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## Games for Children as a Model of Folklore Communication

*Children's games, their forms and contents, have been shaped by cultural and social patterns, while the content itself presents symbolic communication between society and its members –participants in the games. Contents of the games, as with games in general, do not represent a medium only between the society and its members, but also among the members themselves. It is through their communication process that the transmission of the games is happening, mainly among the members of different generations, but also among the same generation group. During the transmission the contents do not remain unchanged, but the new elements are introduced which transform or reduce the content. These qualities of the games, like the qualities presented during their creation, transferring and manifestation, define children's games as a folklore form.*

*This paper examines children's group games in the discourse of folklore and folklore communication. Their folklore qualities are detected and analysed in the context of the communication process.*

**Key words:** children's games, folklore, children's folklore, folklore communication, children's groups

Games for children are a subject of study of various disciplines (pedagogy, psychology, etc.), where the primary aspect of study is their function in psycho-physical development of a child. However, when the games are placed in the discourse of the society and culture of their origin, and where they take place, it is possible to look at them from the ethnological/anthropological point of view.

By analysing the games in the ethnological/anthropological context, their form and content, it is visible that their creation is influenced by cultural and social patterns;

that form and content are a reflection of societies and cultures of their origin or their practice. Viewed in this context, the contents of the games reflect symbolic communication between the society and its members/ game participants, as well as among the members of a social group on cross generation level, as well as within the group of the same age. The children's games can also be studied in the context of folklore, where the qualities displayed through creation, manifestation and transmission are considered.

Among the first ethnological/anthropological researches which indicated the relation between the ways of playing and the culture/society type of a particular game, were the studies by Ruth Benedict and Margareth Mead. Their research was focused on the subject of childhood and growing up in non European societies<sup>1</sup>. Other research from that period which also focused on children's games in non European societies and on European rural societies. The study of children's games as part of the urban folklore was initiated by English folklorists Peter and Iona OPI during the 50s in the last century, and included the children of England, Wales and Scotland. This research resulted in the publishing of 'Folklore and the Language of School Children', and ten years later of 'Children's Games in the Street and on the Playground'. The OPI Research prompted further numerous research by other folklorists (source: Semjonović Kon, 1987: 101). Although the modern research of children's games have shifted focus from the manifestation of a game to analysis of textual and conversational content, the role of games in preservation of local, national and cultural identity, construction of identity based on sex and similar<sup>2</sup>, they have not removed the children's games from the context of folklore.

<sup>1</sup> Margaret Mead has observed during her research on the Manus islands that the children had the freedom to spend the whole day at play, but that their games were void of any imagination, and reminded of the playing of baby animals. The poor development of the games was connected to the absence of pattern in the life of adults who would inspire the children to imitate their behaviour. Another author has come to a conclusion that in traditional communities the children actively take part in the life of adults, and thus learn at a young age through chores and games how to be independent and responsible community members (source: Krel, 2004:53).

<sup>2</sup> See MarjorieHarness Goodwin. 1985. 'The Serious Side of Jump' Rope, Conversational Practices and Social Organization in the Frame of Play'. Journal of American Folklore, July-September, [http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/anthro/faculty/goodwin/Goodwin\\_Jumprope.pdf](http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/anthro/faculty/goodwin/Goodwin_Jumprope.pdf); M.H. Goodwin, Charles Goodwin, 'Children's arguing', [www.sscnet.ucla.edu/clic/cgoodwin/87child\\_argue.pdf](http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/clic/cgoodwin/87child_argue.pdf); M.H. anthro/faculty/goodwin/RelevanceEthnicityClassGender.pdf; ed. Julia C. Bishop and Mavis Curtis. "Play today in the primary school playground, Life, learning and creativity". Buckingham: Open University Press, <http://www.mcgrawhill.co.uk/openup/chapters/0335207154>; Александар Крел. 2004. Дечије игре, Традиционалне српске такмичарске дечије игре. Београд: Српски генеалогски центар; А. Крел. 2005. "Традиционалне такмичарске дечије игре као инструмент социјализације деце у Товаришеву", ГЕИ САНУ ЛП; Елly Вашић. 1985. "Међусобни утицај подунавских земаља на дечије игре, посебно на дечије бројалице". Zbornik radova XXXIII kongresa Saveza udruženja folklorista Jugoslavije I; E. Bašić. "SO –LA – SO – MI, Glasanje djece – glasanje sportskih navijača". Zbornik radova XXXIII kongresa Saveza udruženja folklorista Jugoslavije; Mirjana Prošić–Dvornić. 1990. "Brojalice, primer dečijeg urbanog folklor". Rad XXXVIII Kongresa Saveza udruženja folklorista Jugoslavije; Vesna Marjanović. 1997. "Dečije igre i tradicionalno nasleđe kod Srba u Vojvodini". Zbornik međunarodnog festivala folklor; V. Марјановић. 2005. Традиционалне дечије игре у Војводини. Нови Сад: Матица српска; Zorica Rajković.1978. "Današnji dječji folklor - istraživanje u Zagrebu". Narodna umjetnost

A Variety of qualities of children's group games will be analysed here, those who place them in the context of folklore and define them as a means of folklore communication.

## Children's games in the context of folklore communication

Folklore is not an aggregate of cultural concepts, but communication process (Ben-Amos, 1971:9) and 'active tradition transferred through the units of meaning, exchanged in informal communication among close and familiar people, in a recognizable style, form, and cultural qualities' (Antonijević, 2005 :248). Folklore contents can be separated from non-folklore by text, texture and context analysis. According to Ben-Amos, 'textual signs' of folklore communication which extinguishes it from regular communicating are beginning and closing formulas in fairy tales, event structure in fairy tales, especially **SINTAXICAL** and **SEMANTICAL** structure and similar. 'Textual qualities' separate folklore communication from non artistic ways of communicating by rhythmical speech, reciting, intonation, music, melody, art pattern, while special conventions which indicate place, time and players for a folklore act, mark its 'context'. These communications AS signs for recognizing folklore do not need to be displayed at all three levels, one of them is indicative enough (Bošković-Stulli, 1983: 33).

Dragana Antonijević specifies that a certain behavior can be recognized as folklore in any segment of society and culture if the basic criteria of folklore communication are met. In A communication sense, folklore is defined as a 'special ways of expressing oneself, common to all individuals and groups which in certain situations use folklore speech and folklore genre as an important means of communication' (Antonijević, 2005:249). As a form of a communicating process, in the social context folklore is limited to a small group, which shares similar culture (Isto: 32), and which emerges from the experience of its members, and is made up of their shared systems of knowledge, beliefs, behavior and customs (Žikić, 1996:123,124). A small group of people is defined as a group consisting of individuals who communicate among themselves, and their number permits that each one communicates directly to the others, and not through the third person. Small groups can be families, gangs, office co-workers, village communities and similar (Ben-Amos, 1971:12). Also, groups of children of the same age can be viewed as small groups which carry certain folklore. System of the folklore communication within those groups is called 'children's folklore'.<sup>3</sup> The content of the children's folklore are games, riddles, rimes, jokes, verses, nicknames, secret codes/language, scrap books, diaries and other forms which can be described as folklore.

As stated earlier, those activities conducted within small groups of people which meet basic folklore criteria can also be recognized as folklore acts and folklore communica-

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<sup>3</sup> In English, by analogy with the word folklore, a word childlore is used for this segment of the children's Subculture

tion. The basis for categorization of qualities of children's group games as a form of folklore communication will represent a concept of the qualities of this form of communication which were given by Joseph Arpad<sup>4</sup>, in his popular culture genres analysis, and Dragana Antonijević<sup>5</sup>, in her analysis of the SMS and e-mail messages as modern forms of folklore communication.

Qualities which define children's group games as a form of folklore communication:

1. **Anonymous authors** – individual authors of the children's group games are not known, but it can be concluded that several generations have participated, and still do, in creating these games. Also, the exact time of creation of the so called original game forms cannot be precisely determined (Krel, 2004: 67);
2. **Direct communication** – the communication of the players/participants in the game is direct, 'face to face', by verbal and non verbal means. Direct communication enables spreading of the game via individual players or the whole group;
3. **Oral communication** – the players communicate non verbally by gesturing and performing the game as such, but also verbally. The game spreads by imitation and by verbal communication.
4. **Mutual communication** – mutual communication among the players is one of the pre requisites for the game to take place. One player quits the game if he stops communication with the other players;
5. **Informal distribution** – the games are not distributed by an institution, they are created spontaneously and are distributed as such. Some segments of the children's folklore can be copied and distributed by the adults, especially teachers, but those are lost in the spontaneous communication of the children;
6. **Performance** – the whole way of conducting games, from the preparation activities to the playing itself, with or without props, may be viewed as a sort of a performance;
7. **Public aspect** – The majority of the games are conducted in the open spaces, which are usually parks and playgrounds in their neighbourhoods, school fields, beaches, streets, and similar;
8. **Collectivity** - the games represent the collective property of the small children's groups and a part of their (imaterial) culture. In the context of collectivity, children's games are a representation of the collective identity of the children. How-

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<sup>4</sup> Arpad mentions Oral, Performance, Face to Face Communication, Ephemeral, Communal (Event), Recreation, Variation, Tradition, Unconscious structure, Collective Representation, Public (Ownership), Diffusion and Memory (Recollection). (See Arpad 1976).

<sup>5</sup> Dragana Antonijević had considered most of the qualities listed by Joseph Arpad for her analysis: Anonymous authors, performing, public aspect, collectivity, variation, tradition, re-creation, ephemeral, oral, direct communication, mutual communication, informal distribution. (See: Antonijević 2006).

ever, if considered as a collective property of a wider social group, the games can be positioned as a form of oral heritage of the whole social community;

9. **Re-creativity** – transmission of the games happens in direct communication on the cross generation level, or within groups of the same age. The process of acquiring the existing form of the game allows the players to add new elements or transformation of the existing ones. This process can be a result of adjustment to particular given circumstances of the moment when the game is taking place, in the sense of adjusting to the other players or the place where the game is carried out. The re-creation can also be a result of the social changes and technical/technological prosperity, which require language change, different props and playgrounds;
10. **Variability** – flexibility of the game, that is a possibility of introducing new and transforming old elements, affects creation of numerous versions of a single game. Variability can apply on a name, textual content, role names, certain rules, or on a combination of those or all of them, but with the unchanged structure of the game;
11. **Continuing tradition** – although the games are defined as variable, it can be stated that traditionality is their quality as well, considering that changes of certain elements do not threaten the structure. It remains the same and lasting, thus connecting the old – ‘traditional’ and the new forms of the game;

Based on the given qualities of the group games, it can be concluded that they represent a folklore segment of the children’s groups primarily, and of the wider social group as well. They are a framework for a folklore communication among its stakeholders, and with the flexibility, openness to innovation and transformation, represent a communication chain between generations of players, or as Ben-Amos states, lead to creating a tradition spreading into the time and space.<sup>6</sup>

## Results of researching children’s games in the context of folklore communication

The problem of the children’s games as a form of folklore communication has been examined on a sample of games which had been practiced in the first half of the 20th century in Novi Sad<sup>7</sup>. Also, in order to examine the variability and re-creativity of the games, their level of transformation and modification in today’s practice has been

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<sup>6</sup> Zorica Rajković remarks in her thesis on the modern children’s folklore that rhymes taught by teachers are seldom used in free playing, and that rhymes taken out of the context (of the game) children no longer embrace even when they prove useful in teaching methods (Rajković, 1978:47).

<sup>7</sup> I.S.Kon remarks that, unlike the folklore of adults, which is closely linked to the countryside, in industrially developed countries the bearers of the modern children’s tradition are the urban children, while the transmission is going from the city to the village. (Kon, 1987: 102)

checked with today's children of Novi Sad. Data on the games were provided in conversations with 'players' of different ethnical and religious background, selected by using the 'snowball' sample. The questionnaires with open questions were a basis for the conversations. In the poll on the games from the first half of the 20th century, 40 participants were questioned, 58-88 years of age. In obtaining data on the reduction and transformation of the games in today's practice, 10 participants, age 9-12 and 10 participants, age 25-35 were questioned.

During the questioning 56 group games have been identified which were a part of the playing practice of the children of Novi Sad in the first half of the 20th century. They were played by homogenous groups by ethnic background and/or sex. Playing 42 registered games required some sort of props, while 10 required pre-learning of texts.

Researching of games as a form of folklore communication went towards understanding the form and structure of the games as a framework for this sort of communication, distribution, variation forms, modification and transformation of the playing system<sup>8</sup>, as a basis to comprehend re-creativity, variability and traditionality of the researched games.

When talking about form and structure of the small children's groups, it has been noticed that their forming had generational and territorial boundaries, the groups were made up of the children belonging to the same neighbourhoods, of the similar age. The existence of the same ethnic/sex background groups as well as mixed ethnic/sex background groups were registered, which can point to the social approval of such mixing. In city parts which were in the first half of the 20th century ethnologically heterogenous, so were the children's groups of the mixed backgrounds. Ethnically homogenous children's groups were registered only in the parts which were ethnically homogenous, which was the case with two neighbourhoods on the city outskirts: in one the majority of inhabitants were Serbian and in the other Hungarian. The participants in the poll who were born before the WW2, when Hungarian, German and Serbian languages were equally represented in daily colloquial speech in Novi Sad, said that all three languages were used at playing and that the tongue of the majority had been spoken.

Distribution of games in the period in question had been done by 'face to face' communication on the cross generation level, mainly with the older kin or within a group of the same age. When describing the games which are still in practice today, the participants clearly drew the line between the games which were spontaneously played within groups and those imposed by the formal school program of learning 'traditional games'. The latter ones were not included by the participants in their list of games, which leads to a conclusion that those games distributed by institutions are not accepted as a part of folklore by the children's groups.

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<sup>8</sup> This research is a segment of a wider research of the children's games practiced in Novi Sad during the first half of the XX century, which encompassed sex, ethnic and religious background, socially desirable game qualities, the amount of reduction and transformation in today's practice in Novi Sad.

Analysis of the representation of identical or modified and transformed forms, and also the disappearances of the games practiced in the first half of the 20 century from today's perspective is necessary for an overview of the re-creativity, variability and traditionality of the researched games.

In the context of forms of variations of the games, the variations caused by ad hoc adjustment to the number of players, available props and playground. Also, some variations appear as the main form in various children's groups. The games with most variations were *School* (Šantiškole) and *Rotten horse* (Trule kobile). The variations in regard to the language/jargon had also been detected, which occurs during the playing. Such games are *Buj, buj, zold ag*, with formulated text in Hungarian, which has the identical structure and rules like *Swallows, pass by* (Laste, prolaste), accompanied by the text in Serbian. The games with the same type of variation are also *Korhadit birka*, that is, *Rotten horse*.<sup>9</sup>

As primary factors of modification, transformation, reduction and disappearance of registered games from today's playing practice, the following can be considered:

1. The change of settlement infrastructure – one of the primary factors of disappearance and reduction of some games which took place outdoors. By demolishing a large number of private houses and by erecting apartment blocks, as well as using free land space for streets and buildings, some games simply lost their necessary environment.
2. Modern living – new activities are available which consume children's attention, and affect modification and transformation of their games. The process of game modification in this context does not only imply content but also the language itself. Thus, some games have been renamed or the names of props, roles and the whole textual content had been changed. The process of modernisation had also affected the disappearance of certain games which could not be adjusted by content or performing to the modern social trends.
3. Outdated props – the games that require props which had been outdated in terms of design or use, and that proved flexible towards introducing new props had 'survived' in a modified form.
4. Development of the toy industry – this factor is related to the previous. In some cases, the props had been outdated not only because of their inadjustment to the new playing environment, but because of the new props available. Development of the toy industry, which has made toys available to all the social groups, a considerable number of playing activities vanishes or is modified according to the new props. The games whose content is not attractive enough comparing to those games which required new props become outdated and disappear. The games that could be adjusted to the new props survived in a modified way.

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<sup>9</sup> Term 'playing system' covered roles distributed to the players, the rules, verbal and gesture communication, props and toys (See: Krel, 2004).



5. Arrival of electronic media – the TV conquered the households the moment it appeared, and became accessible to all social groups. The TV, as well as other electronic media affected the disappearance of some games, and affected their transformation. The electronic media influenced introduction of new contents and new role playing in the existing games. However, the electronic media also consume a considerable amount of the children's free time, and may be consider a factor of reduction of practicing certain games.

The above mentioned factors had a clear impact on the children's games and affected the changes in their forms and contents. Those games displaying a higher level of flexibility towards social changes still remain in practice in an unchanged or a modified fashion. The opposite is true with those games with lower potential of adoption to the new props, changes in the colloquial speech, and changes of the physical environment where the playing takes place – they have disappeared from the spontaneous playing practice of the Novi Sad children. However, it can be concluded that the games have a traditional quality (as a characteristic of a folklore communication), as they continue existing by adding new forms or new contents to the old ones.<sup>10</sup>

## Conclusion

From the ethnological/anthropological point of view, the children's games represent an important component of the overall folklore heritage - the children's folklore heritage. Qualities which determine the children's games as folklore, which had been tested on a sample of group games which had been and still are a part of the playing practice in Novi Sad, imply the ways of their creation, manifestation, transmission and adaptation to social change. The folklore qualities of the games are:

1. Anonymous authors;
2. Oral communication – as a form of spreading games and communicating;
3. Performing - it manifests throughout the playing process;
4. Public aspect – in context of the playgrounds in open spaces;
5. Collectivity – defines games as a property of children's groups and a wider social community, and represent a group identity of the children;
6. Re-creativity – in context of adjusting to momentary circumstances of playing or in context of social changes;
7. Variability - possibility of introducing new elements and transforming old ones, creating numerous variations of one game;

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<sup>10</sup> There are several game descriptions in the annex, which were practiced in the first half of the XX century, which are present today, to illustrate their variety, re-creativity and tradition.



8. Direct and mutual communication – happens during verbal and non verbal communication;
9. Informal distribution;
10. Continuing tradition – in context of the remaining structure of the game in spite of modification of some elements.

The above listed parameters place the children's games in the discourse of folklore and folklore communication. Flexibility of the games in terms of social changes helps them to continue existing in practice, and provides them with a role of cross generational chain connecting numerous players of the past and the present.

## Annex

### Descriptions of the games

#### 1. *Swallows, pass by*

This was mainly a game for groups of girls. Their number had not been set by the rules of the game, but the nature of the game asked for a larger number of players. Before the game, two players are selected by reciting a rhyme. They would hold their hands together up high, and underneath their stretched arms (a 'passage'), other girls would pass through. The passing group of girls would secretly divide themselves into a group of *Golden apples* and a group of *Golden pears*. After passing through the 'passage' of the first two girls, other girls would assume their position, also holding hands and creating a 'passage'. They would start a song:

"Swallows, pass by  
 Come to us over the mountain  
 Our mountain is green  
 And yours is dry  
 Hey, hey, Peter, Vera  
 Jela, open the door  
 Jela, let our army pass through,  
 Hey, hey, shut the door!"

While singing the song, the girls keep moving through the 'passages', until the word 'shut' is sang. The girls who are 'passage' at that moment would 'capture' a player passing through. They would whisper to her a question which group she wishes to join, 'apples' or the 'pears'. When the girl makes her choice, she stands behind the girl of the selected group, holding her waist. The procedure would be repeated until all the

girls decide on a group. To decide a winning team, the two rows would, with their leaders still holding hands, pull each other, trying to get the opponents to cross to their side. The cycle is then repeated with all players assuming new positions. When conducting a poll in the Telep neighborhood in Novi Sad, it had been shown that the game's structure is identical with all ethnicities singing the text in Hungarian:

“Buj, buj,  
Zold ag,  
Zold leveleske a pajta  
Nytiva van az aranyka pu,  
Csak bujjatok rajta,  
Rajta, rajta,leszakadt a pajta  
Benn maradt a macska!”

In free translation:

“Duck down, duck down,  
Under the green branch  
Green leaf,  
The golden gate is open  
Come through,  
Now, now, the barn is crumbling  
The cat is trapped inside.”

The game had been played around apartment blocks and schoolyards. It is also played today among the children of Novi Sad.

## 2. *Jelečkinje, barjakčkinje*

The game is played among both the heterogeneous and homogenous groups in terms of sex. The number of players is not set by the game rules. Before the start, the players divide (with or without using rhymes) themselves into two groups, which stand facing one another during the game. Each group stands forming a line (or a chain) and holding their hands, and they decide which one will ‘go’ first by shouting ‘*jelečkinje, barjakčkinje, who do you want?*’

The players from the opposite group shout the name of the opponent's player whom they want to break their ‘chain’. The player who is called for then runs and tries to separate hands of two players (‘break the chain’) where he thinks he has the best chance, or the opponent's weak spot. If he succeeds, he takes back to his team one of the opponents' players. If he fails, he remains in the opponents' ‘chain’ and continues the game there. The game is finished when all players end up on one side (one ‘chain’). The game is still played in schoolyards, parks and free spaces near the apart-

ment blocks of Novi Sad, under the name 'Emperor, give us your army', which replaced the old name during the 1970s.

### ***3. Emperor, my lord, what's the time***

Groups of players of this game are heterogeneous in terms of sex, and the number of players is not set by the game rules. The participants stand in a line, while the 'emperor' is standing a few meters away with his/her back turned to the group. One player in the group shouts: "Emperor, my lord, what's the time?", and the 'emperor' may answer: "five steps" (numbers 1-10 may be used). The one who called the 'emperor' makes five steps towards him, after which another player calls the 'emperor'. According to the game rules, the 'emperor' could at any time, to any player, reply: "Five to nine, run the street", meaning that the player is temporarily eliminated from the game. The player who first reaches the 'emperor' wins and replaces the 'emperor' in his role. The whole procedure is then repeated. The game took place in the schoolyards, playgrounds or open spaces in the vicinity of apartment blocks/houses. During the 1970's, the game was also called 'Mother, mother, what's the time'. The structure remained the same, while new movement rules were introduced. Beside linear movement towards the 'emperor'/'mother' by taking small or bigger steps, the players could have been told to jump on one foot/both feet, jump and turn, etc. This game is still played by the children of Novi Sad.

### ***4. Rotten horse***

This game was practiced only by the boys, usually requiring 6 – 10 players. Before the game the players split into two teams, one team being the 'rotten horse'. The 'rotten horse' would assume its position, which meant that one boy would bend himself over, spreading his legs to keep balance and holding onto a tree or a wall. His team member would line up behind him, assuming the same position, each holding a boy in front of him by the legs or the waist. The opponents' team would then run one by one and jump on their backs, trying not to support themselves by touching either opponents or their own team mates. The first to run was usually the most athletic and swift boy who could jump the farthest. When all the 'jumpers' were on the backs of the 'rotten horse', they would count to ten, clapping their hands up high. If the 'horse' managed to stay in place without succumbing to the weight of the 'riders', the roles would be swapped. It was important that the jumpers remain 'in saddle' for the count to 10 without holding on to the opponents' backs or their team mates, falling down or touching ground with their feet. In case that would happen, the roles of the teams were swapped. The roles were also swapped if one of the players fell or touched ground before his team mates were all 'in saddle'. In case one of the 'rotten horse' boys fell down due to the weight of the 'rider', his team would remain being the 'the horse'.

The game could also be played with an odd number of players, with one ('extra') boy leaning on a wall and supporting the first boy of the 'horse'. He would also play a role of a judge, making sure the rules of the game were not broken. This was often the heaviest boy of the group or the least swift one. It has been found that in the Telep quarter of Novi Sad, where until the 1980s. the majority of the population was Hungarian, all children regardless of their ethnic background called this game by its Hungarian name, Korhadt birka (rotten sheep).

The Serbian participants in the poll, living in the Salajka and Podbara quarters of Novi Sad, also practiced a similar version of the 'Rotten horse'. The game had been registered by the name *Auc h*, *Auch*, *horse* (Kuč, kuč, kobila or Uč, uč, kobila). It requires a smaller number of players, who compete individually. The 'horse' is played by only one boy who is supported by another player. Others jump on his back, trying not to fall down or touch the ground with their feet, in which case they would become the 'horse'. Considering the length of the 'horse's' back, which is 'occupied' by time two boys are on it, the third boy trying to jump is usually the first one to slide down and swap the roles with the 'horse'. The game is played in schoolyards, parks and free spaces near the apartment blocks of Novi Sad, and it is still popular today by the name *Rotten horse*.

## 5. Roast lamb

The game *Roast lamb* (Janjine) was played mostly by groups of boys. One boy would get the role of the 'goat' over which other players would try to jump. At the first phase, the 'goat' would bend down, his back parallel to the ground, hands on his thighs, and the head bent down, and play the 'small goat'. Other players would run and jump over him from an agreed distance. When jumping over him, they could touch his back to bounce, while other players keep reciting certain verses which are an element of the game, and gesturing in a certain way. The first jump is followed by the greeting: 'Roast lamb!' and the second with: 'Cabbage and bacon!'. The third jump was followed by gesturing as if kneading dough for bread on the 'goat's' back and saying: "This is how you make bread!", while the fourth player to jump would kick the 'goat' on the back shouting: 'Pepper bread'. At the next jump the players would kick the 'goat' in the bottom and shout: "Foot in the butt!", and at the sixth player they would take turns in putting and removing an object on the 'goat's' back, such as a cap or a shawl. After this part of the game was through, the 'goat' would 'grow' a little, his back in a more vertical position. After all the players took turn in jumping over him, the 'goat' would become 'big', stand straight with his head bent towards his chest. This is the hardest position for the players 'to conquer', and not many succeeded in jumping over their 'goat'. The rules on swapping places with the 'goat' varied from group to group, while some practiced swapping the 'goat' when a player failed to jump over the 'goat', some would keep the one 'goat' for the entire game cycle. Instead of swapping places with the 'goat', a player failing to jump over 'it' in some cases would be eliminated from

the game. This game is still practiced in the schoolyards, playgrounds and free spaces around apartment blocks in Novi Sad.

## 6. *Gambling*

Gambling is a common name for several 'profit' oriented games. They were practiced only by boys. Metal coins and various picture cards/stickers were used. The coins were of different value, while the picture stickers were often those of football players, found as a gift in chocolate bars called 'Sport'. Pictures of landscapes of different countries found on matches were also used. Before the start the players would agree on the order of playing, and mark the playing 'territory'.

- a) *Krajcarice* was a profit game requiring metal coins. The name of the game was derived from the name of Austrian coins, first used in the game.

The game was played by marking two lines on the ground, which presented boundaries of the playing territory (both surfaces, ground and concrete were used). The players were supposed to throw a coin from one line to the other, or as close to it as possible. The players could not stand on the first line, or cross it, as their attempt would not be counted in such case, and he would have to repeat it properly. Some players would be even be disqualified from that cycle of the game. The winner was the player who threw the coin on the second line or closest to it. He would collect everyone's coins as a prize. In case two players achieved equally good results, the winner was decided by 'heads or tails' tossing a coin.

- b) *Prengla gambling* or *Prangije* was a game based on the *heads or tails* system. It required small coins as props and objects which served as coin holder. The coin holder would be improvised by two crossing sticks, called *prengla* or *prangija*. The players gave their forecasts regarding which side of the coins will show when they fall. The coins would be placed on one side of the *prengla*, while the other side would be kicked by one of the players, in order to throw coins up in the air. They would then count the coins which turned *heads* and which turned *tails*.

If one player guessed the exact number of heads and tails, all the coins would be given to him, thus making him the winner.

- c) *Kvrce* is the game performed by using the Sport picture stickers, while the rules were similar to those of *Krajcarice*. At the start, the line is drawn which marks the 'throwing point'. The stickers were thrown towards a wall, therefore the 'finish line' was not necessary. The stickers were thrown by using special hand maneuvers, if the player was right handed, he would put the sticker in a horizontal position on his left hand (fist). He would then knock off the sticker with the thumb and middle finger of his right hand, trying to toss it as far as possible. The line marking the 'throwing point' was not to be crossed or stood on. In case that occurred, the player repeated the 'throw'. Some groups had stricter rules, and such

player could have been eliminated from the game cycle. The winner was the player whose sticker landed closest to the wall. He would receive all the stickers used in the cycle of the game which he won.

- d) *Odd –even* game also required picture stickers. It was played by two boys, one holds a sticker on his hand, and the other player hits with his sticker the one lying on the opponents' fingers. Before that they have to choose which one will be 'odd' and which one 'even'. As the stickers had usually a photograph on one side and a number on the other, 'odd' and 'even' meant whether they would both fall on one side ('even') or different sides ('odd'). Player who guessed how the stickers would fall would collect both stickers.

Regardless of the type of props used in these games, they were considered as 'gambling', and due to this fact it was strictly forbidden by parents and teachers. In 'case of being caught in the act', the children would be severely punished (spanking and bad grades). However, the games were played in hiding, and they continue to be in practice today (*Kvrce* and *Odd-Even*), although after the '80. of the last century they had somewhat lost on the frequency of playing.

## 7. Marbles

The marbles game was played only by the boys. The game would begin by making a small hole in the ground where marbles would be thrown to, and marking a 'throwing point' which was not supposed to be crossed. The players would, one by one, bend their knees and try to get a better position as possible, throw a marble towards the hole. The player whose marble ends up nearest to the hole, would start the game by trying to hit one of the opponents' marbles. This would not be a marble of his choice, but the one selected by his peers, usually the one at a considerable distance from the player, or with other obstacles that would not make it too easy a target. The player would then place his marble on the ground and knock it with his middle or index finger, directing it to roll towards the targeted opponent's marble. If he succeeded, he would collect all the marbles thrown on the ground. If he missed, the next player whose marble was closest to the hole would start to play. At the end of the game the players counted the lost and gained marbles. A more simple form of this game was played in such way that, after the first throw, they would not aim to hit the opponents' marbles, but hit the hole. If a player manages to get his marble in the hole, he would collect all marbles, or get back his own marble and try to hit the hole with the opponent's marbles, until he missed. The next player whose marble was closest to the hole would continue playing.

In Novi Sad children also played these two marble games, (*štucovanje* and *pašovanje*):

- a) *Štucovanje*: Players mark the 'throwing' line, and place a marble (target) a few meters away. The first player would stand on the throwing line, bend forward and try to hit the 'target' with his own marble, by 'catapulting' it with a strong knock of his thumb. In case he hit the marble, he could collect it, and if not, another player would have his try.
- b) *Pašovanje*: One player makes a hole in the ground with his shoe, where the marbles will be thrown. Players throw the marbles in the hole by standing above it. Each player throws several of the opponents' and several of his own marbles, one player being the 'odd' and the other 'even'. After the throw, they would count the marbles which remained in the hole, and depending on whether the number was odd or even, that player took all the marbles. The game was played outdoors, in the parks, playgrounds, schoolyards and other open spaces. This game was practiced until the end of 1980s, with some modification. *Štucovanje* was more practiced in Belgrade, and other versions in Novi Sad. It is still played today .

## 8. *Nine men morris*

this game required a playing board, which could be improvised with a drawing on a piece of paper and beans. The game was played by a mixed or a homogenous group of children in terms of sex, and was limited to two players at the time. The players took each nine beans and produced a drawing of three squares, each smaller than the previous and each drawn in the center of another, with four lines cutting across squares on all sides. The crossing points of lines and squares , as well as the squares' corners presented spot where beans could be placed. The players took turns in placing the beans, trying to put three in a row, either vertically or horizontally. When one player succeeded in lining up three beans, he would take away a bean from his opponent. The game would be over when one of the players was left with only two beans, and the other would be the winner. The game could be played indoors and outdoors. Now days, this game is not as often played as a related new game 'Man, don't get angry'.

## 9. *Rope jumping*

This game required a prop, either a rope or a long elastic band, and was played only by the girls. The game could be played in pairs or individually. The jumps were simple at first, the girls jumped on both feet, then on one foot, then with feet crossed, and eventually the jumping would become very fast, as the rope swinging turned faster. Only a few girls could keep up with the speed of the rope at this point, at which the game got a new name, 'paprika stew' (paprikaš). The game went on until the girl jumping made a mistake, and then was replaced by another girl. The game was played outdoors, in the parks, playgrounds, schoolyards and other open spaces. This game



was gradually replaced by a similar game, 'elastic band jumping' (*lastiš*) in the mid 1960s. The game was played by two girls holding an elastic band, standing a couple of meters apart, and another girl jumping and performing various elements with the elastic band with her feet. The height of the band was gradually increased, and so was the difficulty of the elements. Making a mistake would mean elimination and another girl would start the game. Elastic band jumping is no longer practiced in Novi Sad, but rope jumping is still a part of physical education in schools for girls and boys.

## 10. *Jumping 'school'*

This game was played only by the girls, usually in a group of six. On a flat surface (ground or concrete) a scheme was drawn, which was made up of a number of squares. There are a few versions of this game, which is still played in Novi Sad:

1. *Little school* – The scheme of eight squares was drawn, each square having a number written in it. The first squares, one and two, were vertically connected, followed by the square number three and four, which were horizontally connected. Five and six were again vertically, and seven and eight horizontally connected. The player throws a pebble in the first square, and then jumps in all subsequent squares, making sure she does not touch any of the bordering lines between the squares, in which case another girl replaces her. The jumps were performed in two ways:
  - a) The first two squares were jumped on one foot, followed by a 'wide step', where each foot in one of the following squares (three and four). Squares five and six were again jumped on one foot, while seven and eight were covered by another 'wide step', after which the player jumps back practicing the same procedure. She picks the pebble up from the square number one, and then another player starts the game. After words the pebble is thrown in the square number two, and so on, and winner is the girl who is the first to complete eight rounds without making a mistake (falling or stepping on bordering lines of the squares).
  - b) The first player would throw the pebble in the first square, and by jumping on one foot, pushed the pebble from square one to square eight. The procedure is followed by other players, and then the pebble is thrown in the second square, and so on.
2. *School* was drawn as a rectangular divided in eight squares, and a semi-circle on top of the rectangular, as a ninth field – the *sky*. The pebble is thrown in the same way as mentioned in the previous version. After jumping in all the eight squares, the player would reach the *sky* and then repeat everything going back.
3. *School* was drawn as a square, one m<sup>2</sup> in size, divided into nine smaller squares. This version was played without a pebble. Players would jump on one foot in the middle square of the first row, and then jump in the left and right squares of the first row ('wide step'). They would then jump in the middle square on one foot

again and leave the 'school'. The process would be repeated by all the players, and then the same thing would be repeated with the middle square of the second row, then the third row, making sure they do not step on the bordering lines between the squares, in which case that player would leave the game until all the others complete the cycle and then try again. The winner was the player who first completed the jumps and the others were ranked by their speed in completing the game.

*Translated by Marija Kondres*