

Tradition from the Perspective of Children's Games

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Introduction

In the conclusions adopted by the participants in the 1988 European Seminar on Traditional Games, children's games were included. Since I have been studying children's traditional games for the past 40 years both in my country of birth, New Zealand, and in my adopted country, the U.S.A. (*Games of New Zealand Children, Folkgames of Children, History of Children's Play*), I thought it might be useful to convey to you the results of those studies which throw light upon the categories of games you are using in your collections and upon the concept of the traditional game itself (cfr. topology for the classification in appendix, Renson, Manson & De Vroede, 1991). Unless otherwise stated, therefore, all mention of historical items in this paper are from colonial New Zealand in the past and present centuries. This whole paper might be considered something of a colonial commentary on the history of traditional games. I will frame my remarks in terms of your eight categories: ball games, bowl and pin games, throwing games, shooting games, fighting games, animal games, locomotion games, and acrobatics.

The first thing to note is that the first two categories refer to *agencies* of play: the ball, the bowl and the pin; the rest of the categories refer to *actions*: throwing, shooting, fighting, locomotion, and acrobatics-excepting animals which refers, one might say, to one type of play *actor*. Not knowing the thought that went into this conceptual organization of traditional materials I hesitate to raise issues that you may well have already considered and wisely put to one side. But in case it might be helpful a widely known approach to this kind of problem, that of Kenneth Burke in his *Grammar of Motives* (1945), suggests that when approaching such a problem one should always consider not only types of *agencies* and types of *action* but also types of *actors* and their types of *interaction*, as well as types of *spatio temporal organization*. I will keep these organizational considerations in mind as I proceed.

1. Ball Games

I am immediately struck by the paradox that using the ball as the major category of agency is essentially a twentieth-century attitude. As far as children's traditional games are concerned, balls were very scarce prior to this century (pig's bladders being more

easily available). The major agencies of play then were quite diverse, including prominently knives (stagknife, whittling and play constructions) and nuts (conkers), grass (soldiers), tops, whips, strings (cat's cradle), tip cats, collections, stilts, kites, hobbyhorses, catapults, wooden whistles, flowers (chains), marbles, etc. The most complex games of the nineteenth century in colonial New Zealand were not ball games but were the team games of running and capture such as the paper chase, prisoner's base, hares and hounds, bar the door, chibby, chevvie chase, etc. There is evidence also that even in the middle ages the most complex games were often similar running games (Opie & Opie, *Children's Games* 146). That is to say, the twentieth century professional sports which make the use of balls so important are in no way representative of the major sports of earlier times.

In case it is helpful I tentatively question, therefore, whether ball games should be the only name for this category of agency, even though in our century balls are indeed associated with many of the most highly professionalized sports (football, cricket, baseball, hockey, basketball). Might it not be more relevant to have a category in which to describe the amazing diversity of agencies in traditional games. Might it not be simply a category of game agency?

Although not specifically relevant to traditional games, it is useful to recognize that although the ball has become the central agency for professional sports in modern society, the diversity of agencies for children in play now operates largely under the quite different guise of commercial toys. In addition, whereas the majority of traditional agencies (marbles, knives, hoops, stilts etc.) were largely a part of collective activities the majority of modern toy agencies are a part of solitary play and as such are a part of the great modern leisure shift away from social towards solitary activities. This is a shift of considerable duration as the history of toys over the past several centuries indicates, mass toys rising in the midst of the twentieth century (1850 plus) reflecting the dissemination of this kind of solitariness to all social classes. And if one takes the even more radical shift of toys these past two decades into electronics (computers and video games), it becomes clear that the increasing hegemony of this kind of play in childhood, at least, fortells a completely different future for games than does the traditional past. Whereas traditional games and modern professional games so clearly involve player to player interaction about some critical actions as their essential components, the new event in history is clearly this increasing dominance of the solitary player interacting with an electronic object. This shift to the electronic object (which parallels the kind of shift from collective manual work to solitary non manual desk work which is the mark of modern bureaucratic civilization) emerges as a totally disjunctive event in the history of mass human play. It also casts a more important light on the history and key role of agency in all prior play adding to my suggestion that your traditional category of agency not be confined to balls but be an exploration of the gradual emergence of this phenomenon

of agency. We need a better sense of the kinds of agency that have developed throughout history and what it was they meant in historical context.

2. Bowl and Pin Games

This is a difficult category to comment on from a childhood viewpoint. Although bowling is a traditional adult game in many forms throughout Europe as well as a major modern form of entertainment in bowling alleys and associated professional tournaments, one must look hard to find child counterparts of high frequency today. In the last century about the only bowling game in which children engaged regularly was marble board, in which marbles were bowled through a board with holes in it and numbers above the holes indicated how much the player should be rewarded.

Although this is not exactly a game of chance, given the incompetence of the players, it is not exactly a game of skill either. It is a game of luck in which being rewarded for lucky shots makes it very much like a game of chance. There were other games of the day which were strictly games of physical skill and chance in which a die (as in dice) was put on top of a stick, and when the stick was knocked over by the rolling (or pitched) marble, the player received in return a number of marbles, the same as the number on the upturned side of the fallen die. A strict game of chance is defined as one in which the outcome must be determined only by a die or roulette wheel, etc.

No physical skill need be involved. But children's games are seldom so pure. Another example is pitch and toss with horse-shoes, where ringing a peg placed upright in the ground at distance led again to a reward of marbles. This was more like marble board insofar as only the reward made the game like a game of chance. Pitch and toss in which money was thrown against a wall and the winner who landed the closest to the wall took all the money was similar. In these games it is not easy to tell whether we are talking of physical skill, luck (meaning an accident), chance (use of dice etc.), or gambling (which is concerned with getting a reward for the right choice or right action). And as far as the physical skill is concerned, it is not easy to know whether the games involve a bowling action or a pitching action.

In general these mixed games did not survive the last century in school playgrounds largely because of their association in the pedagogic mind with gambling, though pitch and toss with money continues to survive amongst adolescents. What was important about them in the mind of authorities was the element of chance not the elements of bowling or pitching, though they perhaps found a certain idleness in these actions contrasted with the vigorous throwing, running, and hopping of other skill games.

And at this point I would like to enter an undoubtedly unpopular brief on behalf of studying these combination games of luck or chance or physical skill or gambling. Games of pure chance were a very early invention in human history, preceding the invention of games of strategy

but apparently subsequent to the development of games of skill. Thus you did not in the past century find them amongst Australian aborigines, but you did find them throughout the Americas and Africa. In the most extensive analyses of games cross culturally in contemporary research, of the most elementary as well as more advanced tribal societies, there are 67 societies with games of physical skill alone, 61 with games of physical skill and games of chance in the same society, 22 with physical skill games and strategy games alone, and 30 with physical skill, chance and strategy (Roberts & Sutton-Smith). The items of physical skill and chance combined in the same game-as in marble board or pitch and toss with a die described above--have not been studied in cross cultural research. Games of chance alone usually figured such artifacts as the roulette wheel or the dice by themselves. But games of physical skill with chance built into the game-as in the illustrations I have given before-were probably widespread, and do I think deserve your attention as traditional games of special uniqueness.

The other phenomenon in which physical skill outcomes are treated as a luck determinant today is in the widespread gambling on most sports. On one estimate currently in the U.S.A. the annual expenditure for all of these kinds of chance (pure chance games alone, physical skill and chance in the same game, and gambling on physical skill) come to 250 million, about the same as the military budget, or about 6% of the gross national product. I do not think that the true history of human game play is helped by ignoring this most essential form, even if as a group mainly concerned with physical skills your organization focuses only on those combination forms of physical skill and chance that I have mentioned. There is a very real case to be made for the view that games of chance have been and still are the most important games in city societies ancient and modern where very few of the people have the opportunity to earn their living or gain prowess by personal body skill or by the kind of higher level strategies required of and supported in leaderly elites. The game of chance models the life of the non privileged and non warrior everyman more adequately than does any other game. This is especially true when we recognize that throughout most history games have been obligatory social forms in which appropriate gender and age ranks had to participate and in which other cultural purposes such as sacred and ritual decisions were served, so that the element of chance in those games was intrinsically a spiritual element indicating the wish of the gods. Games of chance were not in any way an element of optional self destruction as compulsive gambling has often come to be phrased in modern times. There is nothing more traditional about games than relying on elements of luck or chance to indicate the way that the gods or spiritual sources wish events to eventuate especially in such cultures as believed the gods to be benevolent. Where the gods were thought to be malevolent, it is true, such forms of divination tended not to be used.

As a final note I should add that there were in nineteenth century New

Zealand also a number of pure skill pitching games having nothing to do with luck or reward-egg cap, rotten egg, toddle 'em buck, skittles and quoits-which have not survived in regular games of childhood. Bowling and pitching actions seem to have little rationale in the children's world today. Historically, however, the connection of these actions and the varieties of chance is a part of very substantial game traditions and of ways of life in which it would be quite false to imagine that physical skill could be separated out from the issues of good or bad fortune. It is a disservice to history to make such a complete separation no matter how much it emphasizes contemporary cultural values.

3. Throwing Games

There are a host of throwing games of the last century no longer present. These include peg tops, whip tops, duckstones, ducks and drakes, dead man's dive, throwing hats, stagknife, chibby, cunning joe, tip cat, knucklebones, kites, etc. in which all kinds of objects were thrown or hit in all kinds of ways (Sutton-Smith, *Games of New Zealand Children* 121-123). Some of these (tip cat, etc.) might better be called hitting than throwing games, and some perhaps called tossing games (knucklebones and kites) than throwing games. Although nothing of this diversity survives today, throwing as in rugby, cricket, softball and baseball, and lacrosse has become a regular part of organized games for modern children. The nineteenth century team game of throwing caps and keeping them away from the other team is closely paralleled to today's game of team frisbee. The key skill here has undoubtedly a modern rationale in military hand grenades and the javelin throwing, tossing the caber and putting the shot. Perhaps the important story to be told here is about the gradual elimination of most of these more dangerous games from the repertoire of children's play. One might note that Philippe Ariès famous work *Centuries of Childhood* (1962) is for two thirds of its content about the brutal way in which schools were used to bring children under civic governance. This history of childhood is also in part the history of the domestication of children's play with organized games playing a major role in that mollification of their energies (Mangan), although the more strict exercise of this domestication only began with the supervision of playground play and the implied danger of legal liabilities from 1900 onwards. The above games in which children threw stones at other stones (duckstones) while one child guarded those stones (a game I saw being still played in Apple Village near Beograd, Yugoslavia, in 1987 though a ball was thrown), games in which children hit cats (or sharp pieces of wood) into crowds of children, or threw knives into the soft ground threatening the feet of other children, or whipped tips which flew about the playground and through windows when so hit, were quickly banned, as were many games of shooting and fighting in our next two categories.

In part here also we are talking of the vast confinement in play space which arrives with the urbanization of society and the dominance of the city over the country way of life. The shift from traditional to modern games owes much to both the modern organization and formalization of space and time in play and the decay of the role of natural seasons. All of which teaches us the lesson that any study of traditional games requires some knowledge of the cultural contexts to which they were relevant. The same game in different parts of Europe might feasibly have served quite different purposes, just as the same purpose could be served by quite different games. The study of traditional games regardless of cultural context is unfortunately not a very high level of scholarship. I do believe that that is the verdict which one must bring against a great deal of the folkloric study of games over the past 100 years (and I have contributed to this so am as indictable as the rest) which has often yielded massive descriptions of the games but told us little of how they were used, by whom, when, where, and to what end. Such antiquarianism presumes a psychic unity of causation which has very little to recommend it in modern social science.

4. Shooting

In modern educational discourse it is almost a sacrilege to talk of shooting games. The notion that the school playground of childhood in general should be a place for bows and arrows, blowpipes, pea shooters, slings, catapults, clay shooters, popguns or snowball fights, as it was in the last century, is simply unacceptable. Even plastic toy guns appear to be universally disallowed in nursery and elementary schools even though they are sold in great numbers commercially. In recent surveys I have done (with students) of hundreds of schools in the U.S.A. this was the case, even though on the adult level the United States, with its gun lobbies, permits guns at the adult level in what many see as an entirely excessive way. It is estimated that over half the homes in the U.S.A. contain guns. In recent years there have also been serious efforts to ban war toys and claims have been made that play with such toys is associated with later adult violence, though at present there seems no substantial evidence for this proposition (Sutton-Smith "War Toys and Childhood Aggression"). Shooting play then is an anomalous form in high modern societies where what might be called civilized or feminist values increasingly dominate the world of childhood. On an adult level, however, there seems to be no lack of such kinds of recreation and in fact a constant evolution of novel forms of adult shooting play increasingly reflect new laser, computer, and video possibilities. Given that the present debate over weapons only continues the much longer one in which peasants were often required to play games with military useful weapons (bows and arrows and not footballs), it would seem reasonable to suggest that any study of traditional shooting requires a study also of the history of warfare and of hunting—just one more specific case of the

importance of studying social context

5. Fighting

Obviously from the above account children tend these days to be discouraged from fighting. Playground supervision has put an end to the regular playground fighting, initiations, and fighting arena which were characteristic of the last century (Sutton-Smith, *History of Children's Play* chap 6); it has even spelled the end to many very physical and rough games like punch king, sacks on the mill, cockfighting, bull in the ring, no man standing, lazy stick, or king of the castle. Even the classic pretence fighting or playfighting (cops and robbers), in which there is no realistic combat, is now under attack by those who see it as one of the major sources of male sexism.

Oddly enough, children's verbal fighting with each other through teasing and insults does not seem to have abated. Their folklore, their cruel jokes, parody, nonsense, gross rhymes, dead baby jokes etc. in which they fight imaginatively with siblings, peers, teachers, the other gender, or the other race, shows no surcease (Bronner). Imaginary fighting with others still fills the airwaves and the humors of the world.

The biggest childhood shift in play terms, however, is from older world physical fighting to modern world symbolic fighting using video games and computers or using strategy as in board games. In my recent study of New Zealand children contrasting their play in 1950 with their play in 1990, the biggest change was in the great increase in this latter kind of strategic and video fighting. Much of this fighting also takes place in solitariness with no other visible or physically real opponent

A concentration only on physical fighting in traditional games and a neglect of the history of games of strategy is fated to miss out on the gradual interpenetration of the two throughout history and the gradual replacement of the physical by the strategic. Having suggested the unpopular idea that this organization should look at the role of chance in physical games, I now add that it should look also at the role of strategy in these games. There are very few games of simply physical skill left; most sports now contain important components of strategy. A study of traditional games that does not look at the evolution of the strategic component has to be seriously faulted. Furthermore, any study of physical fighting requires I think considerable attention to the interactional context of this fighting, whether it be:

1. solitarily with objects,
2. dyadic (as in boxing and wrestling),
3. central person (Sutton-Smith "Two Cultures of Games") as when every man fights for himself against every other as in buzkashi of Afghanistan, a game in which men on horseback compete with each other to lay a dead calf at the feet of the king; or more simply as in a game of hopscotch,

4. or some form of team play in small or large groups, (a) the latter being relatively role undifferentiated as in most early tribal play or (b) highly specialized as in many modern professional sports.

In my studies, the critical interactional break: in history between traditional and modern games comes when equally matched team games high in role specialization are substituted for central person mob games in which every one competes for himself alone--God for all and everyone for himself ("Dieu pour tous et chacun pour soi")--or are substituted for team games involving two mobs against each other with little role differentiation.

6. Animals

The role of animals in traditional games is generally as predators, scape-goats, competitors, or as opponents. The role of animals in modern children's play is increasingly that of pets. In the latter capacity the animals' role has been increasing inversely with the decrease in family size and the loneliness of its members. If this category is to persist, it could perhaps become a part of a larger category of imaginary companions who have been played with throughout history, a category that today would certainly include ghosts, monsters, and Ninja Turtles and in earlier times might well have included witches, fairies and devils. More seriously though, I believe this category is your *actor* category and should include the names of all the players on the stages of game history which today means quarterbacks and coaches and referees and judges. I have elsewhere written of the gradual differentiation of these play actor roles throughout history (Sutton-Smith "Development of Folklore and Games in the Pacific"). One finds relatively little such actor differentiation in the play of Aborigines and Amerindians but a great increase in the role differentiation of Pacific Islander play with their tournaments and parades and judges.

7. Locomotion

The only category of traditional games which has persisted as a highly diverse and frequent group in children's unorganized locomotive play is that of *chasing*, though modern children do not develop these games into the more complex and formal team forms as did their predecessors. Some of the older team forms are referred to above, such as prisoner's base or hares and hounds. In earlier play these chasing games more often took place in a formal patterned way with the use of circles, bases, holding hands, dancing, and song. Today, only the most informal have survived. However, just as children once chased each other on sledges, in sacks, on stilts, with hobby horses, with hoops, with whip tops etc., modern children chase each other on bicycles, roller skates, skateboards, canoes, yachts, and snowmobiles. The contrast just made also demonstrates the increasing role of vehicles in children's locomotorplay.

A second and somewhat lower frequency class of locomotion is *racing and running* which has a more pronounced place in modem sport professionalization than in earlier times though the consequences for ordinary children and their relative prowess in relation to their forbears is uncertain. Obviously more children receive specialized training than in earlier times, but those not trained may well be less capable because of the sedentary nature of modem living.

Jumping games were prominent traditionally as in leapfrog, fly the garter, cap it, buck buck, saddle the nag, johnny on the pony, or monkey on the bridge, but none of these have survived. Propelling oneself over the backs of others seems not to be a modem proclivity.

Hopping games, particularly hopscotch, have survived although many older forms have not -including hopping base, bumpers, hop peg, and hop the hats. The boys' games have not survived; the girls' games have. In this as in a number of other cases, the girls have retained traditions which the boys with their greater opportunities for modem sports have given up. Similarly many traditional games are still preserved amongst the lower socio-economic groups and similarly reflect their lack of modem opportunities.

Skiping games or jump rope has survived, though in New Zealand its place has been largely taken by elastics in which players hop in and out of an elastic encircling the legs of two others, or one and a table, at successively higher levels. The chief difference from traditional games in this case is that a game once dominated by males has in this century been taken over by females.

Another small class of locomotor games played by girls in their own traditional formation is that in which one girl controls the movements of the others who try to approach and take her place as in creeping up, steps and stairs, mother may I, etc. This group of games developed in variety and frequency throughout the twentieth century and now seem to be fading from the scene as girls participate increasingly in hitherto male sports like soccer. Their presence throughout earlier history is uncertain.

Considering the variety of forms of play action that have here been compressed under the title of locomotion and their different gender and socioeconomic correlates one has to wonder what advantage such compression has over the clearer terms chasing, racing, jumping, hopping, skipping and creeping. A study of each kind and its context is in order surely.

8. Acrobatics

This category may also suffer from having to compress too many odd variations within this one kind of action. For example, there is the whole group of girls' games that involve *dancing and singing*, which might be excluded from consideration because they involve dance, but are in fact the most distinctive form of girls' traditional games over the past several

hundred years; so they are hard to eliminate. We know that in the middle ages these games were danced by young teen age couples as a part of their mating rituals, but that with the growth of church and civic suppression they became an almost singularly unsophisticated childhood girl concern, particularly after about 1800. There are some signs that boys are again showing an interest in the quite modem forms where the girls dance in an pantomime way singing their rock music derived songs to an admiring boys' audience (Opie & Opie *Singing Game*). The organization of the games as chain singing and circle games is, however, today at the simplest levels. In the past century these games were often played by older girls in teams or as couples. As well as these girls' games, there are others involving *handclapping* and *ball bouncing* which are likewise notable for their graceful and sometimes dance like movements. These too are usually accompanied by songs or chants. Like the singing game category they are really not acrobatics or gymnastic in the general sense of the term, but they do fit the definition provided that they should be "performances requiring skillful control of the body." It is also a part of the anomaly of the modem playground that girls also spend more time in their spontaneous play than boys do in working on *gymnastic playground apparatuses* (bars, swings, trampolines) and in doing *handstands*, *cartwheels*, or *imitative body postures* (statues) in ways that are clearly gymnastic. All of these become a part of their own competitive games, so even if the above activities of handclapping, ball bouncing, and singing games do not seem to be entirely gymnastic, they are played by the same gender that specializes in childhood gymnastics.

Conclusion

Adopting the game categories of this European Seminar (see appendix) and using my own information from childhood changes in games traditional and otherwise, I have sought to provide a commentary on the categories. My major problem has been with finding these particular actions, agencies, and actors sufficiently diverse in themselves to manage the phenomenon, and in having considerations of interactive forms and spatio temporal dimensions as well as the cultural context completely left out. Still, I realize how difficult it is. No given set of categories is ever sufficient in an of itself except in terms of the declared purposes of the conceptual system, which in this case is to make a break between the traditional and the modem and to focus on the physically based traditional activities. My recommendations would be:

1. to consider the characteristic *interactional character* of these games.

Traditional team games are more diffuse without much role specialization and often they are group games in which one central player takes on everyone else, often players vie with each other for that position. The shift to our kind of team sports with role differentiation is a major break in game

history (Sutton-Smith "Two Cultures of Games");

2. to consider the way in which the dominantly *rural character* of traditional play affected both its spatial deployment (often between villages) and temporal occasioning (as affected by natural seasons);

3. to consider the names of titles of the different *kinds of players* in each game (clowns, fools, cats, dogs, etc.) and the kinds of linkages between such game player roles and actions. That is a history of game actors;

4. to consider the types of *game actions* as presently provided but with provision for the other differentiations (hitting, skipping etc. suggested in the above commentary) with attention to their gender and social correlate; 5. to create a category devoted entirely to *game agencies* and consider what earlier artifacts have been replaced by the modern ball, the modern electronic game, the modern toy, and modern card and board games;

6. to give due consideration to the *elements of chance and strategy* in physical skill games as these linkages were even most characteristic of earlier historical periods than they are today. The metaphor of the game of life is modelled more by games of chance for the peasants of modern masses than it is by either physical or strategic games;

7. to take a lesson from the history of the relatively useless antiquarianism and survivalism in folklore and not be satisfied simply with game descriptive collections.

Appendix: Games as Traditions

The games that you will be recording were the customs of earlier people; they were not usually their traditions. The concept of tradition adds the additional notion of *self conscious recognition* by the people that the game they are performing enhances some other values that they believe they have in common. It introduces the notion of history to the notion of custom, or if you will the self-consciousness of history to the praxis of custom. In general, the concept of tradition as it applies to play, comes to us from the romantic era of western society and involves such names as Rousseau, Kant, Goethe, Schiller, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Pestalozzi and Fröbel etc. There is in all of these writers a sense that certain kinds of games and plays brought with them certain kinds of valuable spiritual or creative qualities from nature. When Schiller says we are only wholly human when we play, he is thinking not of the folkgame practices of children in the muddy streets of eighteenth century Mainz, Germany; he is thinking of the reputedly amateur athletes of ancient Greece. Or if it is Rousseau, he is not thinking of playful mental fantasies but of groups of parochial players in their villages who control each other through their physical sports. If it is Wordsworth he is thinking contrarily of adults made creative by their own imaginings of things infantile. And if it is Kant, he is thinking of the history of science and the role of the subjunctive mode of playful thought in invention, in aesthetics and in morality. And Fröbel, of course, is thinking

of the spiritual significance of toys in childhood. There are all of these and many other ideas gathered together at the beginnings of the nineteenth century to create that game self-consciousness which turns games into traditions rather than their being just mere practices.

Games as traditions along with folktales or fairy tales or dances as traditions were in the first place all written about to *enhance the national, cultural, or individual status* of those who had once played them and perhaps should continue to play them. When Alice B. Gomme made her massive collections of English, Scottish, and Irish children's games at the end of the nineteenth century, she was as much concerned to reintroduce them into praxis as she was to record their extinction, although the folkdancing societies of the day were generally more successful in this regard than were the folkgame scholars. But Gomme in 1891 brought a group of children to the *International Folk Lore Congress* to demonstrate their games. It is said that her singers and dancers were the hit of the congress. By that time as the Opies have said, the philanthropic classes had become convinced that poor children needed to be taught how to play these "traditional" games. They had supposedly lost or had never had these games as customs and were now to be given them as traditions (Bronner 22).

In 1985 I attended a meeting of the third Rainbow Week International in Toulouse, France, where children had been brought from many third world countries to demonstrate their games. The intention of the organizers was that these "traditional" games should be preserved and should act as a counterbalance to the spreading influence of televised sports and Olympics which were destroying these traditional physical activities (they were including games, dances, initiation rites, motor activities, massages etc.). Speakers spoke of the authenticity of the traditional games, their exemplary moral status as compared with the stereotypic character of international sports. In general, they proposed that schools in their countries should be given the task of their preservation.

The parallel between Gomme in 1891 and Toulouse in 1985 is obvious. We have been losing or rather replacing game customs constantly over the past few hundred years. What was a European plight, as urbanization and industrialization increased dramatically in the 1700's and which led to the Romantics attention to play, is now the plight of the whole world. Tradition is another name for loss and another name for the attempt to preserve us from that loss. This preservation is usually sought in terms of self conscious moral or aesthetic or physical values. But in fact these values are newly invented in the contemporary cultural situations and are used as a selective device for pruning from tradition those aspects of it that are currently thought to be undesirable. Neither Lady Gomme in 1891 nor the contemporary Rainbow Movement sought to cherish and to teach in schools multiple aspects of the savagery, cruelty, and brutality war preparation and

sexual preparation which were often endemic parts of traditional games (Gomme).

What they did wish to do was *teach in schools* those games which they personally valued, and of course in the Gomme's case as in the Toulouse case, these were the more co-operative and less bellicose games. But teaching games thus self consciously by novel social agencies, games which had in the past always been a part of the collective inheritance and its own inherent means of transmission, makes them into *performances* rather than customs. Most folkloric preservation has been of dances, stories and games taken out of their original contexts and turned into performances by the folk or abstracted from their original conditions or taken by professionals who now present these materials quite out of their original contexts and who create new contexts of dancing, storying, and playing for them. It is no surprise that the greatest shift in folklore theory in this century has been away from some form of "survivalism" where the games are seen as containing remnants of times past, to varieties of performance theory which examine the way in which the folk materials are presented aesthetically to their audiences (Bauman). The inherently aesthetic value claimed for tradition by the early Romanticists has now become the focus of how performances create their own aesthetics. In modern folklorists' hands tradition has largely become a contemporary and existential pursuit rather than a pursuit of ancient essences preserved into the present. All of which leads up to the position that tradition, perhaps formerly about loss, is now about the *assertion of contemporary value* and the use of selected earlier customs to heighten that value. Thus the members of this conference whose own major interest is in sports choose to look only at the physical games of the past, not the chance of strategic or dancing games. As I have shown, the concentration on ball games and on physical actions to the relative exclusion of patterns of interaction and spatiotemporal contexts and varieties of players reflects that value system. In addition, the effort to find what European countries have in common in such traditional physical games just as apparently seeks new values in such selected commonalities as well as putting in the center of such new found values the physical actions that are the hallmarks of their profession and own future. In this light, traditions are the reflexive selections and transformations of those aspects of past customs which create identity and value for those engaged in this preservation. Tradition is the reflection of how we wish to think about ourselves and to be accepted by others. Tradition is a rhetoric of our own identity.

Final Conclusion

These few remarks on the selective character of "tradition" as well as my prior remarks on the selectivity of the categories that have been chosen need not, I believe, make any difference to your actual choices which do probably reflect your own values quite fairly. My remarks suggest, however,

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that even if you are not responsive to some of the suggestions I have made, you are, I believe, required in scholarly terms to be more explicit about your own presuppositions, about how you have presupposed traditions. I hope in that respect my remarks have been helpful. They are meant to be clarifying rather than critical.

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