# PLAY AND FOLKLORE

NO. 60, DECEMBER 2013

MUSEUMVICTORIA

# FROM THE EDITORS

This issue of *Play and Folklore* introduces a new design to match other publications produced by Museum Victoria. As usual, it includes a varied table of contents. Jean-Pierre Rossie describes the many ways sand is used by children of the Tunisian Sahara in their play, and their mastery of its properties in building complex constructions. He also explores the effects of massive social and environmental changes on the children's lives and their play.
Clare Needham uses extracts from oral history interviews to bring to life the childhood experiences of several people who grew up in Bendigo, Victoria from the early 1900s to the 1970s. She writes about the innovative way the interviews were used as part of the exhibition *Childhood: growing up in Bendigo*, and the city's official status as a 'child-friendly city'.
Extracts from Oswin Van Buuren's oral history interview by Gwenda Davey recount his childhood experiences and memories of school days in colonial Ceylon (Sri Lanka).
A book review by Kate Darian-Smith examines the richness and depth of Australian folklore research in the 21st century and the publication of a book of multicultural games is welcome news for adults and children wanting to expand their play repertoire.

There is a growing world-wide movement that seeks to give children the kinds of play experiences enjoyed by previous generations, providing safe places for street play, reconnecting children with nature and advocating for unstructured play which involves risk-taking. Our next issue will be a special edition focussing on outdoor play, and we welcome articles, letters, opinions and ideas on this topic. Please send your contributions to j.factor@unimelb.edu.au.

Gwenda Beed Davey, June Factor and Judy McKinty

*Play and Folklore*
Editors: June Factor, Gwenda Beed Davey and Judy McKinty
ISSN (printed) 1329-2463 ISSN (web) 1447-5969

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Two issues per year, published by History & Technology Department, Museum Victoria.
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Available on the web at http://museumvictoria.com.au/about/books-and-journals/journals/play-and-folklore
Design Layout: MV Design Studio

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# Sand as environment and material

## in Saharan children's play and toy-making activities

Jean-Pierre Rossie

In nomadic, semi-nomadic or sedentary communities living in an environment of sand dunes, children familiarise themselves very early with sand and readily use it in their games. These include pretend games related to weddings and female or male activities, games of motor skill involving movement, equilibrium, flexibility and fighting, and also games of cognitive skill such as board games and riddles with drawings. The 'toys' created with sand can be very simple – for example sand itself serving as play material for the small ones – but also quite complex, as in the case of a mosque and minaret made with wet sand by older children.

Fig.1. Ghrib girls building an enclosure with sand in front of their toy tent, Tunisian Sahara, 1975
Photographer – Jean-Pierre Rossie

The data comes from my fieldwork in the Tunisian Sahara in 1975 and 1977, the ethnographic literature and other documents on Saharan populations, and my research in Morocco from 1992 onwards. As this article is largely based on the play culture of Ghrib children it is useful to offer some information on this population. The environment of the Ghrib is part of the Grand Erg Oriental, situated below the salt lake Chott el Jerid in southern Tunisia. The terrain is fairly flat, with sand dunes here and there. In 1975 the Ghrib population was estimated at about 4,400 people. Nowadays this population is almost completely settled, mainly in the oasis of El Faouar, which has become a major urban centre.

Sometimes I refer to the writings of other authors, but as the original books and articles in which the documentation can be found are difficult to find, I have also mentioned the place where these data can be found in my own publications available on the internet.

# Sand as environment and material in Saharan children's play and toy-making activities

The natural environments in which Saharan children grow up consist only partly of sand surfaces (about 20 per cent) and for the rest they are stony and rocky, so it is both a stony desert and a sand desert. In this article I will speak mostly about children living near sand dunes or in an oasis. However, I will sometimes refer to the playful use of sand by Moroccan children who do not live in an environment of sand.

Ghrib toddlers living in tents in the 1970s easily had the opportunity to explore the playful possibilities offered by sand. A game that amused small children a lot was to find a small object slightly pushed under fine sand, and somewhat older children used a long thorn to try to pick up a date hidden in one of a series of holes juxtaposed in a sandy slope.

Among the Ghrib, both girls and boys used their sandy environment for many pretend games. For example, girls often created open-air houses large enough for household, dinner, mother and wedding play. Two types of small houses are most often found – the house using a hollow in the sand made suitable for girls' play and the small house with little walls built of wet sand. The game of the wedding feast, very much loved by Saharan and North African girls, was played by the Ghrib girls in the sand on which they erected a tent in miniature (fig. 1). Boys from the age of about six years had fun in pushing over the dunes their self-made vehicles, with wheels of tin cans attached to a long stick, and also pulling a cart made with two palm branches. Two young boys became a human car, being at the same time driver and car.

Sand dunes were used as an environment in many play activities of Ghrib children, but mostly for boys' skill games such as crawling on their knees, walking each other like wheelbarrows or tumbling down from a dune. Sliding down a dune was done by sitting on a branch of a date palm tree (fig. 2) and friendly fighting between boys often took place on soft sand. In one particular game an older boy, whose legs were buried in the sand up to his knees, was kicked by some other boys running around him while the 'buried one' defended himself by thrashing his arms at them.

In the ethnographic and other literature on the Sahara I found some information that corroborates

Fig.2. Ghrib boy sliding down a dune after a rare rain shower, Tunisian Sahara, 1975
Photographer – Jean-Pierre Rossie

the data on the role of sand in the games of Saharan children. For example, Tuareg girls were observed playing scenes of nomadic life in the sand with toys representing dromedaries and warriors (Lhote 1944: 113, pl. VIII; Rossie 2005: 64). Digging a small well in the sand was sometimes part of household play, as evidenced by a photo taken in the Saoura Valley in the Algerian Sahara (Rossie 2008: 204). Toddlers among the Moors of Mauritania have a special way to get what they want from adults by going to lie on the burning sand, knowing that adults will bend to their will (Béart 1955: 145; Rossie 2008: 164).

Today Moroccan children living in settled communities use sandy environments in their play, especially if they live at or near the Atlantic Ocean. Just as Ghrib boys do, Moroccan boys from the coastal town Essaouira try to perform somersaults from the top of a dune, and teenagers and adolescents play football on all Moroccan beaches. Small Moroccan girls and boys amuse themselves by filtering sand and playing with mud. On a dune at the beach of Tan-Tan two girls created a store and a high mound from which their teddy could observe the scene (fig. 3) (Rossie 2008: 273-274).

Fig.3. Two sisters playing in their shop at the beach, Tan-Tan, Moroccan Sahara, 2006
Photographer – Khalija Jariaa

## Playing with sand and creating sand toys

In the 1970s when the Ghrib were still semi-nomadic and wandered around with their animals in search of pasture, especially in the spring, the children lived with their families in small settlements of a few tents. This was reflected in their play when they were in the desert as well as in the oasis. A miniature tent set up in the sand, used by Ghrib girls for their doll and household play, was surrounded by small sand walls imitating the tent enclosure (fig. 1). A few indications suggest that other Saharan girls among the Tuareg *(Touaregs: 12 photographes témoignent,* 1993), the Moors (Béart 1955: 840) and the Sahrawi (Pinto Cebrián 1999: 103, 110) also built tents in the sand and possibly a small camp in imitation of a real camp (Rossie 2008: 59-63).

The miniature house is a toy for children of sedentary or sedentarizing populations and it is found throughout the Sahara and North Africa. As with the toy tent, the small houses are mostly made by girls. However, recent information from the Anti-Atlas shows that boys also make such houses, but use these to play male occupations such as working in a bakery or a restaurant and being a tailor or a road constructor (Rossie 2008: 260-266).

In the 1970s, influenced by the evolution of their society from a nomadic life to a sedentary life in the oasis of El Faouar, small and older Ghrib girls of the Tunisian Sahara made small houses used for make-believe play related to wedding, dinner and household activities. Small boys may participate in these play activities and often an older girl is the play leader. Several types of sand houses exist, including houses with a flat roof or with a dome-shaped roof.

To make such miniature houses a small wall of wet sand forming a square or rectangle must be built. Twigs, reeds and possibly pieces of cardboard are disposed on the walls, but without covering the entire space. Once the house is finished rags representing mats are placed on the ground. Making a small house with a dome-shaped roof needs a know-how that only older girls possess. To build such a miniature house one must be able to create a well-rounded dome in wet sand (fig. 4). Since it is difficult to use such sand houses, having only a small opening as entry, the play activity is limited to the construction. There are also larger open-air houses delimited by little sand walls that surround small spaces representing the main room, the kitchen and the storage room (Rossie 2008: 76-79, 112-113).

Fig.4. Ghrib girls using wet sand to create small houses with a dome-shaped roof, Tunisian Sahara, 1975
Photographer – Jean-Pierre Rossie

# Sand as environment and material in Saharan children's play and toy-making activities

In May 1975, at the natural source of El Faouar, which no longer exists, boys from six to 13 years created different constructions with wet sand, such as a livestock yard and a market. Another construction made by a 12-year-old boy represented the tomb of a local saint. In the same place and at the same time a 13-year-old boy, showing a remarkable aesthetic sense, created a fine mosque with an elegant minaret and a courtyard (fig. 5). At another spot a taxi was made with wet sand by a boy about the same age, who afterwards pushed it on a sand dune. At that time, when in the oasis of El Faouar there existed only one telephone – at the police station – Ghrib boys created their own telephone line by digging a long and narrow trench in the sand and covering it with twigs and sand. Alternately speaking and listening at both ends of the line, two boys passed messages.

Sand is also used for several games of intellectual skill played by boys and girls. I watched Ghrib children playing a series of games based on the movement of pieces (stones, goat droppings, date kernels) on a board which evolved from the three-on-a-line board to the checkerboard, all drawn in the sand. During the Moussem or the annual feast of Tan-Tan in southern Morocco, I have seen girls and women play the popular Sahrawi game of *sig*, a game of strategy played on a small mound of sand.

Some Ghrib children's guessing games needed a drawing in the sand – for example the riddle of the lost key, based on a short story of an adult going to the oasis to work but losing his house key, a key which is drawn in the sand while telling this story. Another riddle with a drawing clearly shows the transmission of knowledge about the Ghrib social structure. A small child must choose along which of four paths a child might try to escape to avoid punishment, although each path is blocked by an adult holding a stick (fig. 6). These adults are the father, grandfather, paternal uncle and maternal uncle. The correct answer indicates that the child must take the path where the maternal uncle stands, because he will not hit the child as he is not obliged to exercise authority, which belongs to the paternal family.

Fig.5. An older Ghrib boy and his mosque with an elegant minaret, Tunisian Sahara, 1975
Photographer – Jean-Pierre Rossie

Through their play activities the children mentioned in this article transmit all types of content in relation to the natural and human environment in which they grow. When creating toys these children not only exchange information on the materials that are useful but also on the skills needed to use the toys, and at the same time on the positive or negative attitudes of adults in these contexts.

Although change has always existed in the Sahara and North Africa this change certainly accelerated during the 20th century, and more especially since the Second World War. The transition from village to town, urbanization, education, mass media, toy or entertainment industries, high technology, consumerism, migrants and tourists have more or less strongly influenced children's play and toy-making activities (Rossie 2005/2013: 161-182; 2008: 361-364). The progressive sedentarization of nomads in the Sahara undoubtedly reduces the availability of sandy environments for children, and the massive importation of cheap plastic toys not only disrupts the tradition of creating toys oneself but also replaces children's initiative with an attitude of viewing toys as a gift of adults, an attitude which until recently was almost non-existent in the communities concerned. However, I want to stress that, from my observations, these changes do not seem to create much conflict for Moroccan children between the transmission of tradition and the acceptance of innovations.

## Sand as environment and material in Saharan children's play and toy-making activities

A few aspects of the evolution of the Ghrib population in the 1970s are mentioned at the beginning of this article. I would like, however, to add what Gilbert J. M. Claus told me during his stay in Belgium in July 2011. On this occasion I asked him about the current situation of Ghrib children's play in and with sand and he told me that about 20 years ago the natural source of El Faouar, where children used to create constructions with sand, disappeared, and this caused a decrease in such play activities as rainy days were very rare. Yet in recent years, rain has become not such a rare event in the Tunisian Sahara, and nowadays it may even rain in summer. Now that the availability of wet sand has become more common one sees young children having fun with it. Girls and boys more often use wet sand to build small houses or other constructions, and the game of sliding down a dune has reappeared. All this shows how games that seemed outdated resurface when favorable conditions return.

*Dr Jean-Pierre Rossie is a sociocultural anthropologist researching Saharan and North African children's play, games and toys and an associated researcher of the Musée du Jouet in Moirans-en-Montagne, France (www.musee-du-jouet.fr). His publications are available on www.sanatoyplay.org and on www.scribd.com (search: Jean-Pierre Rossie).*

Fig.6. Riddle for small Ghrib children based on a design in the sand, Tunisian Sahara, 1975
Photographer – Jean-Pierre Rossie

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Unless otherwise specified, Jean-Pierre Rossie's publications are available on his website: http://www.sanatoyplay.org/english/en-publications.htm

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# Childhood: growing up in Bendigo

Clare Needham

Childhood is a defining time, considerably shaped by the place in which one grows up. In 2012, in my capacity as Curator, City History and Collections at Bendigo Art Gallery, I curated an exhibition exploring childhood in the Bendigo region of Victoria. The exhibition, titled *Childhood: growing up in Bendigo*, was held at Bendigo Art Gallery's satellite social history exhibition space, Post Office Gallery, from 10 November 2012 to 24 February 2013. Rather than drawing on formal collections and archives, the exhibition was curated by calling on the hidden childhood treasures and stories from the homes and memories of Bendigo locals past and present (fig.1).

Bendigo has been a playground for generations of children, exploring, learning and growing.[1] Today it is known as a 'child friendly city', a city that engages with children directly, and is continuously monitoring and responding to the changing needs of children in the community.[2] The voice of children has not always been so validated, and there are few first-hand accounts of early Bendigo history told through the eyes of children. Indeed, even broad reference to children in historical documentation is limited. Considering this, the exhibition *Childhood: growing up in Bendigo* focussed primarily on the childhood experience of the generations who were present to tell their story firsthand. It was therefore by no means a definitive account of Bendigo childhood through history, nor did it represent the myriad childhoods experienced in Bendigo. It was a collage of sorts, drawing together the stories of those who came forward to contribute their memories as well as childhood objects for display, providing a snapshot of the diverse and layered lives of those who have grown up in the Bendigo region over the past one hundred years (fig. 2).

Despite childhoods in Bendigo being lived in markedly different times and from a range of cultural foundations, iconic features of the physical landscape of the Bendigo region, as well as civic events, were common threads that connected memories. While sharing a geographical location, each experience of childhood was, of course, unique, impacted by social, cultural, economic and familial nuances as well as things distinct to certain generations, such as world events or significant social, ideological or technological change. In this way, by and large the childhood experience of those who grew up in Bendigo mirrored that of many Australian children, ensuring visitors to the exhibition, who themselves grew up in Australia, found many resonances.

Fig.1. Graeme Kirkwood checking out his childhood 'ging' on display at Post Office Gallery, Bendigo, 2012 Photographer – Bill Conroy

In the exhibition, treasures and keepsakes including toys, photographs, souvenirs and games sat alongside 40 oral history recordings of 'one minute memories', recorded and edited with support from the Australian Broadcasting Commission's regional service ABC Open, Central Victoria and Strategic Communication students at La Trobe University, Bendigo. The treasures and keepsakes provided a ready link to distinct eras and generational trends, but most of all, both visitors and contributors enjoyed the personal stories.

The 40 recordings were presented on vintage rotary dial telephones at listening posts in the gallery (fig. 3). Visitors could select whose story they wished to listen to by dialling the corresponding number on each telephone. The individual voices of

the contributors were emotionally charged as they recollected tales of local haunts, childhood games and mischief, defining moments and community events. The telephone offered an intimate listening space for visitors and allowed them to feel as though they were listening in on a conversation between friends, or as though the interviewee was speaking directly to them.

The parameters of the project were such that anyone could contribute (as long as they had spent a significant part of their childhood in the region), and could share whatever they liked. The stories gathered were for the most part quite positive, even when people were recounting difficult times. This may be because people often look back upon childhood with nostalgia. It may also be that children are, by and large, resilient and resourceful, and may have seen times that adults experienced as traumatic and difficult as not only normal, but in some cases adventurous.

Interestingly, of the 60 people interviewed (with only 40 of these interviews able to be included in the exhibition), most spoke about play. What was at the forefront of their memories of growing up was not school or family, but the unencumbered, creative world of childhood play. Recollections included stories of spontaneous, whole-of-neighbourhood games of kick-the-tin, mudpie 'baking', tea parties, adventures in the bush, yabbying and alley contests (also known as marbles).

Douglas Every grew up in Bendigo in the early 1900s, and remembers time not spent at school being spent on one home-grown activity after another: bird nesting (collecting bird eggs), swapping cigarette cards, playing footy and cricket, and making kites. He also remembers playing alleys and playing with his 'ging' (a shanghai or slingshot), which was constantly confiscated![3]

Dennis O'Hoy grew up in the centre of Bendigo on Bridge Street in the 1940s, and remembered his childhood with great fondness:

> Living right in the centre of Bendigo, I could always go and play at the old mines. One of the things we used to do as children, and I loved it, was we'd get sheets of tin and slide down all the mullock heaps[4] … and behind the showgrounds was the hill and every

Fig.2. Visitors enjoying the exhibition *Childhood: growing up in Bendigo* at Post Office Gallery, Bendigo, 2012
Photographer – Bill Conroy

Fig.3. Visitor listening to childhood memories on rotary dial telephones at Post Office Gallery, Bendigo, 2012
Photographer – Bill Conroy

Fig.4. Ros Maber and siblings, Elmore, circa 1962
Image courtesy of Ros Maber

> day when we had a chance we'd go down in our billycarts … every one of us would put pennies on [the tram tracks] and watch the tram squeeze the pennies … and marbles, I used to cheat a lot by using the tombolas and knock everyone else's off … We'd get up to lots of mischief![5]

Geoff Hocking grew up on Chum Street in Golden Square in the 1950s. While the little girls around him were learning ballet and taking their dolls for walks, Geoff remembers he and his brother and the neighbourhood boys playing cricket, long games of kick-the-tin (ranging far and wide across the neighbourhood), burrowing deep inside mullock heaps to make caves, and playing with Dinky cars on the big piece of open ground near Chum Creek. The best game, he remembers, was the billycart grand prix:

> We would take off from the top of Marong Road and speed all the way down to Golden Square, across Chum Street, McKenzie Street and the creek. We stationed 'cockatoos' on each crossing to warn us if there was any approaching traffic – there weren't that many cars in the fifties. No-one got hit, everyone came off at one stage or another, there were no crash helmets but some boys wore buckets on their heads with a little hole cut out. The billycart was a plank of wood, two pram wheels at the front and two at the back.[6]

Ros Maber grew up in Elmore in the 1960s and remembers spending weekends and school holidays with her siblings playing in the cubby house their dad had made (fig. 4). They would 'cook' mud cakes, and play shops with toy money in an old tractor cabin behind the back shed.[7] Ian Ellis grew up in North Bendigo at the same time and also remembers spending a lot of time outside making his own fun. Like many Bendigo children before him, he would head off into the bush to climb trees, make tunnels in the bulrushes and play down by the creek.

An increasing variety of toys and games were available for children in the 1960s and 1970s, many mechanised and battery operated. Despite their increased availability, Ian remembers that new toys were still reserved for special occasions like birthdays and Christmas. When he was five, Ian was given one of the first remote-controlled battery-operated cars on the market for Christmas (fig. 5):

> It was a shiny red mustang convertible! You operated it by turning the wheel on the remote control, but you'd have to follow it around because the remote was connected to the car with a cord. As soon as I got the convertible, everyone wanted to have a go and I wouldn't let them! There weren't the technologies there are today … [and] … batteries were expensive,

Fig.5. Remote-controlled mustang convertible, c1965.
Ian Ellis Collection
Photographer – Ian Hill

you couldn't just go out and buy a whole pack of ten, so you didn't use them a lot.[8]

What Stephen O'Hoy (fig. 6) remembers most about growing up in Bendigo in the 1970s was the sense of freedom. On the weekends and school holidays he would jump on his bike in the morning and head out to the bush with friends to go fishing (or yabbying), not returning until late in the day (without there being any panic). Other memories include '…collecting aluminium cans to trade in for money at a local scrap merchant, and spending lots of summer lying on the hot concrete at the local pool.'[9]

In addition to making their own fun, new forms of entertainment were available. Many children of the 1970s and 1980s recall spending holidays and weekends visiting the Cherry Berry Farm, Arakoon Water Park, Zoo Roller Disco roller skating rink, the Big Bendi waterslide or playing video games at 'pinnie'[10] arcades.

In 2009, the City of Greater Bendigo was the first city in Australia to be recognised as a child-friendly city. In 2006, the council undertook a consultation process with the children of the City to find out what it was like for them growing up in Bendigo, and to identify their needs and aspirations now and for the future. The consultation was based on UNICEF's *'Child Friendly Cities Framework for Action'* and the UNESCO 'Growing up in Cities International Project'. The process engaged with children directly to assess how their needs were being met in the community and to develop a plan of action that responded to them as equal citizens within the community.

The report provides significant information about the way children today perceive both Bendigo and the world around them. In comparing the responses of children today to the memories of children of generations past, several interesting conclusions can be drawn. Unlike generations before them, bushland and parkland are identified by today's children as places that they rarely visit, and commercial places of entertainment are amongst children's favourite places. Our consumer-driven society is increasingly geared towards spending time in shops and participating in commercially-driven activities. Interestingly, however, the study identified that children still want time for free play, leisure activities and hobbies. Swimming pools, as for so many generations before them, are still one of the favourite places for children to spend time. The study also identifies the fact that very few children in the City of Greater Bendigo today are able to roam further than the boundaries of their home without adults, highlighting that we live in a safety-conscious society

and children are not exploring their neighbourhoods as they did in the past.[11]

It is when considering a timeline of childhood experience across generations that differences become apparent and similarities emerge. The exhibition *Childhood: growing up in Bendigo* highlighted the common ground that can be found despite the uniqueness of individual experience. Endorsing the voice of everyday people, oral history recollections extend beyond the restrictions of official documents, allowing an avenue for people to contribute their personal experience to a bigger story. The sharing and exchange of stories and histories is a deeply personal and generous act, and plays an important role in connecting people and generations, and fostering understanding. Oral history recordings also provide key insights into the social context of particular points in history and are wonderful resources for research and understanding of particular times and places. The recordings collected for the exhibition have been deposited in the collections of several local historical societies (as chosen by the participant), to be utilised by generations to come. Discussions are also in process with Museum Victoria about drawing the complete compilation of stories into the Australian Children's Folklore Collection.

Fig.6. Stephen O'Hoy, David Gee and Walter Gee playing with a toy lion and drum, 1975
Image courtesy of Dennis O'Hoy and *The Bendigo Advertiser*

*Clare Needham is Curator, City History and Collections, at the Bendigo Art Gallery.*

Extracts from this paper were first published in the catalogue essay for the exhibition *Childhood: growing up in Bendigo, Bendigo Art Gallery, 2012.*

## ENDNOTES

1. For consistency and efficiency in most cases I have referred to the City of Greater Bendigo with the more efficient title of Bendigo. This is not to discount the many individual towns and communities that make up this broad council area and the unique aspects of childhood experience in each of these communities.

2. The City of Greater Bendigo, *Building a Child-Friendly City: Children's consultations Final Report,* October 2008, pdf accessed September, 2012 from www.bendigo.vic.gov.au/Residents_and_Services/Children_and_Family_services/Building_a_child_friendly_city

3. Personal memoirs of Douglas Every, unpublished manuscript written in the 1980s.

4. Mullock heaps are large piles of earth and stones, dug from the ground during mining. In Bendigo they are relics of the area's gold mining days.

5. Interview with Dennis O'Hoy, Bendigo, September 2012.

6. Interview with Geoff Hocking, Bendigo, August, 2012.

7. Interview with Ros Maber, Elmore, September 2012.

8. Interview with Ian Ellis, Bendigo, September 2012.

9. Email correspondence with Stephen O'Hoy, September 2012.

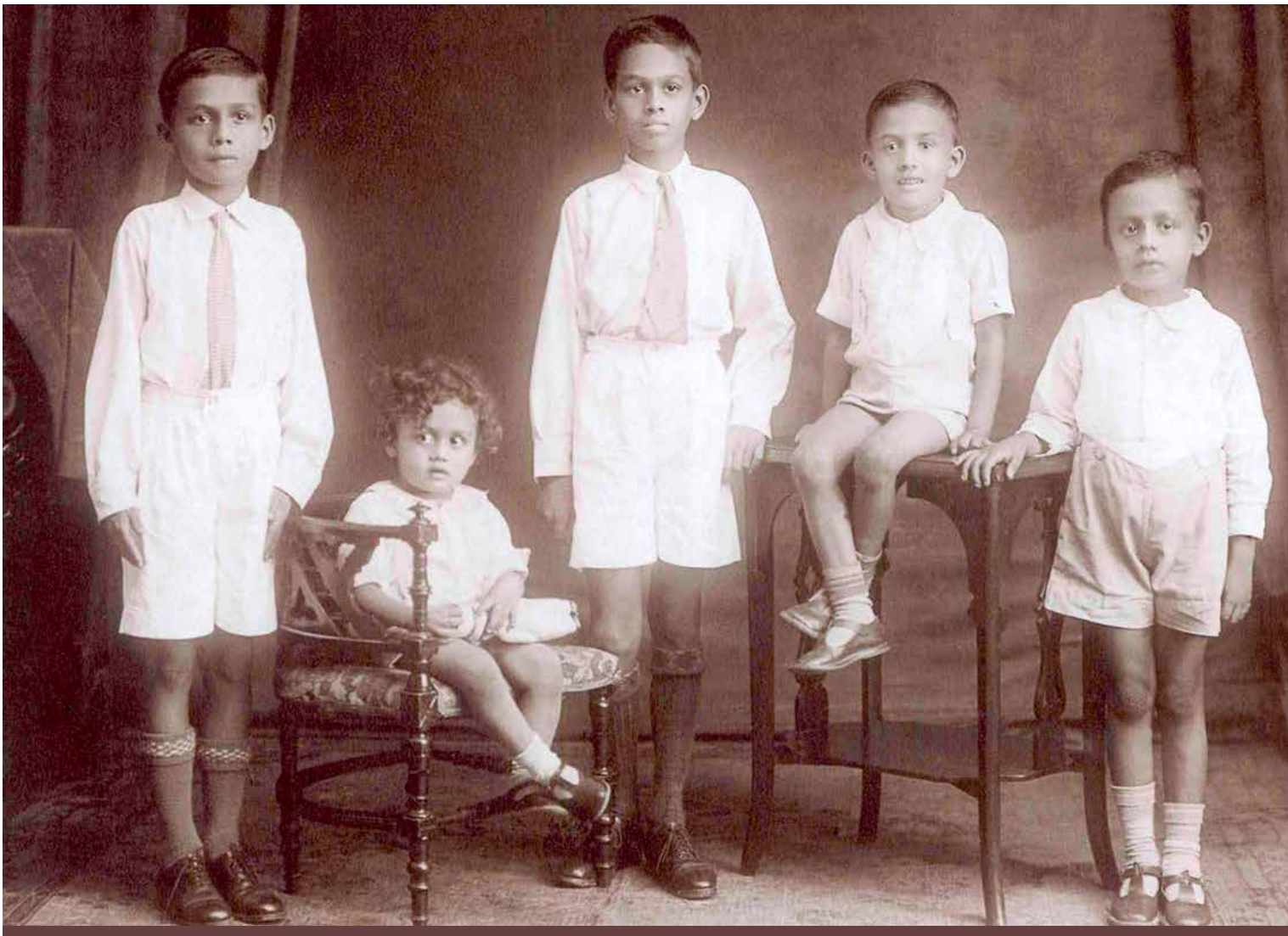
10. 'Pinnie' is short for pinball machine.

11. See *Building a Child-Friendly City: Children's consultations Final Report*, October 2008.

# Cobras and cricket: childhood in colonial Ceylon

Oswin Van Buuren

Oswin Van Buuren grew up in Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) when the country was under British rule. His father worked for the government and was moved around frequently so, after starting school in Ratnapura, Oswin was transferred to Wesley College, a boarding school in Colombo, around the age of seven. He and his brothers attended Wesley College, boarding in private houses, until they were evacuated during World War II. In 1969 Oswin migrated to Australia. He lived with his family in Melbourne and worked as a draftsman for the Victorian Railways until he retired. He was interviewed by Gwenda Davey on 28 August 1988, in the Melbourne suburb of Caulfield, for the Featherston *'Talking Chair'* exhibit in the Children's Museum's *'You're It!'* exhibition. He died in 2001. This is an edited extract from the original interview, which we are publishing with the permission of the Van Buuren family.



Oswin Van Buuren, aged nine or ten years, with his brothers. From left: Oswin, Frederick, Denver, Brian and Trevor
Image courtesy of the Van Buuren family

# Cobras and cricket: childhood in colonial Ceylon

OVB: I was born in 1925, in a little town called Nuwara Eliya, which is in Sri Lanka, and I don't have much recollection of that town because I think when I was about one year old we moved house from Nuwara Eliya. Then we went to a place called Batticaloa, which is on the east coast, and there, too, we must have lived for about two or three years, and then we moved to another town called Ratnapura, which is about 40 or 50 miles from Colombo, the main capital of Ceylon...

The one memory I have of Batticaloa is that I remember my mother buying milk, and the cow used to be brought to the doorstep and milked at the doorstep, and the milk would be put into a jug and given to her, and she paid something like five cents a pint. It was so cheap, you see, and you'd get it straight from the cow...

I started school in Ratnapura, then left Ratnapura when I was in about the third standard, and came to a town called Madampe. Our schooling there was only a very small amount, because then what happened to us was that we [went to] a boarding school in Colombo. It was Wesley College.

GD: How did you like being a boy in Colombo, what did you think of that?

OVB: Oh, we went through a hard time sometimes, because we were not boarded in the school, we were in private houses. I remember one private house, which was really a place that was trying to make money, I think, from boarders, rather than do it as a goodwill gesture, so we were treated terribly sometimes. We were given food to eat which was not given to them [the owners]. They cooked food specially for themselves. We were cooked a different type of food and we were given it to eat early, and they ate later, the people in the house. So, I remember very well that we used to quietly get up in the night and raid the pantry (laughs), and eat something, because it was really bad food. At the end, we complained too much I think, and my mother and father took us out from there and put us in another boarding [house]... [Finally] we moved to Mrs Joseph's place and there, of course, we lived 'til we left school.

GD: And what was that like, Mrs Joseph's place?

OVB: Mrs Joseph wasn't bad. She was also a **teacher in Wesley College, but she was also a very strict disciplinarian and she was very religious-minded, so we had to go to Sunday school on Sunday, church, church again, and church in the evening. So we went about four times to church, yes (laughs). We went to the Methodist church.**
**She was a very strict disciplinarian and she believed in these morning prayers, so we used to have to pray, and we lived next to the college, just next door, and we could hear the bell – the big bell used to toll to start in school – and we could hear the bell ring but she wouldn't let us go 'til we finished the prayers. The prayers had got to be said first, before we went to school.**

GD: Even if it meant that you were going to be late?

OVB: Even if it meant that we were going to be late. We sometimes had to be punished because we were late to school, because we had to say these prayers. It was more important to her, although she herself had to go to school because she was a teacher...

GD: You must have learnt to pray very fast!

OVB: Yes, (laughs) – that's why I don't pray now!

...I remember going to school in Ratnapura, and we used to go in a cart which was drawn by a bull. Four boys – [me] and my three other brothers (laughs). My younger brother, he had learnt that the one way to drive this bull, to make the bull go faster, was to bite its tail, so he used to pick up its tail and bite it and the bull would run for all it's worth!
We used to go to school in this cart, but sometimes what happens [is] it rains, you know – being in the tropics it rains a lot. It rains the whole day while we're at school, and coming back the road used to be under water so we had to take a boat, and we get into a boat at one end and the cart goes through. The driver can somehow or other get the bull through, and the boat brings us across the water and we get off at the other side and get back into the cart and go.

It was an area that often went under flood, so we looked forward to the floods, and it was for us a great thrill to travel in this boat...

GD: What else do you remember about that early period in Ratnapura?

OVB: Oh, I remember in school, up to the fifth standard I think, it was mixed – from there onwards it was the girls' school, you see? So I remember, the one thing that we had to learn was to knit. I can remember we used to get, if you know what the coconut palm is like, in the leaf you get what is known as an 'eagle'. We get the middle of that – it's a fairly stiff bit – so we used to be given two bits of 'eagle', and we used to have to knit with this – the knitting needles…

GD: What kind of things did you make with the needles?

OVB: Oh we just learned the basic knit, so that we could make a scarf or something – everyone was making a scarf, okay, and it was more a fun for us than actually the knitting...

GD: You wouldn't exactly need scarves in the tropics, would you?

OVB: No, we didn't need scarves really, but just that we had to learn to knit, you see. It seemed to be an essential part of upbringing that you learned to knit, and specially since it was a girls' school...

GD: That was when you were what, nearly seven?

OVB: Yes, when I went to Wesley, there in the college.

GD: What other things did you learn in those first two years at school?

OVB: Oh I learned the basic things of alphabet, and reading and writing. See, the thing is, we were akin to an English education because Ceylon belonged to the British, you see – at least was influenced by the British. At that stage it was still British, so all the education system and all was British. We were taught in English, and all the language was English.

GD: Were you taught Sinhalese as well?

OVB: No. Now what happened was that we had to learn Sinhalese in the third, fourth standard as a second language, but once I went to college then we didn't have to learn Sinhalese at all, you know? We learnt everything in English 'til we came to the eighth grade, where the whole system was changing round and then they said, 'Now we've got to learn Sinhalese as a second language', and back we went, to learn Sinhalese.

GD: How old would you have been then, roughly, in the eighth grade?

OVB: Oh, about 14... Then what happened is that the War broke out, and that didn't affect us very much 'til the Japanese came into the War. When the Japanese came into the War there was a threat that they were coming to occupy Ceylon that time, you see. And then, oh, the Sinhalese all vanished again – we didn't learn Sinhalese any more.
And then in 1942, I think, we were evacuated from Colombo. Colombo became a dangerous place. The school was taken over for a hospital and we went back to where my mother and father stayed, which was a place called Madampe, and there we went to school, locally. It was a Christian Brothers' college, one of the Roman Catholic schools, and the last two years of my education was finished there.

GD: And what was that like, the Christian Brothers' college?

...I remember one punishment that they gave me one day when I was in the senior – doing my HSC really – and oh, some mathematical problem, something that I couldn't do. [The teacher] said: 'Oh, you have to be punished for it'. The playing field was attached to the school and it had got a little sort of thorn on it, you know, some little creepers that used to grow – a very thorny creeper – and he said, 'I want you to go to the playing field and collect a thousand thorns', and I said, 'No way!' (laughs), so he marched me off to the Principal, who really punished me. He said: 'I'm not punishing you because you're not picking the thorns, it is that you were rude to another Christian Brother'.

GD: Mm, they sound like hard times.

OVB: Oh they were hard times, but the War was on, you see, and we had no alternative at that stage. I remember my father coming to the school and complaining to the Principal, you know, and telling him that this can't go on, but it didn't make any difference because they knew we couldn't go anywhere else, you know? That was the only school available in the area, and so we had to either take it or leave it...

GD: How many were there in the family? You've mentioned three brothers, did you have sisters as well?

OVB: I had four brothers and three sisters. Two sisters were born there, and one sister was born in Madampe, after we left Ratnapura.

GD: Were you the eldest in the family?

OVB: No, I was the second.

GD: Oh, and who did you mostly play with?

OVB: I played mostly, I think, with my third and fourth brothers, you know – three of us were always together.

GD: Can you tell me about some of the games you used to play, or the things you used to do when you weren't at school, and how you used to amuse yourselves?

OVB: Oh we used to play cricket. Cricket was the game that we played you see, and when we went home, for instance, and didn't have a playing field or something, we just played it in the garden with a tennis ball and a bat made out of a coconut palm. You know, you can get the big coconut palms and you cut it that way and make a bat out of it, and three wickets were three sticks that we found in the garden somewhere. And we used to play a lot of cricket, I remember. In school of course we played tennis and cricket, and soccer, and all those games.

GD: Did you play any sort of imaginative games, like building little huts or cubby houses, that kind of thing?

OVB: We used to have secret hideouts. I remember, you know, when we went back for holidays. We used to live in a house that had a rocky sort of garden and we used to find these edges of rocks, and down below, little places that we called our secret hideouts. And we used to put trees or branches round it so that no one else could come in there – not that there was anyone daring to come in for the three of us, but still, you had to imagine that we have people coming to invade us or something. So we built these little huts and houses with sticks. In the tropics there is no difficulty in finding growth, you see, because everything grows. There are coconut palms, there are trees, and branches you can cut off and cover yourself with and cover all the house with, so we did this.

And I remember we used to skip a lot. Skipping was a big competition between the three of us, specially to see who would skip the longest, you know? (laughs)

GD: Did you ever say any kind of special rhymes or chants, while you were skipping?

OVB: No, I can't remember anything that we used to say. We just used to count the number of times we skipped so that was that record, you see, and we used to record it down in a book that you skipped 400 times or you skipped 300 times (laughs).

GD: What about ball games? Apart from cricket did you play ball games much, when you were very young?

OVB: Oh, we used to kick a football – I do remember one game, but they call [it] soccer here, you see? We usually called it football. A British thing again, you see? We used to kick this football around in the garden, because wherever we went we had very large gardens, so we used to kick this ball around, but other than that I can't remember any other ball games that we used to play.

GD: I know when we think of the tropics we always tend to think of things like snakes and so on. Were there many snakes around?

OVB: Oh yes, there were, but actually we didn't have so many poisonous snakes as you have here, we had only about two varieties which are poisonous, and most of the other varieties weren't poisonous you see, so we would see them crawling along, going across the lawn or something, and no one took any notice of them... I remember one incident when we were in Ratnapura, that we had this snake charmer – this fellow who blows a flute, and the snake comes out of his basket and dances – and the cobra, the snake, wouldn't dance – he wouldn't come out of his basket so [the snake charmer] said, 'There is another snake in this garden and I can get him for you, I can catch him'. So he went round and we had a little shed at the back which is full of firewood, and he blew this flute outside and he put his hand in and he caught this little cobra that was in this shed, you know? They are poisonous snakes but if you catch it in a certain

way it won't sting – and he caught him like that, and put him in his basket and took him away…

GD: What other sort of native animals were there, apart from snakes? Were there monkeys, or tigers?

OVB: Well there were quite a lot of monkeys around that we used to see, you know, quite close to the house.

GD: Were there ever any special occasions that you can remember with monkeys doing naughty things, or annoying things, or that caused any excitement in the family?

OVB: The only incident I remember is that a friend of ours owned a monkey, and this monkey used to sit just at the entrance to his house – he'd sit on this tree, and he somehow or another had a hatred for children. If a child came there he attacked the child, you know? He actually bit him. And one day one of the fathers of one of these children who were bitten brought a gun and just shot the monkey. He said, 'I'm not going to have this monkey biting these children any more.'

GD: I'd like to ask you something about the Wesley College where you went, in Colombo. Was that an all boys' school?

OVB: Yes, it was an all boys' school.

GD: And what hours would you go to school?

OVB: Oh, we started school at 8.30 and we finished at about 3.30. We had one hour for lunch.

GD: Can you tell me something about the kinds of games that you would have played when you were there? Did you in fact play games in the lunchtime break?

OVB: Oh yes, every lunch hour we played some game.When we were small you used to play Hopscotch, then we played Marbles.

I remember we used to play another game called Gudu, you know, and Gudu was played with sticks. It's a cheap game – I think that's why it was played. You had a small stick and you had a large stick, and you would dig a little hole in the ground and you put the little stick across the hole, and with the big stick you just knocked it up into [the air] and the others round you had to try and catch it. If they caught it, from that position they must throw it at you, and you have this long stick and you must hit it again – you must hit the little stick and see how far it went. Then you measured [the distance] with this long stick – the number of long sticks. It was a very native game, see, it was native to Sri Lanka and it was so cheap. I think that it didn't cost you any money to play – all you had to find was two little sticks, a long stick and a short stick. I remember we used to play it a lot in the lunch interval.

GD: Tell me about the Hopscotch that you said you played. Can you remember the pattern that you used to draw?

OVB: I don't know if we drew our own pattern but if we thought it, you know, on the way, we played a thing called 'Aeroplane Hopscotch', which was one square, then you went two squares and then one square and then another two squares, and then three squares down. And we played another Hopscotch which was just six squares in a rectangle. And we had this special stone that you used, you know? We used to polish the stone, look after it very well and keep it at home in a special container, and if you lost your stone you really got angry with someone [who] had robbed your stone. If you were a good Hopscotch player, the other man would try to rob your stone, you see, because it must be a lucky stone – more than your skill...

We used to play these two types of Hopscotch, I remember... The rectangular's much harder than the aeroplane. If you went right through the whole thing you've got a little circle that you could draw, and that was yours. You could step into it. If anyone else stepped into it he was out. So if you won a second time you'd get another circle attached to it, so it meant that you could go there and stand on both your feet and say, 'That is mine, I am in my area', you know? 'Nobody else can get it' (laughs)...

GD: And what about Marbles?

OVB: I used to play Marbles. The game was called 'Taws', where you'd chase each other's marble and you would have to hit somebody else's marble with your marble. And then we used to play another game which had three holes. What I remember about that game was if you lost, you had to stand at the other end and hold your knuckles on the

ground, and the person who won had to hit your knuckles with the marble, and it was tremendous (laughs). Sometimes he missed, but if he did hit your knuckles it really hurt (laughs). That was the punishment for losing.

GD: Did the marbles have any special names?

OVB: I don't know whether we used to have any special names for them, but there used to always be one marble that you played with, you know? The rest you gave away – if you lose you give away two marbles or three marbles or something, so you'd collect marbles, a big quantity of marbles at the end. [If] you've got a good marble player you collected boxes and boxes of marbles – all glass marbles. But we used to play the one with the three holes with little porcelain marbles... We'd know [the special one] at once because it's well pitted because it gets hit always, so you know at once this is the marble I play with. And you wouldn't lose that, you keep it safe.

GD: What about after school? If school finished at three o'clock when you first went to Wesley College what would you do after three o'clock?

OVB: This is amazing isn't it, compared to what children know today. We went home at three o'clock, we threw our books into that house, just dumped them anywhere, we didn't care, and we were out again to the park, because we had a park close by. We sometimes grabbed a biscuit or some drink or something that was made for us, and we were out in the park. We played cricket or football, or some game was immediately arranged, you see, and we didn't come home 'til six. We had to come home by six o'clock – that was one of the things that our boarding mistress insisted on. I remember the Catholic church used to ring the Angelus at six o'clock, and as soon as this Angelus rings we had to be at home. So, three o'clock to six o'clock we were in the park again, you see.

GD: Yes, and what else did you play in the park, besides cricket and football?

OVB: We used to have athletic meets. There's a season for athletics, there's a season for soccer, there's a season for cricket, so it depended on the season, you see. The park was the greatest sphere of entertainment I think, and it was [because] all the children came there – all the school children were there after school. So in the school you tended to keep within your class, but when you went to the park, you know, whether you were in the fifth standard or whether you were in the seventh standard didn't matter. You all played together.

GD: Did you ever play Gudu in the park?

OVB: Oh yes, we used to play Gudu in the park (laughs). We used to have park keepers, you know – fellows in khaki uniforms who used to walk and maintain the park, and if they saw us digging these holes... (laughs). So we'd dig the hole before he comes around!

GD: Were there any other local games, Ceylonese games, that you used to play besides Gudu?

OVB: No, I don't think there was. Wesley College was a typical English traditional school, you see, and all the games and the whole setup was typical English. Even the Principal was always English when I was there. It was a strange thing, you see, that although Sinhalese was the native language and is most spoken, if we spoke Sinhalese in the school we were punished for it... So the boys from Sinhalese homes, most likely they spoke Sinhalese at home, but they dare not talk Sinhalese in the school, or even when playing or anything.

GD: When you were at home with your parents, did you speak Sinhalese then?

OVB: No. We only spoke Sinhalese to the servants. We always had servants, someone to cook and someone to do the housework, you know, so to them we spoke Sinhalese, because that's how we learnt our Sinhalese, and you don't learn good Sinhalese that way, because you tend to talk a menial type of Sinhalese to a servant, so that's the type of Sinhalese you learn.

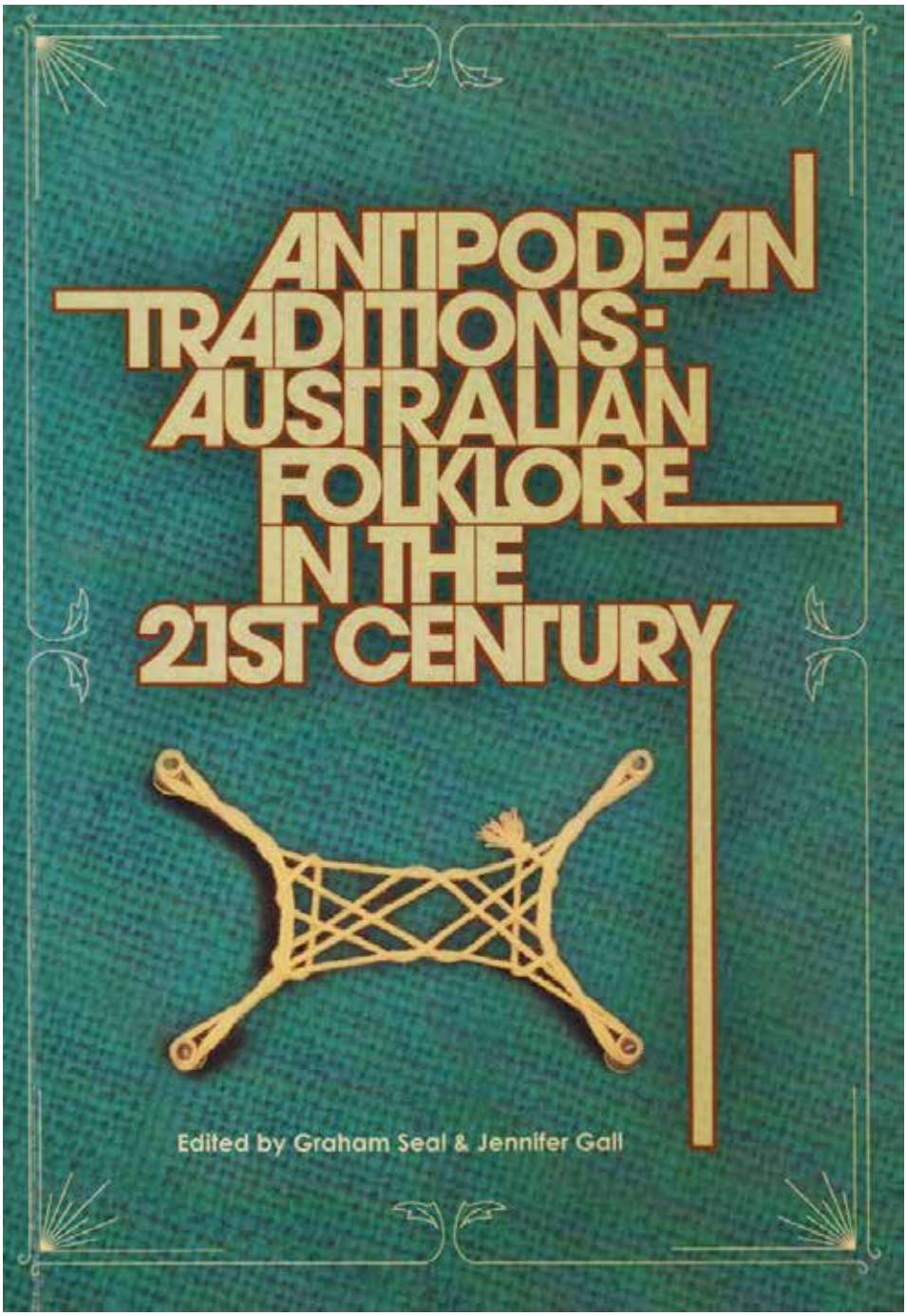
We used to go back to the country for our holidays, and then we used to meet the local people and the local children, who used to talk Sinhalese...

Review: Graham Seal & Jennifer Gall (eds.)

# *Antipodean Traditions: Australian Folklore in the 21st Century*

Kate Darian-Smith

Australian folklore is broad and varied, encompassing music, songs, children's games and the verbal and performative culture of communities and regions. *Antipodean Traditions* brings together empirical folklore research and reflections on the history of folklore studies in Australia. Each of the 19 chapters originated as a paper presented at the Australian Folklore Conference series, an important alliance with the National Library of Australia and the National Folk Festival that has, since its inception in 2006, re-invigorated the scholarly field.



## *Antipodean Traditions: Australian Folklore in the 21st Century*

Much of Australia's folklore has been collected and analysed by individuals, often working outside institutional structures (though there have been great champions of folklore studies, including the National Library of Australia). This has meant that, unlike the United States and many European countries where universities and the community recognise folklore as a legitimate and important field of research, folklore studies are relatively marginalised within Australia. Despite this context, the work collected in this volume shows an academic rigour and depth in probing key questions underpinning Australian culture and society.

The chapters are divided into sections on Children's Folklore, Music and Song, Identity, Reinterpretation and Revival. As a group, they reveal the interests and development of Australian folklore over a significant period of time. A very useful chronology is provided by Brian Samuels of the key events and publications in the study of Australian folk culture from the early 20th century, through to the folklore revival launched in the 1950s, and up to the present. This chronological perspective indicates the role of local, state and national folklore associations, and of dedicated publishing presses and archives, in fostering the broader appreciation of Australian folklife.

Interest in and active collecting of traditional music in Australia dates from the 1890s, and has been core to the Australian folklore studies. It is well covered in this collection, with chapters that range from the creativity of contemporary Indigenous musicians to the radical tradition in songs about work and its transformation, and music within a post-war Greek/Macedonian-Australian community in Melbourne.

Music and poetry contribute, of course, to the formation and expression of belonging. Under the theme of Identity, Ruth Lee Martin's study of the songs of early Scots-Gaelic migrants to Australia explores how these express a longing for home. This study sits alongside a brief history and reinterpretation of rhyming slang by Graham Seal – one of the editors of the volume and Australia's only professorial appointment in folklore – which argues that this form of language play still has 'considerable purchase in contemporary Australian colloquial speech' (page 154). In an engaging chapter by Robert Smith, the humble meat pie is established as 'a discrete folk marker of place, people, loyalty – and a link with earlier times' (page 166). Warren Fahey outlines a current project collecting the folklore of the city of Sydney and how this contributes to a distinct sense of place as a Sydneysider.

The sections on Reinterpretation and Revival are reminders of the evolution and re-making of folklore. They span the evolving renditions of traditional songs, such as *Click Go the Shears* or *Waltzing Matilda*, as documented by Keith McKenry, to the excellent account by Jennifer Gall – the co-editor of the collection – of the role played by women in the creation and collection of traditional songs.

Of particular interest to the readers of *Play and Folklore* is the book's section relating to Children's Folklore. Australian research on children's folklore has achieved international recognition, and the editors describe it as 'the most developed facet of Australian folklore studies' (page 5). Not surprisingly, the three essays on children's folklore illustrate the depth of scholarship in this area. June Factor has written a comprehensive account of the collection of children's folklore in Australia. This covers the colonial period, when the lore of children was recorded as part of an 'affectionate memory' of the past, to the modern collecting of American academic Dorothy Howard in the 1950s. Factor also considers the important work of the Australian historian Ian Turner in the 1960s and 1970s, as well as that of the oral historian Wendy Lowenstein – and of course Factor herself is a major international scholar and author of numerous scholarly books and collections of children's verbal lore. Factor outlines the contributions of other significant collectors of children's folklore, concluding her survey with the recent Australian Research Council-funded project *Childhood, Tradition and Change,* which documented children's play in primary schools around the nation.

Gwenda Beed Davey's chapter examines the electronic recording of Australian children's folklore from the 1950s. Like Factor, Davey was a Research Associate on the *Childhood, Tradition and Change* research project and has a long association with

children's folklore as a collector and commentator. Her account discusses the ethical issues that need to be addressed in the recording of children's play culture, particularly if the fruits of research are to be reproduced by collecting institutions, either on-line or in other forms of exhibition.

Judy McKinty's fascinating chapter discusses the occurrence of string games in Australia. The history of string games dates from classical antiquity and shows 'connections between people, place and time' (page 42). String games were played by Aboriginal Australians, as reported by colonial explorers such as Edward Eyre, but were – and are – played by generations of Australian children in a range of contexts. McKinty not only explores observations of string games by anthropologists and folklorists, but also touches on such wide-ranging topics as the role of memory in this form of play and the therapeutic value of string figures. She concludes her contribution to *Antipodean Traditions* by calling for further research into string games, especially to better understand how traditional folklore has been transmitted and adapted into the 20th century.

The need for further research, and for greater acknowledgement of the significance of folklore in Australia, are themes that resonate across this volume. Despite these realities editors Graham Seal and Jennifer Gall, both academic leaders in the field, are optimistic. The research gathered in the book, they write, demonstrates 'a healthy coalition of research by folklorists in academia, cultural institutions and within the community' (page 6). *Antipodean Traditions* is to be commended as a state-of-the-field summary of folklore in Australia, and its opening section demonstrates the centrality of children's cultures of play and language to national experiences. It is most highly recommended.

## Antipodean Traditions: Australian Folklore in the 21st Century

Graham Seal and Jennifer Gall (eds.)
Black Swan Press,
Perth, 2011
ISBN 9780980631371

Black Swan Press is based in the Faculty of Humanities at Curtin University, Western Australia:

http://research.humanities.curtin.edu.au/blackswan/catalogue.cfm

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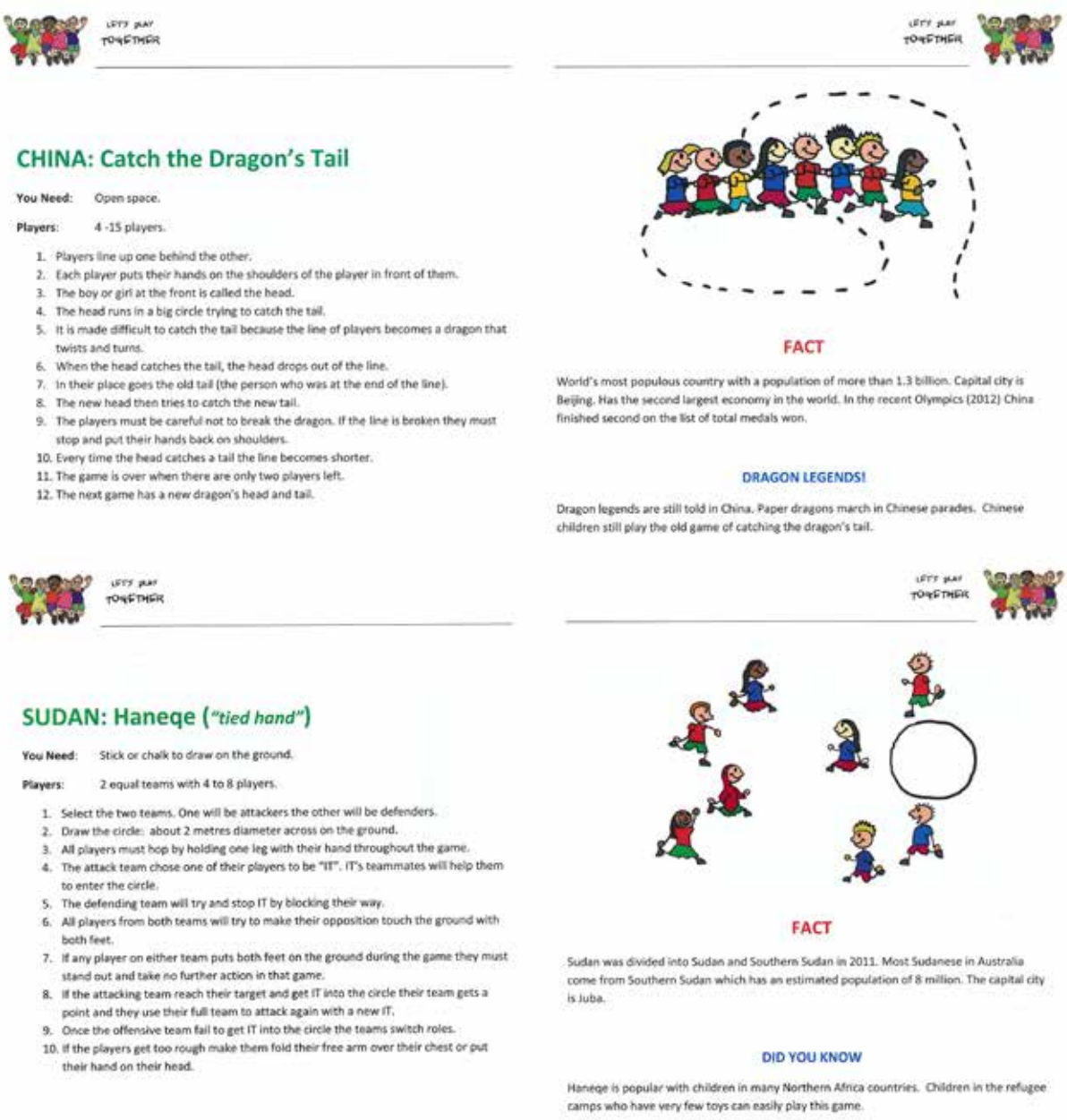
# *Let's play together*

Judy McKinty

Here is some good news for children (and adults) looking for a chance to play some games from around the world. A new Australian book of multicultural games was launched on 22 March, at an International Day celebration in the Hargreaves Mall, Bendigo. *Let's Play Together* was compiled and published by the Loddon Campaspe Multicultural Services Inc. (LCMS). The book contains 50 children's games from different countries and cultures, many contributed by friends and volunteers of LCMS. Each game has step-by-step instructions on how to play the games, a list of simple materials or equipment needed and some facts about the country where it is played. There are also colourful illustrations showing children playing the games, special patterns or hand shapes and the movement of the game.



LET'S PLAY TOGETHER

## CHINA: Catch the Dragon's Tail

**You Need:** Open space.

**Players:** 4 -15 players.

1. Players line up one behind the other.
2. Each player puts their hands on the shoulders of the player in front of them.
3. The boy or girl at the front is called the head.
4. The head runs in a big circle trying to catch the tail.
5. It is made difficult to catch the tail because the line of players becomes a dragon that twists and turns.
6. When the head catches the tail, the head drops out of the line.
7. In their place goes the old tail (the person who was at the end of the line).
8. The new head then tries to catch the new tail.
9. The players must be careful not to break the dragon. If the line is broken they must stop and put their hands back on shoulders.
10. Every time the head catches a tail the line becomes shorter.
11. The game is over when there are only two players left.
12. The next game has a new dragon's head and tail.

LET'S PLAY TOGETHER



LET'S PLAY TOGETHER

## SUDAN: Haneqe (*"tied hand"*)

**You Need:** Stick or chalk to draw on the ground.

**Players:** 2 equal teams with 4 to 8 players.

1. Select the two teams. One will be attackers the other will be defenders.
2. Draw the circle: about 2 metres diameter across on the ground.
3. All players must hop by holding one leg with their hand throughout the game.
4. The attack team chose one of their players to be "IT". IT's teammates will help them to enter the circle.
5. The defending team will try and stop IT by blocking their way.
6. All players from both teams will try to make their opposition touch the ground with both feet.
7. If any player on either team puts both feet on the ground during the game they must stand out and take no further action in that game.
8. If the attacking team reach their target and get IT into the circle their team gets a point and they use their full team to attack again with a new IT.
9. Once the offensive team fail to get IT into the circle the teams switch roles.
10. If the players get too rough make them fold their free arm over their chest or put their hand on their head.

LET'S PLAY TOGETHER

## *Let's play together*

Some of the games will be familiar to children already – for instance Skipping is listed as a 'Universal' game – and others will be unfamiliar, or different versions of familiar games, such as 'Wan Tu Zum', the Malaysian version of 'Rock, Paper, Scissors', which has five hand shapes (bird, rock, pistol, table and water). There are hopscotch games from Afghanistan, Brazil, Chile, Hungary, Spain and the United States, a blindfold game called 'Steal the Treasure' from Iraq, stick games, ball games, marbles games, chasing games, team games and a novel game called 'Clothes Peg' from the Netherlands, where players must try to steal pegs attached to each others' clothing.

The project was a collaboration between people who contributed their skills and expertise to the organisation, and assistance was received from the Australian Government Department of Immigration and Citizenship through the Diversity and Social Cohesion Program. The book is offered as 'a great resource to build bridges and create harmonious relationships amongst children from diverse cultures' (page 3). The introduction suggests ways in which the games can help to make connections between Australian children and others new to the country:

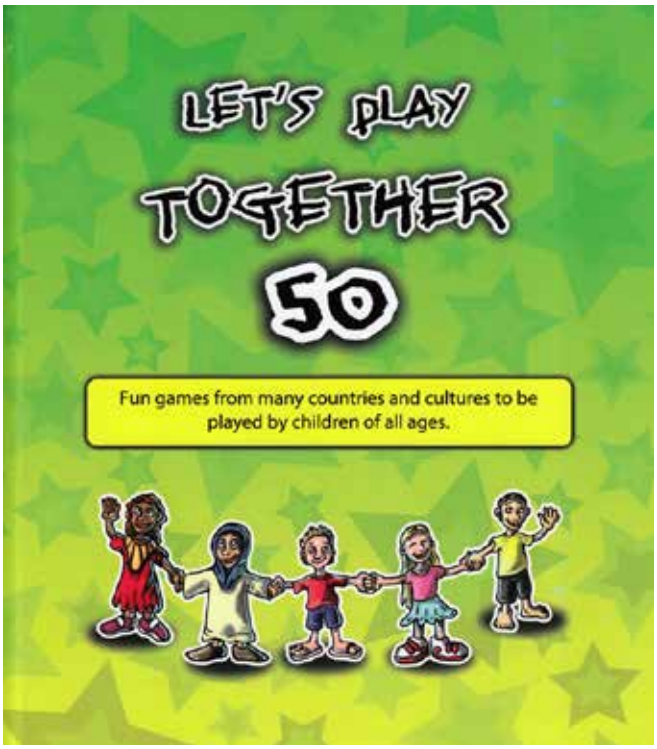
> You will discover that some of the games come from the countries of children who might be new arrivals in your school or community. You can have lots of fun playing the game and also learn more about the country from where your new friends have come... (page 6).

There is also a message to adults about the value of play:

> By playing games together children soon realise that they are all very similar in so many ways. They might speak or look different but their 'new friends' can be just as much fun to play with as their 'old friends'. We would hope that Australians when meeting children from different countries can not only teach them about Australia but can also learn about the newcomers' country and culture. Wouldn't it be great to hear children correct others who refer to the new child as the 'Chinese kid', [for them] to be told 'No, they come from Cambodia' (page 7).

The book can be purchased from Loddon Campaspe Multicultural Services for. For more information go to http://www.lcms.org.au/

*Judy McKinty is a co-editor of Play and Folklore. She happened to be in Bendigo on the day of the book's launch and bought the first copy of the book.*



# *International Journal of Play:* Call for papers for forthcoming Special Issue

## Lifework and Legacy: Reviewing Iona and Peter Opie's Contribution to the Study of Play

The work of Iona (1923– ) and Peter Opie (1918–1982) on the play and games of school-aged children will be familiar to many who study the social and cultural aspects of children's lives. Working as independent and unfunded scholars, the Opies published five books on this topic: *The Lore and Language of Schoolchildren* (1959), *Children's Games in Street and Playground* (1969), *The Singing Game* (1985), *Children's Games with Things* (1997), and Iona Opie's solo volume, *The People in the Playground* (1993). Distilled from data collected principally from schoolchildren during the period 1950–80 (now held at the British Library Sound Archive, the Folklore Society Archives, and the Bodleian Libraries), as well as pioneering historical research, these publications have been widely read and extremely influential.

2013 marks the year of Iona Opie's 90th birthday and what would have been Peter Opie's 95th. To mark this event, a special issue of the *International Journal of Play* in 2014 is planned, devoted to the Opies, their research and their spheres of influence. The guest editors of this special issue (no. 3 in 2014) will be June Factor and Julia Bishop who warmly encourage contributions. Possible topics include (but are not restricted to):

- Critical evaluations of Iona and Peter Opie's lives and work, collaborations with others, scholarly influences, predecessors, contemporaries.
- Critical considerations of the Opies' data, such as its wider social and demographic context, the relationship between their archival data and their books.
- The extent and nature of the Opies' influence in the UK and in other countries among those interested in children's folklore, especially play.
- Forms of play; classification of games.
- The historical and comparative study of play.
- The ethnographic study of play, including research methods.
- Themes and issues exemplified in the Opies' work, such as the relationships between media, commerce and play; risk; place, space and play.

Submissions of up to 7000 words are welcomed, as well as shorter articles (up to 2000 words) of memoir and reflection. Please check the *International Journal of Play* website for details regarding presentation of material.

Deadline: 1 April, 2014

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