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Some Notes on Aspects and Functions of Turkish Folk Games

EVEN TODAY Turkey is predominantly rural. Though the intrusion of both indoor and outdoor foreign games such as cards and football has taken away much of the popularity that traditional games and sports once enjoyed, and other games have been lost as a result of the weakening of local cultures, throughout Turkish villages one can still see both adults and children amusing themselves in their leisure with identical games, and these traditional games vary greatly from village to village.¹

Since peasants and children are among the most obstinate conservators of traditional usage, the study of their legends, anecdotal material, certain fragmentary meanings and actions, and the rich game vocabulary still extant can help to reveal the connection of many games with primitive forms of ritual and their original functions. One approach to this study is to examine the importance given to children's games by the adults. For instance, in some Ankara villages among adults a belief exists that the coming year can be predicted by a study of the children's games. If the children are digging the ground to make wells, the conclusion they draw is that the coming year will be an abundant year, if they are making houses it is believed that that year construction will predominate in the village. Likewise the importance attached to children's games can be a negative one, a taboo. Two illustrations from Konya serve as examples. In one, adults try to discourage children from playing with kites, as they believe this is a sin as, if a kite is flown, there will be no rain and crops may suffer from drought. Also in Konya, adults are against children playing with whipping-tops. This kind of top is called *fırça* or *kozak*, and according to legend, after killing the Imam Hüseyin, the Caliph Yezid similarly whipped

¹ Only two studies on Turkish games are in English: M. Hasluck, "Traditional Games of the Turks," *Jubilee Congress of the Folk-Lore Society* (London, 1930), pp. 137-159, and P. G. Brewster, "A Sampling of Games from Turkey," *East and West* [Rome], 11:1 (1960), 15-20. The present article is drawn either from my own fieldwork or from personal experience as a child, a father, a teacher, or simply as a Turk, as is my published study of Anatolian Turkish games *Oyun ve Büğü* (Istanbul: İğ Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 1974).

and spun the decapitated head of Hüseyin with his feet. Therefore, these tops are identified with the Imam Hüseyin's head.

One of the most important aspects of folk games is vocal or verbal expression. Since many folk rhymes are descended from myth—the concomitant and accompaniment of ritual—the study of them may serve to reveal the original function and inherent motivation of the games in which they are sung or recited. Some games demand the spoken word, rhymes, or chants; yet other games require the suppression of all sound. Among the latter there are games in which uttering a single sound, or even a laugh, is forbidden, and breaking this rule is penalized; sometimes it is even believed that evil results will follow if this rule is broken. Of course, it is usually impossible to unravel the obscure lines and cryptic rhymes because of the limited fragments which survive, yet not always. For instance, there are two versions of a rhyme, one from Kirghiz, the other from Kazak, which is a charm used by witch doctors to avert and cure the bite of the tarantula (*böy*), and the meter and wording show a strong resemblance to a game rhyme existing today. There is another children's game from Burdur in Western Anatolia played at Easter (although Turkey is a Moslem country many practices concerning Easter time are observed, without consciously referring to the Christian holiday) called *Hasır Küfrü*, in which children make a bonfire with old straw and baskets, and while they are jumping over the fire the verses they recite clearly express their motivation to purify themselves from sin. After the bonfire has been extinguished, the children smear a little of the ashes on their nails, believing this has a prophylactic effect on diseases which affect the fingers.

Four main categories of verbal expression may be distinguished in Turkish folk games: songs and chants, rhymes, tongue twisters, and riddles. Songs accompanying games and question-and-answer chants enjoy the greatest popularity among girls. In some mimetic games songs dictate the movements of simulation. A good example of this is a mimetic song game *esnaf* (craftsman), from Kastamonu, North-Central Anatolia, in which gestures reflect movements used in the work of various trades. The minimum number of players required is four, usually women or children. The participants are generally arranged in two rows facing each other, one row representing the apprentices, the other the masters. The apprentices put forward the question in song while the master craftsmen sway their hands to the rhythm, "How does the blacksmith forge iron?" The masters listen attentively until the question has been put and then take up an attitude which represents the blacksmith hammering, leaning to one side and making a hammering motion. They repeat the same movement on either side four times and strengthen the effect by verbal suggestions such as, "They forge this way, that way." While the master

craftsmen are performing, the apprentices listen with their hands clasped behind their backs, and when the craftsmen finish they repeat the same action. Then both rows make a half turn and promenade in a circle until they come to the same position again. Then in the same fashion they begin to imitate other trades such as the tinsmith, coppersmith, weaver, felt maker, and tanner.

Sometimes chants associated with games can take the form of an invocation. In Karaman Aşiran, Central Anatolia, there is a rather mysterious game called *Dede* played either by women or by children. That its origin is worship is self-evident. *Dede* literally means grandfather, but it is also used for a venerated saintly person or the head of a religious sect. This game is performed on the first Thursday in the seventh month of the lunar year, *Receb*. (The Moslem lunar year takes no account of the solar system nor of the change of seasons; thus it recedes approximately eleven days each solar year. At present this game is not fixed in any season, but probably it originally occurred on a fixed date.) The participants, numbering around eight or ten, are called “*Dede* players.” On a previous day they have cooked a flat bun called *bışı*, some of which they distribute to the neighboring houses. On the appropriate Thursday, they make a crude human effigy with mud and bricks, which they decorate with fragments of colored glass or china. It looks like an African fetish image or the image of a deity. A few of the round bread-like *bışı* are stuck on spikes protruding from the shoulders of the image. To invite others they visit every house singing a special song. Then they gather around *Dede*’s effigy and with a tone of invocation sing songs with some obscure religious significance. This is followed by a question-and-answer rhyme of which the last two lines are:

What does he make with the house?
Pull it down over the head of my *Dede*.

Last, they demolish the *Dede* effigy. In short, the game of *Dede* represents the last shadow of an enacted rite.

The second category, rhymes, are very rich in Turkish folklore. Generally they are called *tekerleme*, a word which has several variants and usages. One form is a formula introduction to fairy tales, sometimes called “Lie Stories.” These are rambling stories with free association.² Another *tekerleme* form employs the dream motif much used in traditional popular theatre, where the audience is asked to believe an impossible story that includes inverted logical

² For *tekerleme* used in Turkish tales as formulas see Pertev Naili Boratav, *Le “Tekerleme”* (Paris: Cahiers de la Société Asiatique, 1963).

reasoning, which eventually turns out to be a dream.³ But in the folk games *tekerleme* is basically a speech formula—gibberish rhymes usually delivered with accented syllables which are interspersed without causality or logic between comprehensible phrases. Some of the uses of such *tekerleme* in relation to games are:

Used as dip in determining who shall be “it.” This is the most pervasive function, having counterparts in meter and wording with the repertoire of children of other countries.

Used for elimination, in choosing sides, or to determine who shall start the game.



Figure 1. Odd man out for determining “it.”

Can be used for time measurement: for instance, in one catch-as-catch-can game, until “it” finishes the *tekerleme* the other players sit in a safe position. When “it” finishes the *tekerleme* they start running. Or if one player jumps on top of “it” and starts reciting the appropriate *tekerleme*, if “it” cannot rise and throw off the other player before the *tekerleme* ends, the following child jumps on top of “it”; if the child on top falls down before the *tekerleme* ends, it is his turn to be “it.” There are many such games where *tekerleme* is used as a time measure.

Tekerleme can be used as a measure of length. In one game called *Sülümpe* children dislodge a round stone by throwing flat stones. To determine the distance between the first location of

³ For *tekerleme* used in popular Turkish theater see Metin And, *Karağöz: Turkish Shadow Theatre* (Ankara: Dost Yayinlari, 1974), and *A History of Theatre and Popular Entertainment in Turkey* (Ankara: Forum, 1963–1964).

the round stone and the next location each player recites an appropriate *tekerleme*, to each word of the *tekerleme* one step, and whoever finishes the *tekerleme* wins the game.

Tekerleme is used for guessing games. For instance in a guessing game called *Çöppen* one of the players hides a coin or a piece of straw in his hand; the other player who is trying to guess in which hand it is hidden recites a *tekerleme*. In one kind of Blind Man's Buff the players circle around the blindfolded player reciting a *tekerleme*. When they are quiet then the blindfolded one begins to search. Here *tekerleme* has no real function, only maybe by the voices he can find his direction. In one of the most popular and widespread games *Yüzük Oyunu* (the Ring Game), which I shall discuss later, a ring is hidden under one of several cups, and to guess under which cup the ring is hidden sometimes there are special *tekerleme*. In some places, for example in Kayseri, it is by a song that they determine the cup.

There are *tekerleme* in lieu of a farewell, recited when the games are over and the children are returning to their homes.

Some *tekerleme* are recited to humiliate, to reproach, or to mock. For instance a game from Konya called *Aydede* is played only in the evening. If one of their playmates cannot obtain permission from his family to join them, then the others recite the *tekerleme* aloud in front of his home to humiliate him. Likewise, in an astragal (knucklebones) game in Konya, if a player leaves the game before it ends, the other players recite a *tekerleme* to humiliate him. Also, in Çorum they recite a *tekerleme* to mock the loser in a *Yüzük Oyunu*; this *tekerleme* has a special name, *Çığzak*.

Some games are dependent solely on *tekerleme*. There is even a game from Sivas called *Tekerleme* which consists of competition between groups in reciting *tekerleme*.

Some *tekerleme* have no special function except to enrich the game, as in some games such as *Hamam Evi* (Bath House) from Muğla, where children make some domes with mud and recite *tekerleme* especially used for this game.

There are *tekerleme* for special occasions: when it is raining; when they see a camel, lizard, stork, or the moon. And some *tekerleme* on proper names, when they see a child of this name the others recite the appropriate *tekerleme*.

Tekerleme are also used as charms or spells. For instance in some villages near Antalya in southern Turkey, when the first son of a family is born, the young lads of the village climb to the roof of that house carrying long logs and while throwing these logs down they recite *tekerleme*. When children make small flutes or whistles (*sipsi* or *düdük*) from reeds or branches of trees, either during or after the making they recite special *tekerleme* for them, to ensure a good tone. In many regions there are spell *tekerleme* associated with the games played for spring festivals. For instance, when a kind of blackberry called *Kür* first sprouts leaves, children cut a branch, cover it with a handkerchief, and beat the bushes with this while singing a *tekerleme* to make all the bushes shoot into leaf. In some regions during Ramazan (the Moslem fasting month) children go from house to house reciting *tekerleme* and collecting food. If nothing is given from a house, they climb on to the roof and throw handfuls of salt down the chimney on to the fire, so that it makes crackling sounds which frighten the household.

The third category of verbal elements is tongue twisters (*yanılmaç*) the rapid recital of which provides much fun. Some games are basically a competition on the speed of recitation. Or they are used as a forfeit, the loser having to recite a



Figure 2. Leapfrog, *Birdir bir*.

tongue twister. Some tongue twisters are repetitive, and rapid repeated recitation changes the sounds into obscene or undesirable words. In Gaziantep there is a leapfrog game where the first jumper makes his jumps reciting an unexpected tongue twister which the others must repeat without hesitation. In a game called *Tekerleme* from Çankırı, Central Anatolia, players are asked questions, and their answers must start with A, and then with B, and so on until the alphabet has been gone through. In the game *Yattu Kalktı* ("He lay down—he got up") from Muğla, every player is given the name of a dish of food, and when this dish is named quickly at random that player must stand up.

The fourth category is asking and answering riddles, which are used as games by themselves either between two competing groups or individual players.⁴ In Gaziantep, Southeast Anatolia, a game called *Şakı Bilbilim Şakı* is a mixture of riddle game and chasing game. In this, "it," holding a knotted handkerchief used like a whip, asks a riddle about a bird. Any player who gives the right answer takes the handkerchief, which entitles him to chase and beat those who fail to answer the riddles posed by "it." While he is chasing the others, "it" recites a formula meaning "Sing my nightingale, sing," during

⁴ On the function of Turkish riddles as a game and contest, see İlhan Başgöz, "Functions of Turkish Riddles," *Journal of the Folklore Institute*, 2 (1965), 132-147.

which the chasing can continue. But if “it” says “*Soyak, soyak*” then the player holding the knotted handkerchief must return it to “it.” Before he returns it, the other players try to catch him, take the handkerchief, and beat him with it. The game ends if the handkerchief returns to the first “it.”

At the opposite pole from these games rich in verbal dimension, we find games where speaking is strictly prohibited. Some are mere diversions meant to while away the tedium and some have a serious, perhaps religious or magical, significance. Of the latter we can give an example from Kars called *Çile Çıkarmak*, which literally means to pass through a severe trial or suffering. Toward the end of February when the very cold days are ending and the warmth is coming, people celebrate as a sign that the period of endurance is over. In Kars this celebration falls on February 20th, and is celebrated by unmarried girls and boys in the evening. The first part of the ceremony is conducted in silence and darkness. A boy must bring in a pail of water without looking behind him and without uttering a word. Each participant must throw in a threaded needle, the color of the thread identifying the owner. After shaking the pail, they examine the water inside. When one thread is tangled with another belonging to the opposite sex, it is believed they can make a match and marry. Later the girls throw their rings, bracelets, and earrings into the pail with a wish. The boy who fetched the water is veiled, and then he pulls the objects out one by one. Before and while he is doing this, the girls sing some couplets together, and, according to whether or not the meaning of the couplet corresponds to the object pulled out at that moment, they decide whether that person’s wish will be fulfilled or not. This category of game is very widespread, especially in the observances connected with the coming of spring, which will be more fully dealt with later.

There is a large variety of silent games which are termed *Dilsiz*, “dumb games,” and under the same name there is an equal number of dramatic mumming plays, so sometimes it is difficult to draw a borderline between games and mummings since all games, sports, and dancing, as well as dramatic manifestations, are named *oyun* in Turkish. Some of the dumb games structurally resemble the widespread games such as Follow the Leader where the leader challenges the other players to emulate his actions, with the one difference that they must be careful neither to utter a word nor laugh. Among such games are *Dilsiz* from Cide, *Samut-Dilsiz* from Bolu and Muğla, *Arap* from Burdur, *Dilsiz* from Seferihisar, *Dilsiz* from Isparta, and many others. In the Tokat villages a similar game is called *Oyun Sende, Benin Gibi Ol* (“It is your turn, be like me”) in which the leader goes outside and makes some alterations to his clothes, and upon rejoining the other players he orders them

to make similar changes, but very rapidly. Those who fail to make a quick adjustment are beaten by the leader. In some of these games players are challenged or shamed into performing rash actions: they may be instructed by their leader to do very daring actions to show their courage, for example, bathing outdoors on a cold winter day, as may happen in the game called *Sende* from Isparta. In some games not only is speaking forbidden, but at the leader's command they must remain motionless like statues, as in *Estepeta* from Istanbul and *Çatım Eşek* from Kayseri.

Another interesting approach would be a comparative study of the names of some of the games. Regardless of distance, countries share a common heritage, as can be shown by the wide diffusion of certain games, hence they may contain the memory of a rite of some kind. A good example of this is one kind of Blind Man's Buff from villages in the Ankara and Muğla areas called *Kör Çebiş*, meaning Blind Goat or Kid; yet in Kırklareli it is called *Kör Çapar*. (*Çapar* has various meanings, but the most common is any animal such as a dog which has spots on its skin.) The villagers explain Blind Goat by saying that the blind man is like a goat with its hair falling over its eyes, but it must have a deeper significance since in Europe Blind Man's Buff is called *Blind Bock* in Sweden, *Blinde-buk* in Denmark, *Blind Bock* in some parts of southern Germany, all meaning "blind goat." In some parts of Germany it is called *Blinde Kuh* meaning Blind Cow. When the blindfolded "it" touches another player, he calls out, "He is burnt." We can easily conjecture that this is a survival of a rite in which a priest wearing animal skins seized upon a victim or scapegoat by chance, and the person touched was sacrificed by fire.

One of the most common names in Turkey for Leapfrog is *Uzun Eşek*, meaning "long donkey." Not only in some parts of England is it Donkey, Jump the Long Horse, or Jump the Long Mare, but in other countries it has similar names too: in Germany *Das lange Ross*, in Italy *Il cavallo lungo*, both meaning "long horse," in Belgium it is *Le plus fort cheval*, "the strongest horse."

Another game which has many counterparts in Turkey is the one called in English, "Mother, the Cakes are Burning." The mother trusts her children to the charge of a maid, unaware of the danger that a kidnapper is scheming to abduct all the children, who are then transformed into edibles, or sometimes colored birds, and the mother has to identify them. In Germany this is known as *De Brei kakt aver* and *Moder o Moder wo ist Kindken bliewen?* and in Sicily *Mamma caduta dal monte*. There are many similar games in Turkey, one of them from Kütahya is called *Dünür Dünür* (*dünür* means an in-law, so the name of the game can be translated as "Mother-in-law, Mother-in-law").

In games where the players do not know whether they are runners or

chasers, this is decided by spinning a flat token or stone, one side white and the other black. The side whose color comes uppermost chases the other team. Since the ancient Greeks this has been called Day and Night, in Germany *Tag und Nacht* and in Italy *Giorno e notte*, or Black and White as in Austria *Schwarz-Weiss*. Among other names in Turkey it is called *Kırmızı-Beyaz*, meaning “Red and White,” in Kayseri and Istanbul.

A game which is remarkable for its peculiarly wide distribution, especially in Africa, is *Mancala* (or in Turkish spelling *Mangala*), though in some countries it has different names. One of the earliest references to *Mangala* is in *The Arabian Nights* (fifteenth night). The first reference to it by this name in Turkey is in Thomas Hyde’s *De Ludis Orientalibus* (Oxford, 1694), volume II, in which he gives a list of approximately thirty Turkish games including *Mangala*. In fact, in current Turkish in some areas like Gaziantep in Southeast Anatolia, this game is still sometimes called *Mangala*. The game is generally played in brazier-like holes, either twelve or fourteen of them. In most cases it is played by two players in the following manner. Each player digs seven small holes in the ground in lines opposite each other and places five stones in each hole. Each player in turns picks up all the stones out of any one hole on his side, and distributes them one by one counter-clockwise in the other holes beginning at the first hole on the right of the one from which he has taken the stones. Should the last stone end in a hole which either contains one or three stones (not two), the player may take them and place them on one side; also if the one immediately next to it on the right, in which a stone has been put, contains either one or three, it may also be taken. The game is finished when all fourteen holes are empty. The stones are then replaced five in each hole and the player whose stones exceed the number needed to fill the holes in his line wins. In some parts of Anatolia it is called *Altıev* meaning “Six Houses” and there are twelve holes, six for each player. Each player has eighteen stones and places three stones in each hole. The name of the game in Iğın (eastern Turkey) is *Meneli Taş* and in Muğla it is called *Evcik* (little house). In the former it is played with five holes for each player and twenty-one stones. In another variation found in Azarbijan, where it is called *Mereköçdü*,⁵ the holes are placed in a circle, each player having three holes and twenty-one stones. In a village near Erzurum (eastern Anatolia) it is called *Pıç*, there are no holes, and it is played either with corn or beans instead of stones. It can be played by two to five players, and each player has three heaps of beans or grains of corn, each heap with twelve (or nine) counters; these heaps are called *kuy*. If one player suc-

⁵ See Ehliman Ahundow, *Azerbeycan Folkloru Antalogyasi* (Baku: Azərbaycan CCP İmler Akagemiyyasi Neşriyyati, 1968).

ceeds in making the number three in the other player's heaps, he owns that heap, and marks it by encircling it with chalk; every ear of corn or bean put in that heap then is his property. When there is no heap left, whichever player owns most of the beans or corn is the winner. There is lots of strategy in this game, yet planning cannot be done when the player is playing since the transfer from one hole to another requires very speedy action, so thinking is done when the other player is playing. There are many other varieties of *Mangala* in Turkey, and my purpose in describing this example is to show that a game like *Mangala*, although separated by race, language, and history—not to mention the thousands of miles between such places as Bali, India, Malaya, Ceylon, the Philippines, Abyssinia, and San Domingo—is very widespread.

Another important dimension to be considered is the occasion and functions of the games. As mere amusement, games are performed on a great variety of occasions. Man finds many situations for game-playing, such as birth, puberty, circumcision, marriage, return from military service, and release from prison, to which may be added the religious and national holidays, fairs, seasonal festivals, and ceremonies. Each region and each town has its indoor and outdoor gatherings and parties held on various occasions, their names and traditions differing from place to place. Some games are responsible for the growth of the crops, for the increase of flocks and herds, the making of rain or to insure sunshine or an increase of solar heat. Both fixed and occasional rain-charms form a vast subject. For example, pebbles are gathered, and after some incantations have been said over them, they are thrown into pools or rivers; or a person may be thrown into water, sometimes wearing an animal mask, usually a goat; or they throw water over one another; or, more widespread, is making a puppet or effigy which is carried round the town while people throw water on it from the roofs of the houses. In most places the children dress this rain-dolly up as a bride and veil its face. It has several names varying according to regions mostly referring to it as the bride, yet some names like *korçak*, which means "puppet," are also used. Dolls are also used for puberty rites of young girls; on that occasion it is accepted that the girl has outgrown the age of playing with dolls, so the doll is dressed as a bride and placed in the honor corner of the room. Music is played, songs are sung, and dances are performed. Central Asian Turkish shamans used these dolls—also called *korçak*—to cure diseases. Another game-like rite has the opposite aim of making the sun appear and diffuse its heat; young boys go from house to house carrying lighted torches, singing, and dancing; they receive food from the houses and fling their burning lights toward them. On the Black Sea this practice is called *kuç kuçura*.

There are games for therapeutic purposes. An example was given above of

young people jumping over bonfires. Another comes from villages near Tarsus (southern Anatolia): to cure aches and pain in the back it is believed one should frighten the sufferer. The patient sits in a room facing away from the people; a round board (usually the board on which dough is rolled out) is placed against his back vertically. A person straddles a pole on one end of which a head of a corn with a tuft or a handkerchief has been put to make it appear like a horse. He takes hold of another pole like a javelin. After a short dialogue making clear his intention to cure the patient, he throws his javelin at the board and makes a tremendous noise. It is believed that twenty shots like that are sufficient to cure the sick person. Here two elements cannot escape our attention. First, it is very reminiscent of the most popular and traditional sport called *Cirit*, played on horseback with a large number of contestants who throw javelins at each other. Though there are some unmounted *cirit* games, generally speaking it is always done on horseback. There is an interesting dance-like game from Çankırı (Central Anatolia) where dancers on hobbyhorses holding short sticks in their hands imitate *cirit*. The other interesting element in the curative practice is that mounted on a horse-like stick in their heavenward journey, Central Asian Turkish shamans during their seances cured the sick.

There are a great many games connected with weddings. Some are found on any festive occasion, but others are invested with symbolic significance in protective magic to bring good luck and other blessings. In the villages around İzmir (western Anatolia) one wedding custom was called *Kül Torbası* ("Bag of Ashes"). It took place on Thursday afternoon when the bride was brought on horseback in procession to her new home. Along the way, the villagers shook bags of ashes tied to the ends of poles over the procession. While this was happening the groom hid himself, and the village lads, while playing *cirit* on horseback, tried to trace him. Whoever found the groom had to try to bring the groom's overcoat to the bride without letting anyone else snatch it. If he succeeded he was rewarded by the bride, then he snatched away the bride's embroidered handkerchief and gave it to the groom by whom he was rewarded again. When the groom arrived at the house, some relatives shook the bags of ashes over the guests in order to drive them away from the house. From Adana villages comes another game associated with weddings and preparing the dowry. During the wedding a lad from the groom's side snatches away the bride's special cushion; others pursue him, and the cushion changes hands like a ball. On the roof of the groom's house a flag is erected on a pole to which a mirror is fixed. The first person who arrives with the cushion aims his gun at the mirror and shoots until he breaks the glass; then he brings the cushion to the groom and is rewarded. Also in the villages of Adana a practice having genuine status as a game is called *Toprak Bastı* ("Stepping on the Ground").

The groom's party and the bride's party each hoist a flag when they encounter each other on the way. Each group has a spokesman, and the bride's spokesman has the right to ask his question first. It is a nonsensical riddle, and naturally the groom's spokesman fails to answer; the bride's group is rewarded with money called "the money for stepping on the ground." In some villages if the head of the family refuses to pay, they make a crude, funny mask out of a pumpkin and force him to wear it.

Ghosts and evil spirits still play their roles in Turkish children's games. We find traces of this even in the game vocabulary, for instance, in some parts of Anatolia "it" is called *öcüm*, "Bogey man." Some safe and unsafe zones in games are called *cennet* or *cehennem*, meaning "heaven or hell." Connected with the old Turkish calendar at certain times between December 25th (called *Evvel-i Kancolos*, that is, before *Kancolos*) and January 6th, the twelfth day (*Ahir-i Kancolos* "after *Kancolos*"), some mysterious beings can bring evil and endanger the prosperity of houses. These creatures must be expelled by making a great noise with chains, or by boiling beets (since *Kancolos* or *Congolos* never come near the places where they feel there are beets). There are many practices to drive away these evil creatures, sometimes as dramatic mummings or sometimes as games. In the Balkan countries these spirits are called *Kallikandzaros* or *Karkandzalu*, from the Turkish *Kancolos*, and it is believed that they try to extinguish the fire on the hearth, thus gaining access to the house via the chimney.

There are many games associated with the seasons. This connection between the season and games is sometimes accidental—or certain games merely require certain weather conditions—yet a good many games are based on a real seasonal affinity. The great majority of these are associated with spring. For instance, bonfires are most commonly lit at spring and midsummer. In spring young people singing songs break branches from blossoming trees to celebrate the vernal growth.

Another dimension of games is the values assigned to the outcome of the game, that is, rewards and penalties. In many games the loser or the losing group pays a forfeit; this often takes the form of being made to appear ridiculous. For instance, he or she has to stand on a chair and crow like a cock, or bray like a donkey, or have his or her face smeared with paint. Sometimes these penalties become a game played independently. We may call them "victimizing games," where horseplay and jokes are abundant and sometimes the victim is the innocent party who does not know what will happen to him. For instance, in Tokat villages in a game called *Dök Dök* ("Pour Pour"), somebody hides himself in a place from where he pours a pail of water over the innocent party. In Burdur, in the game called *Mahkeme* (The Court) they pull

the carpet away so that those who are facing trial all fall down. Some games are based on frightening people by dressing up as ghosts (see Fig. 3). The penalties most used at the end of games are that the loser must imitate a cock, an old woman, a dog, a cat, a mouse, or a bear. In Çanakkale/Bayramiç the loser is buried in earth up to his waist and is tormented and teased. In Niğde/Bor (Central Anatolia) he carries all the children on his back. Or in Çankırı, in a game called *Fes Değiştirme* ("Changing the Fez"), each player changes the fez on his head as quickly as he can; each time a person loses, they make a mark on his face with soot and when he has seven black marks on his face he is eliminated. In Senirkent, after the Ring Game they break an egg on the loser's forehead, or the rim of one of the cups used in the game is smeared with soot and sealed on his forehead, which is licked by other players.

There are penalties not only for losers but also for players who do not observe the rules, who are querulous, or who hesitate. In Çankırı, they lay such a player on the ground where they mark his outline with chalk. After he has stood up, all the other players urinate over this silhouette. In Istanbul, Sinop, and other towns, the other players lift a spoilsport horizontally and bring him down six times with a jerking movement as if his back will hit the ground. In Gümüşhane/Kelkit the penalty is getting punches called *Kızzık*.

In gambling games the winner seizes the property of the loser, for instance marbles in marble games, or knucklebones in games with these. Penalties can mean a delay in games such as the one called "Slappies," where one player stretches out his hands palm upwards and the other player has to rest his hands flat on top of them, with the backs of his hands uppermost. The player whose hands are underneath tries to slap one or both of the palms before the other withdraws his hand. This game, generally called *Kızartmaca* ("Making Red") can be painful. There are also, in eastern and southeastern Anatolia, a large category of folk dances where usually the dancers stand in two lines facing each other and jump at each other, striking each other's palms vigorously. They turn on their axis and attack repeatedly. One way of gratifying a winner is honoring him with a title such as *Bey*, or as in Gaziantep villages *Böke*, or by accepting him as the most skillful player.

The objects used in games and children's toys furnish another aspect of the subject. Toys in the villages are almost unknown except for a few homemade objects. The most common toys in the rural areas of Anatolia are tops. The author has recorded more than seventy names for tops in Anatolia. There are also contest games played with tops. For instance, in a game called *Tuka*, *Doz-doz*, or *Domuz*, one contestant tries to hit the other's spinning top with his own and drive it out of the game area. Kites fall into two categories: the first are made of cloth or paper but have a wooden frame, and others are without



Figure 3. A ghost called “Man with teeth of beans,” from Maldan village in the Yunt Mountains on the Aegean Sea.

this structure. The names of kites change according to their shape, make, and the various localities. One kind of kite called *Çıvga* in Çorlu/Tekirdag (western Anatolia) is in the shape of a funnel which revolves on its axis when hit with a stick. Some of them are made by splitting one end of a stick and inserting two feathers.

Slings and catapults made of leather, knitted cloth, or elastic are very popular. On certain holidays there are real fights which can take a nasty turn between groups with slings, and contestants may be seriously injured. There are popguns or peashooters such as *Kütlek* and *Patlangaç*, and waterguns, called *Çırtlamık*. Some shoot nails and can be used for shooting birds, or they shoot arrows called *Çakmaklı*. Traps and birdlime are also abundant for catching birds or other small animals. Among musical and noisemaking instruments the most common are whistles made of wood, straw, bone, or other material, and some thirty different names of these have been recorded. There are noisemaking rattles such as *Vızılık* from Erzincan/Kemaliye; it is a small piece of wood with three holes in it. A string is passed through these holes, and when the strings are pulled at both ends the wood piece revolves making a buzzing sound. *Şingirdak* from Bolu consists of two nested cylinders which make a noise when shaken. Or *Çingirdak* from Isparta is a tin box containing small pebbles which rattle when shaken. *Şakıldak* from Ordu/Ulubey is made of the bark of trees with hemp hanging from one end. When shaken to and fro, then suddenly shaken strongly back, it makes a sound like a gunshot.

Large playthings like swings, revolving wheels, seesaws, and roundabouts, though primitive, work effectively and efficiently. One kind called *Çıkrıncak* is very interesting. It works both as seesaw and roundabout. One vertical pole four and one-half meters high has attached to its axis another horizontal pole four meters long. It moves so speedily that some contests are even organized. This device is so widespread that nearly thirty different names have been recorded. The names are often onomatopoeic since, while revolving, this instrument makes a creaking, rustling sound. Kinds of seesaws are also abundant, some twenty names having been recorded. Swings are most popular, and it is a springtime practice, especially for girls, to sing appropriate songs while swinging. There is also a peculiar toy from Gaziantep called *çıkışa*, which is a round, flat piece of wood with a groove making it like a spool; a string is wrapped round, and when one end of the string is held letting the spool unwind and drop, it climbs up again itself and will endlessly continue up and down. (Once this toy was a worldwide craze under the name of Yo-Yo.)

Two large categories of games which are most popular in rural Anatolia are the *Astragals* or knucklebones games (*Aşık*), and the Ring game (*Yüzük Oyunu*). The first is more an outdoor game, yet it can also be played indoors;

the latter is more an indoor and table game. Knucklebones may have six sides, but four sides are more commonly used since they fall in four ways with the flat, concave, convex, or sinuous sides up; hence they are used for gambling instruments serving the purpose of dice. Not only does each of these six sides have dozens of different names according to region, but also different names indicate the way the bones are thrown, the game rules, or the animal from which it is taken. Knucklebones arose out of an earlier serious use of such instruments for magical divination and drawing lots to learn the future. Old Turkish texts show us that ancient Turkish rulers and statesmen threw knucklebones before making an important decision. And the survivals of this can be noted in some games today where they have a divination function. For instance there is a game called *Aşığım, Ne Adam?* ("My knucklebone, what sort of a man is he?"). In this game they try to discover a person's nature or character, since each side is called *tok* (satiated), *aç* (hungry), *alt* (donkey) and *üst* (bey). A similar game can be found in Gaziantep under the name of *Aşık Filan Ne Kişi?* Sometimes an *aşık* is cast to start another game, to decide who is going to start first, or to determine "it."

A large variety of *Aşık* are used for gambling. Sometimes a larger knucklebone is added to hit the smaller ones, either to dislodge it or transfer its place according to a borderline. This knucklebone is not only bigger in size but heavier. To make it heavier they pierce it to the hollow inside, which is then filled with molten lead. It is such an old Turkish game that it is mentioned in the tales of *Dede Korkut*, tales of the Oghuz Turks in Central Asia during the Middle Ages. *Aşık* also can be used in combination with other games such as an astragal game played by girls in Tekirdağ where the player throws her ball up in the air and before it falls down she must pick up as many knucklebones lying on the ground as she can. There are also guessing games played with knucklebones. For instance, there is a game called *Hıncı* from Gaziantep where one player holds a knotted handkerchief while another player hides a knucklebone in the garments of one of the other players, using ruses to bewilder the other players so that no one sees which player he has placed it with. Then all ask "Who has the knucklebone?" The players who cannot guess are beaten with the knotted handkerchief; the one who can guess right can hide the knucklebone next. There is a combination of knucklebone with marbles, again in Gaziantep, in a game called *Aşık-Gülle*, where knucklebones are hit and dislodged by marbles.

The second very popular category of folk games in Turkey is *Yüzük Oyunu* (The Ring Game), which is a guessing game (see Fig 4). On a tray there are usually eleven coffee cups, one of which covers a ring (or sometimes a seal). There are two teams. After determining by some method which team is going



Figure 4. The Ring Game, *Yüzük Oyunu*.

to start, the other team either turn their backs or they leave the room while the first team hides the ring under one of the inverted cups. Their opponents try to guess the cup under which the ring is hidden. If the opposite team is right with their first guess, it is their game, and the functions are reversed. This is the most important moment of the game, and victories are celebrated with cheers. If they find the ring with the second guess, the hiding side gets eleven points, and the ring is hidden again. If it is not found the first or the second time for each cup upturned, the hiding side adds to its score by adding the number of cups upturned to the eleven points from the lifting of the second cup. This is done until three unopened cups are left. If it is found in the first or the second of these cups, the hiding reverts to the guessing team. If it is not found in these two of the remaining three cups, the hiding team continues the game. Whichever teams gets fifty points first is the winning side. Of course this is a simple description of the game, as there are many more rules,

either basic ones about making progress or special ones about “what happens if. . . .” More than a game, the Ring Game is an institution, where very many beliefs, rhymes, and penalties are involved, and sometimes there is even serious tormenting of the winning team. If the guessing side finds the ring under the first cup, they may give a chance to the other team by hiding the ring under only four cups. If they find it by lifting two cups, the hiding ones lose eleven points; if they find the ring in the other, then the hiding ones lose twenty-one points. If they cannot find it in the third cup, they lose twenty-one points. The number of cups, scores, and rules vary according to regions. In some places it is played with six, seven, nine, or twelve. In some places the finishing score is 100, but if a team makes 99 points, it loses all these points and must start all over again. For both roles—that is, hiding and guessing—some methods of play have been developed. The guessing roles have their own charms, rhymes, or the observation of cues, including the attitudes and faces of the hiding team. The hiding team in turn has methods of deliberately misleading their opponents. Ring games are not always played with cups. Sometimes the ring is hidden in the hand, or under hats, towels, or handkerchiefs. When it is hidden in hands, the ring is threaded on a long circle of string and the players sit in a circle, holding the string with both hands. In the middle of the circle is the “it.” When the game starts the players stretch their fists to both sides in order to touch the fists of the players on either side. Holding their hands thus, they transfer the ring secretly from hand to hand quickly, and “it” in the middle, by studying the hands and faces, tries to spot who actually holds the ring. If the ring is thus discovered, then the one who had it changes place with the one who was in the middle. Sometimes instead of a ring a reel is used. The general name for this ring game is *Cicoz*.

Anatolian ball games are also very rich in number and kind. One is the favorite game of girls. The ball is tossed up, and before it falls down a certain action is done; or the ball is thrown and is accompanied by a count or rhyme which must finish before the ball touches the ground. Another kind is a combination of a ball game with a racing game. Instead of touching by hand, a ball is thrown to the next runner. Or, the players of one team mount the players of the other team piggyback and they throw the ball to each other. If the ball falls to the ground or if it is caught by “it,” then the teams reverse their roles.

Another kind of ball game is throwing balls into holes dug in the ground. For instance, in the *Emenli* (*emen* means “hole”) *Top* from Çorum (Central Anatolia), the number of holes exceeds the number of players by one. The ball is thrown from a distance of four or five meters. If the ball enters the hole of another player, then the thrower mounts on his back. If the ball enters the extra hole called the hole of the Jinn (*cin emeni*) the others run, and the “it”

throws the ball at the runners. If the thrower hits one, he becomes “it.” In some ball games, instead of a hole the target is a goal. In Maraş (Southeast Anatolia) this goal is called *hınt*. Sometimes it is a large piece of stone called *Say*. One team stands next to this stone; the other team throws the ball to them. If the ball is caught by the other team before it touches the ground, then the thrower is out; if the team catches it after it touches the ground, they hit the stone with it and the thrower is out again. There is one interesting game called *Çindilli* from Konya (Central Anatolia) where the game played is like football, but instead of a ball a worn-out hat is used. In this game “it” tries to guard the hat with his feet and the others try to move it to a place further away. If “it” can get the ball which he has lost and hit one of the players with it, then the one who is hit becomes “it.”

There are ball games with sticks, clubs, or bats, mallets as used in pallmall, croquet, golf, and polo. For instance, in Malatya (Southeast Anatolia) in a game called *Eğir*, there is a well one-half meter wide called *Tandur*: a ball about the size of an orange is hit with a stick eighty to ninety centimeters long, one end of which is bent by heating so that this club looks like a polo stick. The aim of the game is to drive the ball into the hole with one stroke. In a game called *Col* from Bitlis/Ahlat (eastern Anatolia) teams try to make goals against the opposite team by hitting the ball with a stick. Instead of balls, in some places bones, knucklebones, cows’ hoofs, stones, cypress cones, and other things are used.

This brings us to games with sticks. The most widespread of these already has been mentioned, *Jirid*. In some games with sticks the purpose is to throw the stick like a javelin as far as possible, or to make it penetrate the ground. In other games penetrating the ground is not sufficient; it must also hit a previously placed stick. A very widespread game with sticks is called *çelik-çomak*, though there are dozens of other names according to the region, with slight changes of rules. A *çelik* is a small fairly thick piece of wood about a foot long, with each end pointed round off into a point. A longer stronger stick of three to four feet is called *çomak*. A long narrow hole approximately two feet long, six inches wide, and three inches deep is dug in the ground. The *çelik* is placed across it; one man raises the *çelik* with his *çomak* and sends it afield with a stroke and the other player tries to catch or touch it. If he succeeds in doing so, he gets possession of the hole and starts playing the game. If he fails, then the man who first sent the *çelik* avails himself of the first chance. The game has some resemblance to cricket, in which one side bats and the other bowls. When defending the hole the “batsman” tries to hit the *çelik* away with the stick, and every time he hits it he counts a point in his favor. In a variant of

this game one player sends the *çelik* as far as he can, then he starts measuring with his stick the distance between the hole and the place where the *çelik* has fallen. According to region he requires so many units of this stick in all to win the game. A few of the many other names for *çelik* are *düllük*, *şibibik*, for hole *çıldır*, *mene*, *yalak*, *güllük* and for the *çomak*, *holla*. Nearly fifty different kinds of *çelik-çomak* have been recorded. Sometimes sticks are thrown like a javelin to hit a target—usually a heap of stone or bricks; sometimes the players try to hit a target while they are running. Or a target may be a melon or pumpkin on a pole. Some games are played by sliding javelins along the ground.

There is a large variety of games with stones and pebbles in Anatolia. Some are a kind of warfare, with two teams throwing stones at each other, either with slings or hands. On occasion this results in very dangerous consequences, but some beliefs encourage this dangerous game. For instance, in Kayseri (Central Anatolia), if *Daş Döğüşü* (stone war) is not played, that year the crops will not be abundant. In some games big heavy stones are thrown as far as possible, and in other stone games a larger stone is used as a target and they try to hit it with their smaller stones. Or players make a mark on the ground and throw their flat stones at it aiming to get nearest to the mark. Alternatively, there may be small objects piled at the target, and whoever gets nearest to the greatest number of the scattered objects wins. In another kind “it” has his stone in a hole, and others throw their stones trying to knock the stone out of the hole; when the stone is knocked out, if he can catch the one who has dislodged his stone, “it” is replaced. Another stone game favorite with girls which requires skill and quickness is called *Beş Taş* (Five Stones). In the palm of her hand each girl holds five small round stones which she tosses in the air and tries to catch on the back of the hand. When four stones have fallen on the ground, one is retained in the hand and then tossed up. While it is in the air, with the same hand, she must grab the four stones that are on the ground and catch the one tossed before it reaches the ground. Then one stone is again tossed in the air and the four stones on the ground are grabbed one by one, each grab being preceded by the tossing and catching of a stone that is retained in the hand. This is repeated, grabbing two by two, then three and one, and then all together.

Of course a large variety of the *mangala* kind, already mentioned, belong to the games category of stones and pebbles. Yet another kind is *mill*, *merelles*, *morris*; a kind of board game. A rectangle is chalked on the pavement and divided into four squares by lines drawn parallel to the sides from the center of one side to that of the other. Standing at a fixed distance the players each take three stones, and each plays, in turn, with the object of placing his stones in a

straight line. If a stone is between two belonging to an opponent it may not be moved and is considered blocked. This is called *Üç Taş* (Three Stones) like Three Man Morris or Merrymen. The other kind, more like Nine Men's Morris, is similar, with the object of getting three stones in a line; it is called *Dokuz Taş* (Nine Stones) or *Dokurcun*. The origin of the Turkish game probably goes back to the Kirghiz, Kazak, and Uzbek tribes of Central Asia, where spreading nine stones called *Kumalak* was used in fortune-telling and divination. The Six Man Morris known in Britain and other countries seems to have been unknown in Turkey.

Space does not allow description of all categories of games, but nearly all the standard games are played by Anatolian peasants, including marble games; games with buttons, hazel nuts, beads, or seeds and other implements; chasing games; catching games; hide-and-seek games; hunting games; guessing games; daring and exerting games; acting games; and dramatic games. All these categories are played throughout Anatolia under different names. Their rules and regulations vary from place to place, as do their names, but in essence they are the same everywhere. In short, Anatolian games are a rich field of study not only for students of folklore, but also for linguists, since game terminology is very rich and varied.

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