last collecting trip in the villages of Somogy in 1901. On this occasion he recorded 80 melodies in twelve villages. GÖNCZI’s contemporary and friend, Árpád EGYÜD, looked on VIKÁR as his model. VIKÁR published 34 games and song texts: 15 from Csökölly, 5 from Edde, 11 from Csurgó and 3 from Balatonberény.

prehensive collection of games *Gyermekjátékok*¹² [Children's games] which appeared in 1951 as the first volume of the Collection of Hungarian Folk Music. Around half of the material it contains comes from four villages: 12 from Szenna, 16 from Törökkoppány, 9 from Karád and 7 from Nemespátró. This publication contains the Hungarian games material for the period from 1880 to 1943, running to almost a thousand pages and 1161 game songs.

After these precedents, Árpád EGYÜD¹³, former physical education teacher, folklorist, began collecting Somogy folklore. Besides other material (folk ballads, ballads, beliefs, folk religiosity, etc.), he also recorded children's games. Following the example of VIKÁR and GÖNCZI he did outstanding work in this area, too, and published his collections in a number of places.¹⁴ EGYÜD's eventual aim was to publish a separate Somogy games monograph but he was prevented from doing so by his early death.¹⁵ His legacy and life-work can be found in the county museum.¹⁶

The ethnographic collection of the county museum has a similarly rich games material. In addition to objects collected by Ferenc GÖNCZI, it also comprises folk games collected by volunteers and civics circles, while the ethnographic database and the collection of photographs are also of value for research on children's games.¹⁷

We know very little about the collecting circumstances of Ferenc GÖNCZI and even less of Árpád EGYÜD. GÖNCZI only considered it important to note that he took into account mainly data "referring to the children of the agrarian population" where he found "archaic, original traditions". He regarded the material of "the tradesmen, merchants and others falling in the category of gentlefolk" as being wholly "international". EGYÜD went around the countryside with a taperecorder and recorded everything he considered important. As a former physical education teacher, he was principally interested in folk sport-type games which he worked up and also used with his students. He was one of the first in the country to set an ex-

¹² KERÉNYI, György (ed.) 1951. The thick volume appeared with a foreword by Zoltán Kodály and dedicated to the memory of Béla Bartók. The games were classified on the basis of melody and only games with songs are included. The second part of the publication contains Kerényi's system based on games action. Among the counties, Somogy is represented by material collected by Ferenc Gönczi and Áron Kiss in this volume illustrated with photos and drawings. Vikár, Kodály, Lajtha and Kerényi also collected in Somogy.

¹³ After earning a diploma as a physical education teacher, Árpád EGYÜD (1921–1983) was appointed in 1946 to the famous Csokonai Vitéz Mihály Secondary School in Csurgó where he came as a Calvinist in place of a Catholic fellow student. For the rest of his life, marriage and work bound Együd to the county.

¹⁴ EGYÜD (1975, 1978, 1981a, 1981b, 1985a, 1985b).

¹⁵ He died at the age of 62, at the height of his creative powers.

¹⁶ The legacy comprises: manuscripts (including around 600 letters), archive film material (mainly ethnographic and local history, later also a small amount of archaeological films), audio material (around 600 hours of recorded material on a variety of themes: folk music, folk dance, folk belief and folk customs, festive days, legends, ballads, outlaws and shepherds, servants and beggars, folk religiosity, nuns, cantors, holy persons, fair booth-keepers and chroniclers. He collected among Catholics, Calvinists and Jews, Hungarian-, German-, Croatian and Roma-speaking inhabitants. The legacy is being continuously processed. So far the following have been published on the composition of the material (manuscripts and archive film material): SZAPU (1992, 1994a).

¹⁷ For more details, see SZAPU (1996, 262–274).

ample in this respect in the 1940s and 1950s.¹⁸ EGYÜD recommended his studies on the subject of children's games to the attention of teachers, leaders of clubs and ensembles, adult educators and amateur collectors.

In Somogy and no doubt throughout the country there was a growing demand for a publication on children's games which could be used by kindergartens, schools, parents and teachers, and communities approaching sport as play. The collection of *Magyar népi gyermekjátékok*¹⁹ [Hungarian folk children's games] published in 1971 by Gyula HAJDU naturally also contains games collected in Somogy County. In 1990 Katalin LÁZÁR classified the games collection of the Institute of Musicology of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. She grouped the collection consisting of around 16 000 items into four main major blocks: games using implements, games of movement, pair selection games and intellectual games. In addition to these there are rhymes and counting out rhymes.²⁰ She further developed György KERÉNYI's games system²¹; her classification is open and can be expanded with new types and kinds of games.

The rich store of data on Somogy County and the existing games system encouraged the author to sum up in a separate volume the games with singing and dancing, with text, with movement and the sport-type folk games found in Somogy County. In 1996 Magda SZAPU's monograph on *Gyermekjátékok*²² [Children's Games] appeared. It traces the games material from the perspective of one hundred years.²³ The collection contains all children's games material from the county published to date and the unpublished material to be found in manuscript and legacies.²⁴ One of the biggest problems in teaching the games is the inaccessibility of the literature.

¹⁸ On the subject of his years in Csurgó EGYÜD wrote: "As a former physical education teacher at the Csurgó secondary school I was among the first to have my students play sports games found in their environment, which were still alive in the villages in the early fifties and were familiar to my students themselves. This natural, spontaneous action gradually became conscious collecting activity. I gathered enough material for quite a large volume which we are planning to publish later". EGYÜD (1981a: 95).

¹⁹ HAJDU, Gyula (1971). The publication contains games classified into six groups (games with singing and dancing, dramatic-stage games, folk parlour games, folk games of movement, sport-type folk games and sport games with uniform rules), slightly adapted but also with variants.

²⁰ NIEDERMÜLLER, Péter-LÁZÁR, Katalin (1990: 544-647). In: *Magyar Néprajz* [Hungarian Ethnography], VI.

²¹ KERÉNYI, György (1951). In: *A Magyar Népzene Tára* [Collection of Hungarian Folk Music], I.

²² SZAPU, Magda (1996). The publication of 300 pages with 100 scores and 120 drawings and photographs presents the regional characteristics of the games; besides a precise description of the games, it also sets out the rules in detail. Its aim is to provide a source material and aid for use by teachers in teaching the Hungarian language and music, as well as in physical education and training for a healthy way of life. It also offers useful material for developing children's use of implements and movement. Text, melody and action form an integral whole in children's folklore so that mainly at kindergarten age, but also in primary school age, play practically fills the whole life.

²³ While the first description of a children's game from Somogy County was given by Áron KISS in 1891, the first song text, also from Somogy, was published in 1792 under the title "*Somogy Vármegyei Dal*" [Somogy County song] and was recorded with the first line as "*Kis-pillants, kis-pillants*" (the equivalent of *Ispiláng, ispiláng, ispilángi róza*). Cf.: *Magyar Hírmondó* 1792, I, 640.

²⁴ The publication also contains the children's games material found among the objects, data and photographs of the county museum's ethnographic collection, and a list of manuscripts (up to 1990) relevant to Somogy found in the Ethnology Database of the Museum of Ethnography.

This is why, in place of and in addition to textbooks and teaching aids, there is a need for the publication of a large quantity of games material, for a general work covering the games of counties and regions which can be used by teachers to teach the games of the given area.²⁵

What is true for children's folklore and children's culture in general also applies to Somogy: although this is a phenomenon which changes over historical time, it has a constancy and significance which enables it to pass on traditions.²⁶

In the following an attempt is made to give a brief overview of the games which occupied an important position in the lives of Somogy children. Most of these games cannot be associated closely with particular areas or ethnic groups; the main factor is rather their degree²⁷ of popularity. The games are linked not so much to occasions as to place and weather. For children, play is not only amusement but also a means of education and training which provides behaviour patterns corresponding to the stage of maturation and helps integration into the family and social environment. One or two years are a big age difference in childhood. Infants are put to sleep with songs from the time they are a few months old, comforted and entertained with short rhymes. Besides entertainment, the aim is also for them to learn to speak. Two- and three-year-old children already imitate adults. Children of this age group still willingly play together, mainly with implements found in nature, although differences between the genders appear quite early in play. Play communities rarely form before the age of five or six years. Girls begin to play games with singing and dancing earlier and continue to play them longer (from the ages of 5 to 12 years), while in the case of boys these games can be put around the ages of 6 to 8 years. Boys are very fond of team or sport-type games in the form of matches. Some of the ball games are played in mixed groups. Children also played individual games during the week, but the big play sessions were mainly held on Saturdays and Sundays. In bad weather the players gathered in the room or the farm buildings, while in good weather they played in the street, the meadow or the playground. Within the constantly changing body of children's folklore, the role of the traditional games with singing and dancing is declin-

²⁵ Cf.: LÁZÁR (1995, 695). The author considers it important that mainly practical training on this theme should be a compulsory subject in teacher training institutions (kindergarten and primary teacher training colleges, secondary teacher training colleges, universities). She also elaborated the subject matter for a 28-lesson course and tested it in the frame of a special seminar in the Department of Folklore at the Loránd Eötvös University. Her method is based on tradition, which is the most effective. In essence this means that text, melody and action must be taught and learnt simultaneously. The game is a complex genre where these three co-exist. These games can be taught in singing lessons or physical training lessons, but the games involving the making of objects can also be taught in the technical and drawing lessons for primary school pupils.

²⁶ Cf. GYÖRGYI (1995: I, 40). In: *Gyermekvilág a régi magyar falun. Szolnok*. [The world of children in Hungarian villages in the past. Szolnok] The author sums up the papers on Children's Culture presented at the 25th Congress of German Ethnography held in Bremen in 1985. She cites this conclusion as the definition given by Prof. Konrad Köstlin, organizer of the congress. It is Köstlin's conviction that childhood folklore is being continuously recreated since it is, in essence, the manifestation of children's creativity, the learning of reality.

²⁷ Cf. the conclusions of general validity concerning children's folklore made by Imre KATONA. *Gyermekfolklor* [Children's folklore]. In: *A magyar folklor* [Hungarian folklore]. Budapest, (1979: 375–391).

ing and they are being replaced by games from school or of foreign origin. The traditional sport-type games, mainly of a pastoral origin, are losing ground to modern ball games. Indoor games of school origin, especially the guessing games or those designed to trick and amuse, have grown in popularity.²⁸

The *games involving the making of objects* form one group of the *games with implements* in Somogy County. The toys found throughout the country show few local characteristics. Toys are objects with which the child develops a personal relationship and at times they even serve as a substitute for playmates. The features characteristic of a region or community generally arise from the material available locally (stone, mud, sand, wood, metal, materials of vegetable and animal origin, etc.). In role games the child models its own environment, imitating adults. Some of the toys are made by the child itself, or by an elder sibling or the parents. The girls imitate the mistress of the house with their toy furniture and household implements, while the boys' toys (farm equipment, tools) are modelled after the master of the house.

The human figures, and in particular dolls made from a wide range of materials (rag, wood, corn cob, corn husk, poppyhead, etc.) have a long past and show great variety. In contrast with the factory-made dolls reflecting middle-class taste, the girls' popular toy was made very simply. The frame consisted of two sticks bound together at right angles, while the head and clothing were made of rag. The county museum's collection of children's games includes some very lovely (renovated) rag dolls dressed in folk costume.²⁹ The mechanical dolls, made of wood and paper were rather the games of boys.

Another popular boys' game is flying paper kites, known as *röptetők*. This toy, popular in spring and autumn, had a frame of reed and paper and was made in a great variety of forms. The abundance of toy weapons shows how popular they were. The guns (water gun, tow gun, potato gun, key gun, bayonet), sling-shots, catapults, wooden knives, daggers, wooden swords, bows and arrows were indispensable implements in the games played by smaller boys. The many forms of instruments (e.g. the thunder sticks, whistles, rattles, tops, violin, trumpet, horn) were made of wood, corn stalk, pumpkin leaf and reed.

The *play implements* were objects used in children's games for aiming, throwing, hitting and rolling (e.g. the stick, tip-cat, bowling pin, ball, marble, sphere, block; the objects used in parlour games, such as scarf, ring, coin, could also be listed here).

Another group of games with implements were the *games of skill with implements* (ducks and drakes, blowing soap bubbles, bowling a hoop, skipping, spinning a top, *kapókövezés*, button game, tossing pocket knives, egg beating,³⁰ various ball games), and the *sport-type folk games*. Right up to the early years of the 20th century the latter served as a substitute for sport and sport games, until uniform rules were

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ For greater detail, see SZAPU (1996: 264–270).

³⁰ The custom of Easter *kókányolás* was a typically Somogy boys' game. The boys played the game with painted eggs after sprinkling the girls on Easter Monday. A number of variants are known. Some of the broken eggs were later eaten together by the sprinklers, while the rest were sold – cheaply – to the young men. For more details, see SZAPU (1996: 42–43).

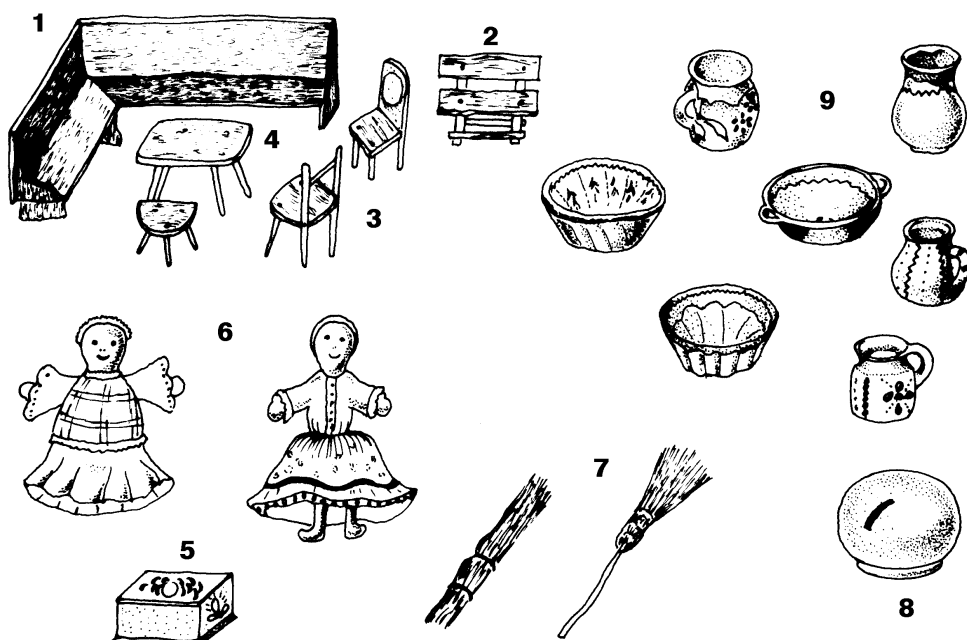


Fig. 1. Children's toys from the ethnographic collection

1. Corner bench 2. Bench with back 3. Chair 4. Table 5. Small chest 6. Dolls 7. Brooms 8. Money box
9. Dishes

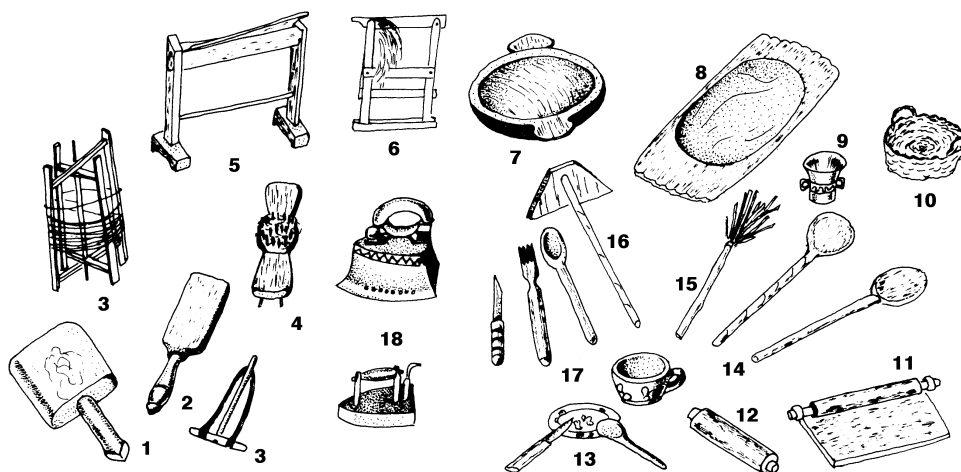


Fig. 2 Children's toys from the ethnographic collection

1. Laundry paddle 2. Mangle 3. Reel (for winding thread) 4. Flax-comb 5. Hemp breaker 6. Hemp breaker
7. Basin 8. Tub 9. Mortar 10. Small woven basket 11. Pastry board 12. Rolling pin 13. Cutlery with plate
and glass 14. Baker's shovels 15. Oven mop 16. Oven peel 17. Wooden cutlery 18. Irons

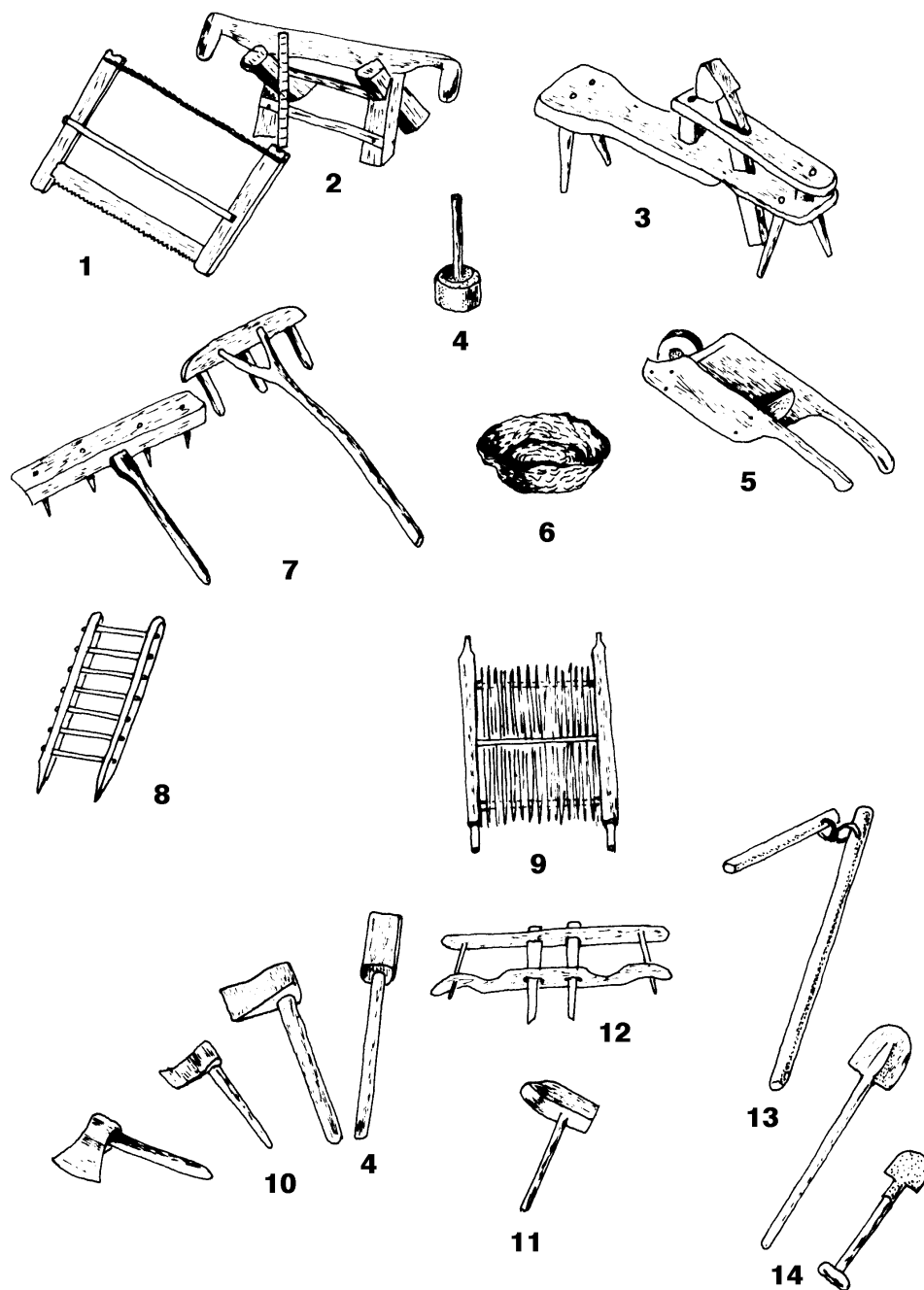


Fig. 3. Children's toys from the ethnographic collection

1. Saw 2. Saw-horse 3. Workbench 4. Mallet 5. Wheelbarrow 6. Small woven basket 7. Drill rake
8. Ladder 9. Hay rack 10. Hatchet, axe 11. Hammer 12. Double yoke 13. Thresher 14. Spades

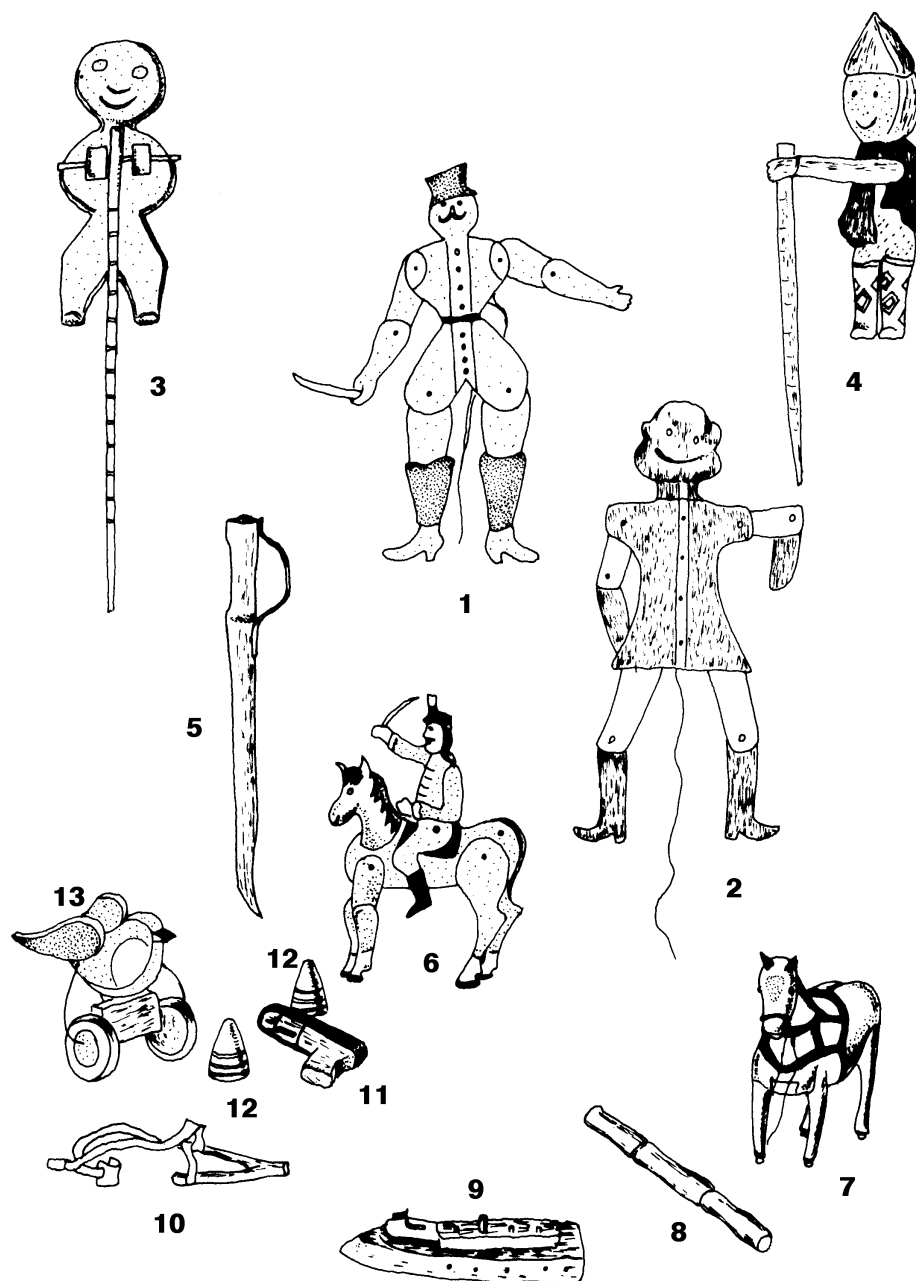


Fig. 4. Children's toys from the ethnographic collection

1-2. Mechanically movable dolls made of paper 3-4. Human figures made of wood 5. Wooden sword
6. Wooden hussar 7. Wooden horse 8. Tow gun 9. Wooden boat 11. Sling-shot 11. Wooden pistol
12. Wooden top 13. Bird on wheels

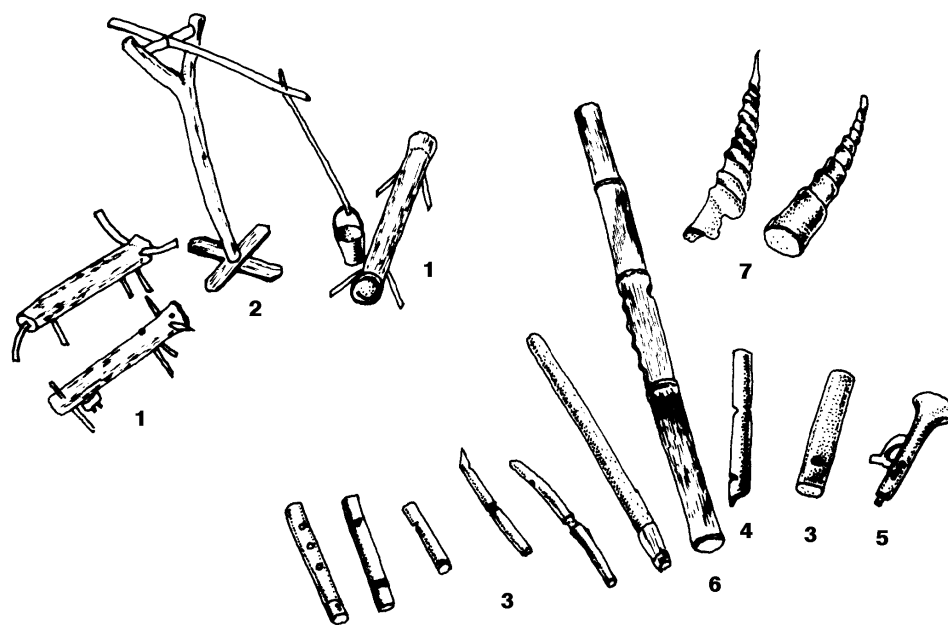


Fig. 5. Children's toys from the ethnographic collection

1. Corn-cob oxen 2. Sweep-pole well 3. Wooden whistles 4. Wooden flute 5. Wooden trumpet 6. Flute made from a corn stalk 7. Bark whistle

set with the introduction of sports. These highly varied games which can be played anywhere (outdoors, on a playground, in a courtyard, in school) involve energetic movement, skill, speed, courage, individual ingenuity and masculine rivalry. The games, some of which have a historical background (e.g. the various forms of rounders) and others a peasant (pastoral) past, were very popular throughout the country, naturally including Somogy County. The difficulty in recording them was due to the fact that they were known by different names in each region and often in each village, and had numerous variants. The sport-type folk games were mainly popular with boys, in contrast with the girls' games of singing and dancing.

The various *movement games of strength and skill* were played by both younger and elder boys and girls. These games required strength, skill, beauty of movement and speed.³¹ Games classified here include, in particular, popular boys' pastimes such as leap-frogging and its variations, *pecsenyeforgatás* (turning the spit) and *sótörés* (crushing salt). The internationally known and widespread game of hopscotch was popular in Somogy too, while younger girls played the "bread" game. Elder boys played "wheelbarrows" with each other or with adults; whip-cracking was a game played by boys aged 8–10 years. Other popular games were "statues" and "Adj,

³¹ Cf. LÁZÁR (1990: 577).

király, katonát” (King, give soldiers!); hopping in pairs which is a game always played by girls; *“Borsót főztem”* (I cooked peas) and *“Ég a gyertya”* (The candle burns) are games with song which can be classified among the games of walking and jumping; as well as whirling in pairs which belongs among the whirling games. The great amount of squatting and whirling round games collected testifies to their popularity. Like the former games, the turning-out round games are also accompanied by singing (e.g. games with song such as *“Lánc, lánc, eszterlánc”*, *“Ispiláng, ispiláng, ispilángi rózsza”* or *“Kis kacsza fürdik”*). Variants of the “odd man out” games were once popular mainly among adults, at weddings, but were also popular outdoors (e.g. “Where are the scissors”, kerchief game, etc.).

Marked regional differences can be found among the games of *tag* known in all parts of the world. Fine examples of variants with melody or simply with text can be found in our county, too.

The various kinds of procession belong to the group of games with song, on the threshold of the world of adults. Countless variants of processions, and hide and procession were played in Somogy. Traces of magic ceremonies can be found in the girls' game greeting spring. Games of this type are also played later at weddings, but were also known among schoolchildren (e.g. the *rétes*, or winding procession). Some variants figure in the description given by Áron KISS in 1891³² together with the melody, later examples are given in the *Magyar Népzene Tára I*³³ and are naturally also given by GÖNCZI.³⁴ One variant can also be heard on the record included with EGYÜD's book: the title is *“Arra alá bekeríték egy kis várat”*.³⁵

Both GÖNCZI and EGYÜD consistently collected *sport-type folk games* in Somogy. Most of the games recorded are group or team games. It would appear from a comparison of the collecting dates³⁶ that some of the games were simplified while others became more colourful and in some cases were contaminated. The shepherds' games played with a stick include *bigézés* (tip-cat) (EGYÜD recorded nine variations, illustrated with drawings), *csülkőzés* (=knuckle-boning) (which was still very popular in the villages of Somogy in the 1940s and 1950s), *paprikázás* (=red peppering), *kanászozás* (=swineherding) (together with knuckling-boning and the various forms of rounders this was among the most popular games for boys), *görcölés* (played in teams of 8, 10 or 12 members). The latter game was not so popular in Somogy and was played mainly by girls.³⁷

The rounders games are among the oldest types of game, popular both internationally and in Hungary. American baseball and English cricket are variants of this game and it is also known in Asia. This game, which preserves the memory of the old castle wars, was so popular in Somogy that researchers were able to record numer-

³² KISS (1891/1984: 65).

³³ KERÉNYI (ed.) (1951: 621).

³⁴ GÖNCZI (1949: 13–14; 28–29).

³⁵ EGYÜD (1975: 381, 468). Record track 4.

³⁶ Gönczi collected around the years 1920–1930 and Együd in the seventies.

³⁷ Gönczi notes that in Kéthely, for example, it was played by elder girls and boys together. Cf. GÖNCZI (1949), and EGYÜD (1981/a).

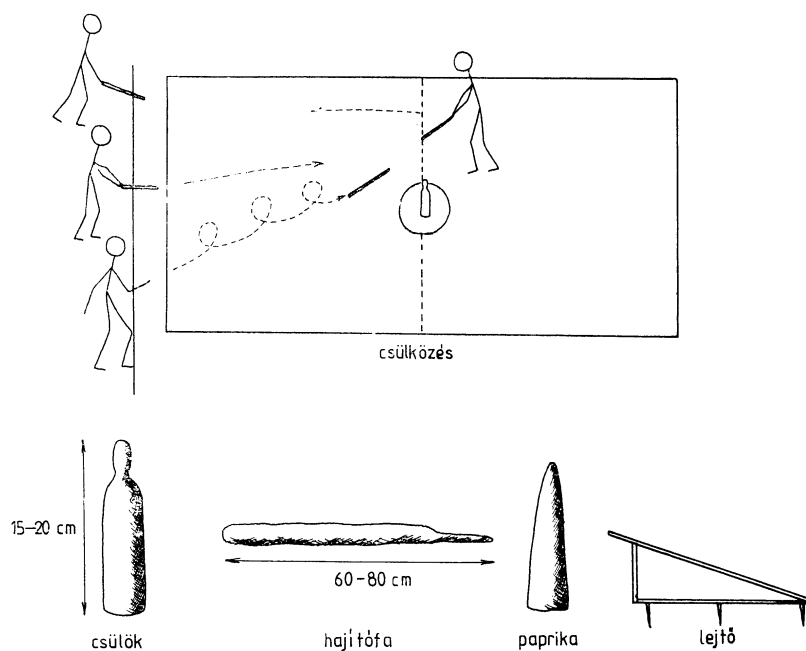


Fig. 6. Csülkőzés (knuckle-boning) and its implements (based on EGYÜD 1981a: 110)

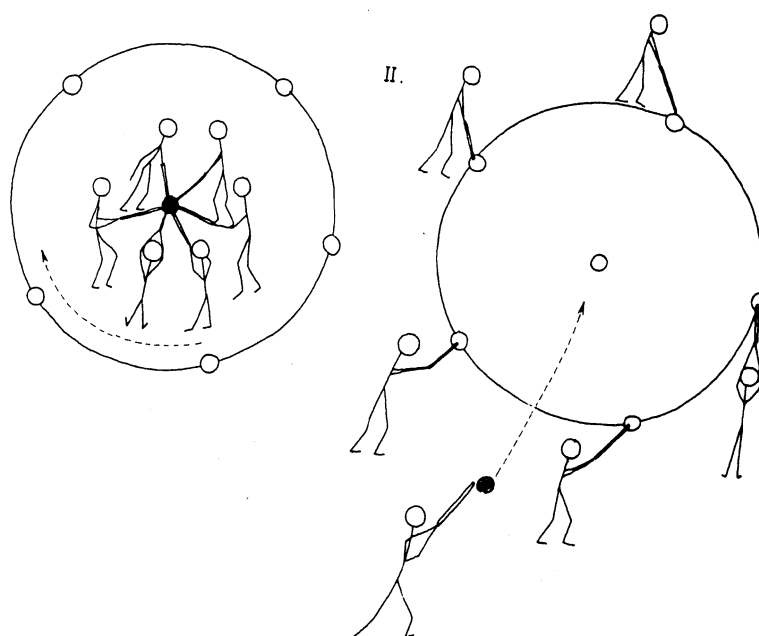


Fig. 7. Swineherd game (based on EGYÜD 1981a: 109)

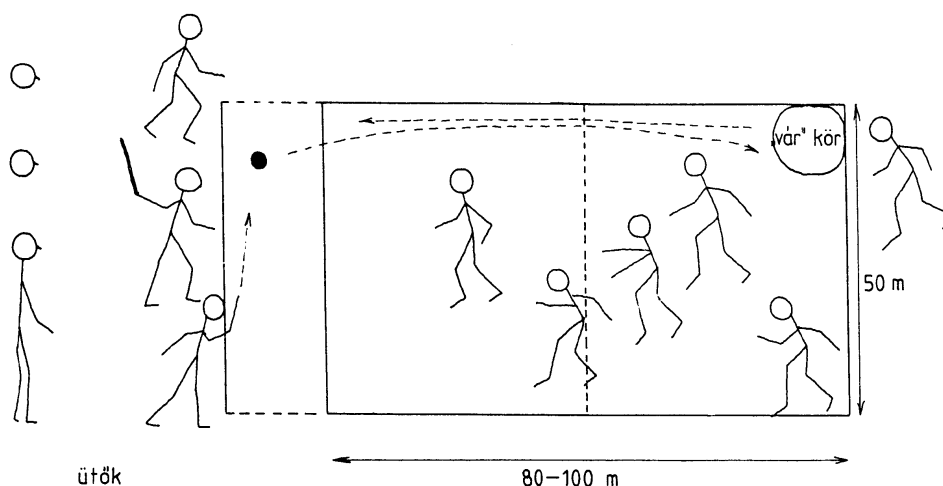


Fig. 8. Rounders (based on EGYÜD 1981a: 115)

ous variants. Good batting ability, skill at catching, aiming and throwing, as well as speed in running are the main elements of the game. Like the other ball games, it enjoyed great popularity in our county.³⁸

One group of games of movement comprises the *games for infants*, or nursery rhymes. These are games for small children accompanied by melodic or rhythmic rhymes (feeding, finger, palm, handshake, clapping, hand pinching, tickling, swinging, exercising, dancing games and games to teach dressing, standing and walking). People first begin to play with the child from around the age of nine months,³⁹ when the infant is already able to pay attention to phenomena. At first the games played together are based on touching foreheads and blinking, tickling and making the child laugh, followed by games with various parts of the body (palm, hand, foot) and swinging the child.

The many different *games of procession*, gate and bridge can be traced right back to the Middle Ages. The essence of these games of a dramatic character is the song text with response. Occasionally historical names also appear in the game texts (e.g. Queen Elisabeth, László Lengyel, etc.). Variants of the gate games so popular throughout the country were also widely played in Somogy. This type was represented by the largest number among the games collected in the county ("Are you at home bridge-master?", "Hide, hide, green branch", "Hide, hide, bushes").⁴⁰

³⁸ The precise description of the sport-type folk games, their rules and implements, and the large number of variants can be found in SZAPU (1996: 51–75). Sketches help to understand the games.

³⁹ See observations made by GÖNCZI in 1937.

⁴⁰ See SZAPU (1996: 140–148). The audio material in the Együd legacy preserves the melodies and game descriptions of around fifty games from the 1970s, but we also have material collected earlier by, among others, Áron Kiss, Vikár and Gönczi.



Fig. 9. Rocking a small girl on the foot. Zselickisfalud, 1930s

Among the *pair selection games*, the *round games* and *games seeking the girl's hand* were mainly played by elder girls of marriageable age, while the boys to be married also took part in the *pair selection parlour games*. Contaminated texts are often found in games of this type, in which the song texts of games of procession around a castle were mingled with those of games seeking the girl's hand. Some of the game songs preserve the memory of old matchmaking customs. The Somogy variants of "White lily", a pair selection round game can be traced from 1891,⁴¹ but the song text beginning "*Mosdjál, mosdjál*" first occurs in 1905.⁴² This means that the material collected in Somogy is continuous from the late 19th century to the present. Apart from the historical changes, the many variants of these game types, the melodies and texts recorded also indicate their geographical dissemination.⁴³ The large amount of material also provides the possibility for comparative studies.

The *intellectual games* encourage children to think. The long rhymes and chain verses require players to have a good memory, concentration and the ability to respond rapidly. The large amount of material collected in Somogy indicates their degree of popularity. The *trick games*,⁴⁴ popular in the spinning rooms in the first half

⁴¹ On the basis of KISS (1891/1984: communication 516).

⁴² For the text of the song collected in Csurgó, see VIKÁR (1905, 265).

⁴³ For details, see SZAPU (1996: 150–182).

⁴⁴ This is probably due to the inconsistency of collecting for this game type. It is probable that the researchers did not regard the trick games as sufficiently traditional and so did not record them.

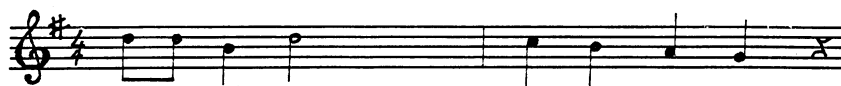
Csurgó, 1961



1. Itt - hon vagy - e, hi - das mes - ter?
 2. Itt - hon va - gyok, csak most jöt - tem.
 3. E - ressz á - tul, te hi - da - don!
 4. Nem e - reszt - lek, mert le - sza - kad!
 5. Ha le - sza - kad, meg - csi - ná - lom.
 6. Mi - vel tud - nád meg - csi - nál - ni ?
 7. Gyű - rű - gyöngy-gyel, gyöngy- a - rany- nyal.



8. Hol ven-néd a gyű-rű-gyön- gyöt, gyöngy-a - ra- nyat?



9. Is-ten ad - ná jobb ke - zem - be.



Bújj,bújj, zöld ág, zöld le - ve- lecs - ke,



Nyit-va van az a- rany-ka- pu, csak búj-ja- tok raj - ta.



Nyisd ki, ró - zám, ka - pu- dat, ka- pu- dat,



Hadd ke- rül - jem vá- ra- dat, vá- ra- dat,



Szi- ta, szi- ta pén- tők, Bab - szer- da.
 Sze- re- lem csü- tör- tők,

Fig. 10. Are you at home bridge-master? Teréz Borbély 1913, Somogyszob. Tape no: M180/B

of the 20th century, are fewer in number. The *guessing games* focus on guessing a person, animal, flower or occupation. The *taboo games* forbid certain actions, movements or behaviour forms (e.g. laughing or speaking) for participants in the game. One group of the *finding games* consists of games in which an object is hidden and has to be found, and another group is the games of hide-and-seek. The latter type are popular throughout the world, including in Hungary and in Somogy County.

Many *rhymes* were found in our county. GÖNCZI published some from his 1922 collection⁴⁵ which he had noted down on his field trips. He recorded a wide range of rhymes, from rhymes reflecting the natural and social environment to cradle songs. The material published reflects mainly the rhymes known by the Hungarian population, but naturally may be also collected among the ethnic minorities, especially the Germans and Croatians. The roughly fifty rhymes published in 1996⁴⁶ belong to 14 types and their variants, in part related to the natural environment and natural phenomena (e.g. rhymes calling on the sun to shine, asking for rain, plant and animal rhymes). Some of them preserve archaic elements (elements of magic songs, charms, spells), such as the rhymes of healing or dispelling freckles.

Originally the rhymes – like the games – had a melody and most of them are still on the borderline between song and speech. For the most part they are of small amplitude, consisting of the repetition of short motifs. This is also true for the children's songs which have preserved a pre-pentatonic scale. In contrast to the games, these rhymes are linked to a particular occasion and accompanied by set movements (e.g. shooting with a rhyme to frighten away crows, rubbing the face accompanied with rhymes to dispel freckles).

The *counting out* rhymes – which GÖNCZI publishes⁴⁷ in a separate chapter – also show international parallels. The counting out rhymes, which range in length from a few words to chain verses, often contain meaningless words (e.g. distorted, Hungarianized expressions from the neighbouring peoples), and are strongly rhythmical. The rhythm is quite clear even where the text is not. This rhythm must be indicated when they are recorded.⁴⁸

The function of the counting out rhymes is to select the main character for a game of the starting team for team games within a group of children who are accustomed to play together. The selection is made by lining up the children in a row or circle; one of them says the counting out rhyme and at every fourth beat points to a player (always poking a different child with the finger or tapping one of the child's hands which are held out with clenched fists). The child on whom the last syllable falls (or who has had both fists tapped) is eliminated. Finally, the counter says the counting out rhyme between herself and the last player and the one on whom the last syllable falls is the winner.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ GÖNCZI (1937: 126–156).

⁴⁶ See SZAPU (1996: 210–232).

⁴⁷ GÖNCZI (1949: 5–12).

⁴⁸ See KODÁLY, Zoltán (1951. XVII). In: KERÉNYI, György (ed.) 1951. Egyűd consistently marks the rhythm of counting out rhymes in his publication. See EGYÜD (1981b).

⁴⁹ Gönczi also recorded the counting out procedure. See GÖNCZI (1949, 5).

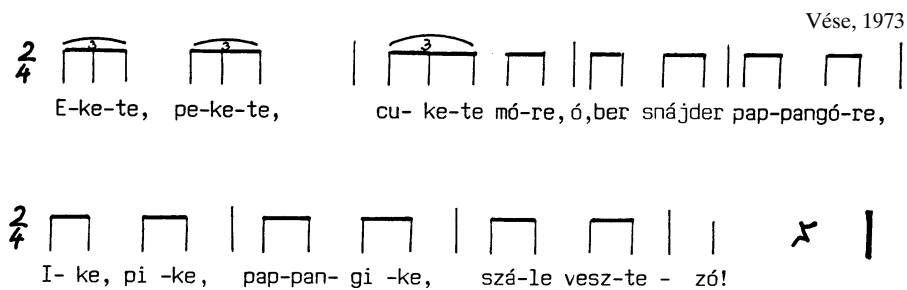


Fig. 11. Ekete, pekete. Mrs. Péter Lébár 1903, Vése. Tape no: M149/A



Fig. 12. Enten dénusz. Mrs. Lajos Amsztmann 1911, Bize (Based on EGYÜD 1981/b: 17)



Fig. 13. Infant in a cradle. Törökkoppány, 1920



Fig. 14. Rocking a baby on the floor. Potony, 1927

Besides the prose texts, *cradle songs* or lullabies form an important part of the poetry of childhood. Like the rhymes, cradle songs are said or sung to infants by adults or elder siblings. Their aim is to put the small child to sleep. The observations made by GÖNCZI in 1937 in this connection are very instructive.⁵⁰ “The child is put to sleep by breastfeeding as long as it is in swaddling clothes and later, when it is in a swaddling tub or cradle, also by rocking. The third pleasing means used to put children to sleep, as an accompaniment to rocking, is the cradle rhyme or song, popular song or folk-style humming.” As GÖNCZI recorded in his collections, the rocking words accompany the rocking rhythm of the cradle. In place of the now forgotten cradle songs, older or more recent folk songs and children’s game rhymes are sung. GÖNCZI made the interesting observation that the German-speaking population knew far more cradle rhymes and verses than the Hungarians or Croats. He attributes the high degree of similarity in the German cradle rhymes to the fact that the Germans were settled in their present villages (he mentions, among others, Somogydöröcske and Szentbalázs) from the same region.

According to Árpád EGYÜD’s observations,⁵¹ some of the cradle songs, which are generally short, consisting of a single strophe and two or three notes, preserve

⁵⁰ GÖNCZI (1937, 107–111).

⁵¹ EGYÜD (1975, 404).



Fig. 15. Infant in the field. Somogyacsa, 1927

Táska, 1970s

E - ej, e - ej, a-lud-jál pi-ci-kém, a - lud- jál!

Nin-csen ne-ki ma - má - ja, el -ment a vá - sár - ra,
Nin-csen ne-ki pa - pá - ja,

Hoz ne- ki- je ba - bát, csu-to- rá- ba már - cot.

A - lud-jál, a - lud-jál, szé- pe- ket ál - mod- jál!

Fig. 16. Ej, ej, aludjál. Mrs. Márton Étvágyoló 1920, Táska. Tape no: M199/B

Hosszúvíz, 1970s

Hej, csi-ba, csi-csi- ba, nincs itt-hun a ma-má- ja,

El - ment a vá-sár- ba, hoz ne-ki bá- bot,

Csu-to- rá- ba már - cot, pi- ci pi- ros e - ge- ret,

Ki- vel húz- za a sze- ke - ret!

Fig. 17. Hej, csiba, csicsiba. Margit Wimmer 1904, Hosszúvíz. Tape no: 37



Fig. 18. Clap for Daddy. Cserénfa, 1930s

very old elements, while others show strong literary and school influences. In Somogy these short cradle songs are sung only by women.

In conclusion, it can be said that the child's personality found the greatest scope in making toys. At first the child received the toy ready-made from adults, or found it in nature and used it without making any real changes. The varied forms of sand and mud games show the children's manual skill, inexhaustible and rich imagination. By the time children reached the age of five or six years they made more complicated toys: the boys made musical instruments, carts and tools, while the girls made dolls, dolls' clothes and kitchen implements.

Research also shows that certain games were linked to age and/or gender. Squatting round games can be taught to children of kindergarten age. Round games with song are mainly played by girls, while boys prefer the games of movement and sport-like games. Elder girls (12–14 years) played the games of seeking a girl's hand. Ball games are popular with both boys and girls. Ball games in which the ball is thrown against a wall, bounced on a wall, aimed at hitting an object, etc., which develop skill in handling the ball are played almost exclusively by young girls. Lower primary school children play *csigabigázás* (a kind of tag games, in which the 'he' is called the snail) and the bread game. Guessing games can be played by children of all ages. Throwing and aiming ball games can be played by all ages and both genders. Infants play their games (swinging, hand pinching, etc.) with the help of adults or elder children. Small children can use various materials to make objects. Games such as tag and hide-and-seek are group games. Games of passing under an arch and procession can be played by all age groups from kindergarten to lower primary school, and the same applies to round games. Adults use short rhymes, ditties and songs to put infants to sleep, teach them to sit, stand and walk. Small children are very fond of tongue twisters and chain verses which serve as speech exercises. Pair selection parlour games can be played at weddings or other social gatherings, especially where young boys and girls of marriageable age meet. Many more examples could be given.

Summing up, it can be said that the stock of children's games in Somogy County located in South-west Hungary, is extremely rich and varied. Thanks to the work of experts who collected in the county, the large number of games recorded and their distribution in time and space can be traced. The variants of song texts and annotated melodies also show how the changes occurred. Somogy County is very fortunate as regards the study that has been made of this theme; such outstanding researchers as Áron KISS, Béla VIKÁR, György KERÉNYI, László LAJTHA, Béla BARTÓK, Ferenc GÖNCZI and Árpád EGYÜD have devoted great attention to games. They all regarded it as important to record the phenomena. Material published a hundred years ago, together with melody, action and text, gives an authentic picture. The majority of these games can still be found in our county, even if there are not so many variants. However, most of the children's games preserved in memory can no longer be collected in the spontaneously formed children's communities since the now predominant ball games have consigned to oblivion the great wealth and varied local types and variants of games. The occasions on which the games were played no

longer exist, just as the large meadows have disappeared and foreign games learnt/taught in kindergartens and schools are now almost the only kind. The traditions are preserved most persistently in rhymes and cradle songs, and variants still live in common knowledge. Oral tradition has not disappeared in this field either, it has only declined in intensity, abundance and variations, but examples are produced on occasion from the fragments of memory. The influence of television, radio and literature can be felt here too, and fading memory is no match for the beautifully produced children's books, attractive to both parents and children.

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