GAMES AND TOYS

IN MEDIEVAL AND EARLY MODERN HUNGARY

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GAMES AND TOYS IN MEDIEVAL AND EARLY MODERN HUNGARY

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Nine-men's morris. Buda, 15th century, clay (see figure X)

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Preface

The publication and interpretation of medieval find assemblages has since long been one of the main projects undertaken by the Archaeological Department of the Eötvös Loránd University in Budapest. In the past few years the scope of these projects has been expanded to cover all possible aspects of medieval life. The *Hungarian National Research Fund* (OTKA) has generously funded several research programmes designed to prepare archaeological finds and assemblages for publication, as well as to survey relevant written sources and surviving depictions. The *Department of Medieval and Postmedieval Archaeology* has actively taken part in the organization of these interdisciplinary research projects, as well as in hosting two major conferences,[1] and in establishung close cooperation with the *Institut für Realienkunde des Mittelalters und der frühen Neuzeit* in Krems (Austria).

One of the most important objectives of these research programmes has been that certain thematic units should be discussed as part of a series of doctoral and other dissertations. This book, written by a young colleague working in the Tata Museum, is in fact the publication of one of these dissertations.

Toys and games have already been the subject of previous scholarly research. In the last century Baron Béla Radvánszky published a monumental, three-volume study surveying the written evidence on family life and households in Hungary, in which he also referred to toys and games.[2]

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[1] Alltag und materielle Kultur im mittelalterlichen Ungarn, 1988; published as: Alltag und materielle Kultur im mittelalterlichen Ungarn, ed. A. Kubinyi and J. Laszlovszky (Medium Aevum Quotidianum 22) Krems 1991. – Alltag und materielle Kultur im frühneuzeitlichen Ungarn 1991 (not yet published).

[2] B. Radvánszky: Magyar családélet és háztartás a XVI. és XVII. században [Hungarian Family Life and Household in the 16th and 17th centuries]. 1873 (reprint Budapest, 1986, 3 vol.).

More recently, Walter Endrei and László Zolnay have devoted their attention to this topic.[3] Their study was mainly concerned with cultural history, set in a wider, European perspective. Several Hungarian finds and sources were published in their study, together with a comprehensive review of earlier publications. However, these books were not written with the expressed aim of systematically collecting all Hungarian finds.

Ethnographic research has clearly demonstrated that toys and games have traditionally formed an important part of popular culture in Hungary.[4] This research offered an excellent starting point for Sándor Petényi to survey and publish the Hungarian written and artifactual evidence on toys and games. He is to be commended for his exemplary effort in collecting an unexpectedly high number of medieval toys and games from museum collections. Numerous colleagues have kindly shown him their previously unpublished finds and have generously consented to their publication in this volume. Unfortunately, the catalogue to the original doctoral dissertation with its precise description of the finds has had to be omitted from this volume for lack of space. The main merit of this study is that through comparisons with other Europeans finds, the survey of the written sources and a review of the pictorial evidence a number of objects, whose function was previously unknown, can now be securely classified as toys and games. I know from my own long museum experience the difficulties in collecting, reconstructing and classifying finds that are often fragmentary or unprecisely recorded in museum inventories. This task can only be adequately resolved if we invoke the help of a wide variety of sources and offer a complex interpretation of the available evidence. Only thus can a specialized survey of medieval toys and games contribute to a better understanding of the life in the Middle Ages.

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[3] W. Endrei and L. Zolnay, Társasjáték és szórakozás a régi Európában. Budapest, 1988 [also published in English (Fun and Games in Old Europe) and in German (Spiele und Unterhaltung im alten Europa).

[4] Magyar népi játékok [Hungarian Vernacular Toys and Games]. In: Magyar Néprajz [Hungarian Ethnography] VI, ed. T. Dömötör. Budapest, 1990, 529–649.

Introduction

The custom of writing, i. e., writing intended for the historical record, was an exceptional phenomenon throughout most of the medieval period in Hungary. Writing intended as document for later periods included predominantly laws and moral principles published in a written form, or the lives, great political deeds and wars of rulers. The mundane activities of the majority of people, such as games, were usually not considered worthy of recording by contemporary authors. Consequently, researchers dealing with reconstructions of everyday life must rely mostly on records justifying the admitted political events of those days. Since playing was excluded from the adult world in modern times as well, the lack of such references in medieval literature was not noticed. This situation did not even change when modern historical research into this period developed an approach based on medieval values.

Archaeological excavations have not yielded a sufficient quantity and variety of toys to direct attention to this element of everyday life either. Unfortunately, in Hungary the medieval pictorial sources (panel paintings, frescoes, illuminations, etc.) had been destroyed to a high degree. Therefore, they only play a minor role for the reconstruction of the material culture. Thus, playing of any sort has been treated as a peripheral phenomenon of the medieval way of life.

Is it true, however, that Hungarian written sources make no mention of games and toys? Does the lack of direct references mean that no games were played during the Middle Ages? Did games play any role in medieval life? If they did, what was their function? It is intended to answer these questions on the basis of the written sources and artifactual evidence at my disposal, although a comprehensive evaluation of the problem cannot be attempted.

This study is an abbreviated version of the doctoral thesis written under the supervision of András Kubinyi. On the other hand, additional data, many of them new in certain respects, were included in this revised form of the dissertation.

The Written Evidence

Playing games

When the surviving written sources are taken into consideration one may see that coeval charters mostly describe legal acts or deeds in order to prevent further complications potentially resulting from a lack of accurate documentation. Games did not pose such problems. This was partly due to the fact that they were usually prohibited. Consequently, anyone who suffered damages during games could not hope for legal compensation. This is clearly illustrated in a sentence by Pelbartus de Themeswar:[1]

> *Nam secundum leges qui in domo sua ludos statuit et lusores: si tempore quo luditur aliquid substractum vel raptum fuerit de tali domo ubi scilicet ludus illicitus retinetur: sive a lusoribus sive ab alio: non possit reperere vel etiam si dominus ille tenens ludum verberatur: non possit agere ex tali iniuria.*[2]

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[1] Pelbartus de Themeswar (around 1435–1504): Franciscan monk, writer, preacher. He studied at Cracow University after 1458 and became a superior in Esztergom in 1494. His collection of Latin sermons was compiled for monks who mixed with simple folk. His works have been republished several times until the end of the 16th century and were well known throughout Europe.

[2] Pelbartus de Themeswar: Pomerium sermonum. Hegenau, 1516, pars hyemalis, sermon 46 (referred to as Themeswar 1516). This story was read in a book published abroad which is shown by the fact that he refers to Portius Azo who made the quoted parable about masters of dice who regularly pursued this game. Since, however, Pelbartus de Themeswar preached only in Hungary, he could only take examples from the foreign literature which were understood here. In this way he had a chance to influence his audience. It is for this reason that even if no written law, similar to that quoted in this work, existed in Hungary, conventions may have dictated similar behavior, otherwise Pelbartus de Themeswar would not have cited this example.

In spite of this, sporadic references to games may be found in the charters. The paucity of such data, however, should not necessarily be attributed to the insignificance of playing games. On the contrary, unexpected mentions of games in this type of written source may be indicative of the strong presence of games in medieval life. For example, a charter was written on February 4, 1410 in Byzere. The chief magistrates and sheriffs of the Arad county testify that according to a report by their representative Lőrinc, the son of István of Bak, Tamás of Nadasd lost the horse and saddle blanket of János Waydafaluai Wayda while playing dice in the town of Temesvár (Timişoara).[3]

Data on chess are known from 1490: *Ibidem sunt tria vascula. In uno sunt sah.*, and from 1494: *Saah in sacculis.* Backgammon was mentioned in 1494: *ligna ad okch in sacculo.*[4] Information on a card game is available from 1495: *Eodem die dominus in ludendo per kartha perdidit.*[5]

References to games are not absent from works (chronicles, *gesta*) concerning the lives and politics of rulers either. The work written by the notary of king Béla III (1172–1196), entitled *Gesta Hungarorum*, contains the following data:

> *Tunc dux Arpad et sui propter letitiam permanserunt in civitate Atthile regis per XX-ti dies et omnes milites Hungarie ante presentiam ducis fere cottidie super dextrarios suos sedendo cum clipeis et lanceis maximum turnamentum feciebant (sic) et alii iuvenes more paganismo cum arcubus et sagittis ludebant.*[6] [...]
>
> *Et eodem anno dux Arpad genuit filium nomine Zulta et factum est gaudium magnum inter Hungaros et dux et sui nobiles per plurimos dies faciebant conviva magna, iuvenesque eorum ludebant ante faciem ducis et suorum nobilium, sicut agni ovium ante arietes.*[7] [...]

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[3] E. Mályusz: Zsigmondkori oklevéltár II (1400–1410). Budapest, 1958, 318–319 (charter 7318; referred to as Mályusz). Also cited by Gyöngyi Kovács: Juh astragalos-játékkockák a szolnoki vár területéről. In: Archeológiai Értesitő 1989, 109 (referred to as Kovács).

[4] I. Szamota – Gy. Zolnai: Magyar oklevél szótár. Budapest, 1902–1906, 827 (referred to as Szamota – Zolnai).

[5] Szamota – Zolnai: 459.

[6] E. Szentpétery: Scriptores Rerum Hungaricarum, 1. Budapest, 1937, 94–95 (referred to as SRH).

[7] SRH: 101.

Dux vero Arpad et omnes sui primates celebrantes nuptias magna fecerunt conviva et fere cottidie comedebant nuptialiter cum diversis mili(ti)bus circumiacentium regnorum et iuvenes eorum ludebant ante faciem ducis et suorum nobilium.[8]

János Thuróczy[9] wrote in his *Chronica Hungarorum* (1488) as follows:

Anno domini MCCCXXXV. circa festum sancti Martini Iohannes rex Bohemorum, cum Karolo filio suo, et rex polonorum, venerunt ad regem Karolum, in Hungariam, ad castrum Wyssegrad, pro perpetuae pacis concordia componenda, quod et factum est. ... Remunerauit autem rex Hungariae, regem Bohemorum, diuersis et pretiosis clinodiis, videlicet; quinquaginta vasis argenteis, duabus pharetris, duobus baltheis, et una tabula pro scacis mirabili, duabus sellis inaestimabilis pretii, vno bicello valente ducentas marcas argenti, et vna concha margaritarum, mirabili opere composita.[10]

In the work of Antonio Bonfini[11] entitled *Rerum Ungaricarum decades* ... the young king to be, Matthias,[12] was praised by Mihály Szilágyi at the Election Assembly of the king in the following manner:

... in castris natus est, altus in sago, in veteranorum contuberniis educatus a teneris hic didicit unguiculis Turcorum tumultus et aciem non expavescere, pugnare sub vinea et centurionis precepta servare, ab equo ac pedibus iuxta dimicare, ad palum quotidie exerceri, transnare sepe Danubium et per frigus et estum sub galea diem ac noctem agere, laboris et inedie fieri patientissimum, nil magis quam hostilem aspec-

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[8] SRH: 105.

[9] János Thuróczy (around 1435 – around 1490): tribunal master and chronicler. He independently compiled the history of Hungary utilizing texts from old chronicles, charters and oral tradition.

[10] J. G. Schwandtner: Scriptores rerum Hungaricarum veteres ac genuini, I. Vienna, 1746, caput XCVII, 165.

[11] Antonio Bonfini (around 1434–1503): Italian humanist historian. He taught in Italy for some time before he moved to the Buda court where he became a reader for queen Beatrix. King Matthias entrusted him with the writing of Hungary's history. His work contains independent data especially concerning the period when king Matthias reigned.

[12] Matthias I (1443–1490), king of Hungary (1458–1490). He was the second son of János Hunyadi and Erzsébet Szilágyi and the chief representative of an effort aimed at the creation of centralized monarchy, one of the most outstanding characters of Hungarian Renaissance. Mihály Szilágyi was his uncle.

tum anhelare, singulari certamine admodum delectari, in castris cum sociis simulacrum quotidie belli agere, nil ignavia et desidia magis abominari, contra nil bello plus appetere.[13]

In relation to the meeting of Matthias with Wladislaw[14] in Olmuc he writes:

Rex quotidie Wladislaum e regione manentem officii gratia traiecta via familiariter adibat, educebat in regiam admissumque in cubiculum Beatrice teste domestice ac iocose alloquebatur; quandoque latrunculis cum regina ludere iubebat, quod futuri vani coniugii fuit auspicium.[15]

He also recorded the following story illustrating the good luck of king Matthias:

In bello Bohemico sibi defuere pecunie, verbis ergo et pollicitationibus crastinis alebat exercitum. Cum dies distribuendi stipendium prestitutus instaret, quem promissis differe ultra non poterat, e prefectis equitum et legatis legionum ad alearum ludum invitatur; tota nocte lusum; ipse tam equas tesseras sortitus est, ut nihil sibi aliud caderet, quam quod iactu opus erat. Dena milia aureorum ea nocte ex ludo sibi comparavit, que, antequam loco moveretur, militibus dedit, et ex alee lucro stipendium exolvit.[16]

Events following the coronation of king Matthias were summarized by Gáspár Heltai[17] in his *Krónika az magyaroknak dolgairól* (Chronicle of Hungarian Affairs) in 1575:

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[13] A. Bonfini: Rerum Ungaricarum decades in IV tomis. In: Bibliotheca scriptorum medii recentisque aevorum, ed. I. Fógel, B. Iványi and L. Juhász. Budapest, 1941, decas III, liber IX, 209 (referred to as Bonfini). With the above-mentioned speech Bonfini actually defined the contemporary ideal of a man, a good soldier, worthy of becoming a king. The fact that games are given a place within this description shows their importance in those days.

[14] Wladislaw II (around 1456–1516), king of Bohemia after 1471, king of Hungary after 1490.

[15] Bonfini: decas IV, liber V, 100.

[16] Bonfini: decas IV, liber VII, 167.

[17] Gáspár Heltai (1490 or 1510–1574): Protestant preacher, writer and printer from a Saxon family in Transylvania. In 1543, he matriculated into the University of Wittenberg. Following his return to Transylvania, he became the minister of the Saxon church in Kolozsvár (Cluj). The majority of his literary work was written in Hungarian, and besides a few books he published the Bible as well. Following the work of Bonfini, Heltai wrote the first coherent book on Hungarian history in the Hungarian language.

Mikoron a koronázásnak vége vólna, felméne Máttyás király mind az urakkal Budára, és ott lőn a nyáron csendeszségbe. És ott mindenféle játékokban, harzsolásokban, vadászságokban, oroszlányoknak játzássokban és öklelésekben gyönyörkedék.[18]

(When the coronation was over, Matthias went with all the lords to the town of Buda where he spent the summer in peace. There he enjoyed all sorts of games, entertainment, hunting, lions games and tournaments.)

When he described king Matthias' Olmuc meeting with Wladislaw he mentions the following situation:

Egy nagy piacot csináltatott vala az vásáron az szállások előtt. Abba csináltatott vala drága kölcséggel állásokat, mellyeken megjátzák szép játékokat, és azzokon járák meg a szép táncokat. ... Tiz asztal vala renddel egymás után. És mellettek szép játékokat jádcodoznak vala. Sok hegedések, lantosok és egyéb vigasságtövék valának ott. Másfelől tornirok és jeles öklelések lesznek vala. Vacsora után elvivék az asztalokat, és elhozák a szép asszonyállatokat, és a fejedelmek ott táncot járának vélek. ... Máttyás király mindennap megyen vala az ő attyafiának, László királynak szállására, és úgy hozza vala őtet által az ő szállására. És bevivé őtet az ő ágyasházába, ott csúffolkodnak vala az Beatrix királyné asszonnyal nagy víg beszédekkel. Gyakorta meghadja Máttyás király, hogy Beatrix királyné asszon okstáblás vitéz játékot játzodozna László királlyal, olly nagy tisztességet teszen vala néki Máttyás király nagy szeretettel.[19]

(Matthias had a huge fair organized at the market place and in front of the living quarters. There he had stands built at great expense where nice games were played and beautiful dances performed. ... Ten tables followed in a neat order at which fine games could be played. A number of fiddlers, lute players and other entertainers were also

[18] G. Heltai: Krónika az magyaroknak dolgairól (1575). Budapest, 1981, 298 (referred to as Heltai). It is not always possible to provide a literal translation into English of these and subsequently quoted 16th century and later Hungarian texts. The situation is similar with sources published in old German or other languages. In order to provide practical understanding, parenthesized translations follow these quotations, which concentrate on the reliable presentation of their contents. In the case of poems, these translations do not go beyond summarizing the essence of the quoted texts.

[19] Heltai: 349–350.

present there. At other places tournaments and duels were organized. After dinner, the tables were taken away and beautiful women were brought there with whom the sovereigns danced. ... Matthias visited the quarters of his kinsman Wladislaw every day and took him to his own lodgings. There they went into the bedroom where they teased queen Beatrix with cheerful talking. King Matthias often allowed queen Beatrix to play backgammon with king Wladislaw as a gesture of great honor and love.)

Matthias playing military games as a child was described by Galeotto Marzio[20] in his book entitled *De egregie, sapienter, iocose dictis ac factis regis Mathiae* (1485–87):

> *Puer rex Mathias ad huiusmodi carmina et virorum fortium commemorationem adeo erat attentus, ut cibi potusque oblitus, inedia pressus a mane usque ad vesperum ad illorum vehementes ictus pugnamque acerrimam quodammodo stupefactus, nil aliud cogitans, interdum gloria victoris accensus bracchia pedesque sub quadam pugnantium gesticulatione movebat, cum et pugnantibus et adesse et praeesse sibi videretur.*[21]

Mention of dice playing may be found in *De perdicione regni Hungarorum* (1545–1547), written by György Szerémi,[22] in the context of the duel between Ulrik Cillei and Ladislaus Hunyadi:

> *... in se decreuit, quod Ladislaum Hunyad interficeret. Fecit inuitare*

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[20] Galeotto Marzio Narni (1427–1497): Italian humanist. He started teaching at the University of Bologna in 1473. As a punishment for his philosophical teachings he was imprisoned by the Holy Inquisition in 1477. He was freed thanks to the efforts of, among others, king Matthias. He served as a caretaker in the library of Matthias. In addition to other works written in Hungary, he compiled an anecdotal work praising the virtues of king Matthias between 1485 and 1487.

[21] Galeottus Marzius Narniensis: De egregie, sapienter, iocose dictis ac factis regis Mathiae, ed. L. Juhász (Bibliotheca scriptorum medii recentisque aevorum) Leipzig 1934, caput 12.11.

[22] György Szerémi (around 1490–after 1548): He was born into a family of serfs. He studied in Gyula where he became a chaplain following his ordination. In 1520, he was admitted to the royal court. His Latin texts often mirror Hungarian syntax, and his sentences were also frequently blended with Hungarian words. He summarized his memories of important events of his time (1456–1543) in a raw, "Hungarianized" Latin language, including the uncritical adoption of many contemporary gossips.

predictum Ladislaum ad palacium ad aliqua verba. Cum spatario suo iuit ad eum, et mox protulit vnum taxillum ad ludendum. In ludo sepissime Ladislaus Hungarus Alemanum preualebat in ludo; mox inflatus fuit Cyllingh Ispan in stomaco suo superbie. Et erat vir fortis magnus in statura sua. Et ostium palacium erat nimis repagulatum, nec extra nec intro quilibet potuit ingredere et egredere. Mox Alemanus ewaginauit biccellum suum rotundum more Germanorum. Fortiter cum totis viribus suis Alemanus persequebatur in palacio de angulo ad angulum istum Ladislaum Hungarum.[23]

Valuable and interesting data on games in Hungary were provided by Thomas Moore[24] as well:

In good fayth Cosyn so begynne we to fare here in dede / & that but evyn now of late / For sinnes the title of the crowne hath comen in question, the good rule of this realme hath very sore decayed / as litle while as it is / And vndowtidly Hungary shall neuer do well, as long as it standeth in this case / that mens myndes harken after newelties, & haue their hartes hangyng vppon a chaunge / And much the worse I like it, whan their wordes walke so large toward the favour of the Turkes sect / which they were euer wont to haue in so greate abomynacion, as euery trew myndid christen man & christen woman to must haue. I am of such age as you see / & verely from as farre as I can remember, it hath bene markyd & often tyme provid trew, that whan children haue in Bowda fallen in a fantasye by them selfe

[23] Georgii Sirmiensis: Epistola de perdicione regni Hungarorum (Monumenta Hungariae Historica) Pest, 1857, 3 (referred to as Szerémi). Since the argument went on behind closed doors, Szerémi obviously did not know (how could he have known?) at which phase of the discussion the noblemen resorted to the use of naked swords. It is for this reason that he had to 'reconstruct' the events giving the impression of an eyewitness account, to avoid any doubts on the readers' part. The fact that a brawl over gambling with dice was considered the best context for this purpose illustrates that in those days violence during this game was a more than usual element of everyday life.

[24] The reliability of this source deserves a short note. The battle lost against the Turks at Mohács in 1526 sealed not only the fate of Hungarian statehood for centuries. King Lewis II also died in the fighting. His widow, Mary of Habsburg, became a governor in Flanders during the late 1520s. Her court also housed a small Hungarian colony whose members had access to direct information from Hungary. It is for this reason that Thomas Moore was not as isolated from the Buda events as one might expect on the basis of the geographical distance between England and Hungary.

to draw together, & in their playing make as it were corsis caried to church / and sing after their childish fasshion the tewne of the dirige,[25] *there hath greate deth there shortly folowid after / And twyse or thrise I may remembre in my dayes, whan children in diuers partes of this realme haue gatherid them selfe in sundry companyes, & made as it were parties & batayles / & after their batayls in sport wherin some children haue yet taken grete hurt, there hath fallen very batayle & dedely warr in dede. These tokens were somwhat like your ensample of the see / sith they be of thinges that after folow tokyns foregoyng, thorow some secret mocion or instinct, wherof the cause is vnknowen. But by S mary Cosyn these tokens like I mych worse / these tokens I say / not of childrens playes / nor of childrens songes / but old shrewes large open wordes, so boldly spoken in the favour of Machometes sect in this realme of Hungary, that hath bene euer hetherto a very sure kay of christendome.*[26]

(In good faith Cousin so begin we to fare here in deed / and even that just recently / For since the title of the crown has come into question, the good rule in this realm has very sorely decayed / even within this short time / And undoubtedly Hungary shall never do well, as it stands now / when men's minds hark after novelties and their hearts desire change / And I like it even less, when their words tend to favor so greatly the religion of the Turks / which they used to hold in great abomination, as every right minded Christian man and Christian woman must do. I am of such an age you see / and truly as long ago as I can remember it has been marked and often times shown true, that when children in Buda decided to come together and pretended to

[25] Some games assimilated and preserved many elements from ancient customs. These were 'deposited' from the realm of adult world into the empire of childhood, where they were inherited over many generations without their original meaning ever having been consciously preserved. Their long lost original meaning was not at all interesting for children (A magyarság néprajza. Budapest, 1933–37, IV, 459). Moore's report on the children performing a make-believe burial complete with songs is unique in the sense that it documented the very roots of such a tradition, which could be reconstructed mostly on the basis of modern ethnographic material.

[26] A dialoge of comfort agaynst trybulacion, made by an Hungaryen in laten, & translatyd out of Laten into french & out of french into Englysh. 1534. In: The Complete Work of St. Thomas Moore. vol. 12, ed. Louis L. Martz and Frank Marley. Yale, 1976, 192–193.

carry a corpse to the church / and sing in their childish manner a dirge, there followed shortly thereafter a great death / And two or three times I remember when children in diverse parts of this realm gathered themselves together in different groups and pretended to be companies in battle / And after their battle for sport in which some children were badly hurt real battles and deadly wars took place. These tokens were somewhat like your example of the sea / since they are about things that follow omens through some secret motion or instinct of which the cause is unknown. But by the Virgin Mary, Cousin, these omens I like much less, these omens I say / not of childrens games / nor childrens songs / but of old shrews' loud open words, so boldly spoken in favor of Mohammed's sect in this realm of Hungary, which has been hitherto our very sure key to Christendom).

The view of the world represented in theological works and books dealing with the lives and legends of saints is very far from entertainment and game, though not even documents of this sort could completely ignore the mention of games. The following information may be found in the court protocol written during the canonization of Margaret of the Árpád dynasty:[27]

Domina Elisabeth, filia quondam domini comitis Thome de Bodome(r) et domine Olimpiadis, soror et monialis predicti monasterii, iuravit ut supra. ... Item dixit, quod dum ipsa virgo Margaretha esset scholaris cum aliis puellis in eodem monasterio Vesprimiensi, quando magistra permittebat ire ad ludendum ipsas scholares, tunc alie ludebant, ipsa orabat: 'Venite mecum, et intremus ecclesiam ad salutandam beatam Mariam et dicendo: Ave Maria, gratia plena, et sic ludetis hic'.[28]

[27] Margaret (1242–1271): daughter of king Béla IV. He intended that his daughter should be a nun. She lived in the Veszprém Dominican convent between 1246–1254. After 1254, she moved to the Dominican cloister on Rabbit Island (today Margaret Island) in the Danube river. Margaret was beatified, and elevated to sainthood in 1944.

[28] Inquisitio super vita, conversatione et miraculis beatae Margarethae virginis, Belae IV. Hungarorum regis filiae, sanctimonialis monasterii virginis gloriosae de insula Danubii, ordinis Praedicatorum, Vesprimiensis diocesis. In: Monumenta Romana Episcopatus Vesprimiensis. Budapest, 1896, I, 212.

In the epic biography of St. Elisabeth[29] the author known as the Anonymous Carthusian[30] wrote the following:

> *És mikoron ez leánzó ötesztendős volna, és esze kezdött neveködni, oly nagy szent malasztot ada őneki Uristen, hogy mindenek csodálkoznak vala rajta. Mert látják vala, miképpen gyorsan, siet az szentegyházhoz, mily ájtatosan hall misét, mily nagy gondot visel az szegényekről, mily nagy tisztösséggel illi az szent innepököt minden hévalkodás és játék nélkül. Ha mikoron leánytársaitul történt táncba vitetni avagy játékban, mind hamarabb végét szakasztotta Uristenért és szentegyházban avagy kápolnában futott be, ő mennyei atyjának házában, és ott avagy imádságra adta magát, avagy könyvet ragadott kezében, és tettette magát, ha mint irást olvasna, hogy csak kivonhatná magát ez világi hévalkodásból.*[31]
>
> (When the girl was five years old, and her mind started developing, she fell in great divine grace so that everybody admired her since they saw how quickly she joined the church and saw the adoration by which she listened to the service, how well she took care of the poor, and how great a honor she paid to holy days with no ostentation or playing. Whenever she was taken to dance or play by other girls, she abandoned it in favor of God as soon as possible. She ran into a church or chapel and in the house of her heavenly father, she devoted herself to praying, or she took a book pretending to read the script in order to withdraw from mundane ostentation.)

Religious works of a different nature make reference to games as well. The

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[29] Elisabeth (1207–1231): daughter of king Andrew II and queen Gertrud. She was engaged to Lewis, margrave of Thuringia, and was taken to Thuringia in 1212. Following the death of her husband, she had to leave the Wartburg, and settled down in Marburg. She was elevated to sainthood in 1235. Her cult spread quickly in Hungary as well. One of its propagators was king Béla IV, the brother of Elisabeth.

[30] The Anonymous Carthusian (first half of the 16th century) was born in the southern frontier region of medieval Hungary and he even visited Rome. He became the economic supervisor of the Carthusian Monastery in Városlőd. He wrote his codex including sermons and a collection of legends (Érdy Codex) between 1524 and 1527.

[31] A néma barát megszólal. Válogatás a Karthauzi Névtelen beszédeiből. Budapest, 1985, 528–529 (referred to as Karthauzi).

Székelyudvarhely Codex, written around 1528 partly by András Nyújtódi,[32] contains the following remark:

> *De kérdetyk. ymár, haň lyaňy vadnak az torkosságnak. felel zent gergel' doctor mondwan, hoǵ ôt lyaňy vadnak. eǵǵyik az éktelen vygasság, hoǵ ky mykor kôlsô yatékoknak, es fesletségnek myatta az ôn torkanak kewansagot tamazt.*[33]
>
> (The question now is, how many daughters does Avarice have. The doctor Saint Gregory tells us that there were five. One of them is unseemly gaiety, which raises selfish greed out of superficial games and debauchery.)

In yet another place he gives a list of things one is deprived of by death. He mentions *marchanctul* (wealth) and the *testnec edessegetôl: es gônôrôsegetôl* (sweetness and joy of the body). Then he goes on:

> *holot vannac a hytsanac ôltôzeti holvannac mend atte tagayd: labayd: a tančolasra zemeyd a latasra holot vannak kezeyd az očy tablanac: es verfelenec yazzasara: holot vagon atte fertelmes testi eletôd.*[34]
>
> (Where is your ostentious clothing, where are your limbs; your feet for dancing, your eyes for seeing, where are your hands to play the backgammon and dice; where is your abominable carnal life.)

A relatively ample reference to games may be found in the sermons made by preachers. The previously mentioned Anonymous Carthusian flies out at the loose morals of his contemporary clergymen in a sermon prepared for St. Stephen's day:

> *Ilyen szent atyákat, kik nem pusztitottak mint az mastaniak, gonoszságra nem költötték az szentegyház jószágát, mint az mastaniak, kik el nem rekkentötték Krisztusnak részét, jószágát, mint az mastaniak, kik*

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[32] András Nyújtódi: Franciscan monk in the 16th century.

[33] Nyelvemléktár. Régi magyar codexek és nyomtatványok 15. kötet. Budapest, 1908, 48 (referred to Nyelvemléktár 15).

[34] Nyelvemléktár 15: 69 (also quoted in W. Endrei – L. Zolnay: Társasjáték és szórakozás a régi Európában. Budapest, 1986, 15 (referred to as Endrei – Zolnay). This source unambiguously indicates broad distribution of dice and backgammon boards. Considering the number of activities and earthly pleasures that must be abandoned after the loss of a hand, it is remarkable that these two games were given such a special emphasis.

sem hasártra, sem torkosságra, sem drága ruházatokra nem vesztögették az szent alamizsnát, mint az mastaniak.[35]

(... such holy fathers did not destroy like those of today, they did not waste church property on evil things like those of today, they did not destroy Christ's part and wealth like those of today, they did not spend the holy alms on gambling, greed and expensive clothing like those of today.)

Pelbartus de Themeswar referred often to gambling as well. His work also lists the opportunities provided by such games when he writes:

Legitur in libro de donis Spiritus Sancti (Stephani de Borbone), quod iuvenis quidam ingressus purgatorium S. Patricii, inter varias poenas animarum vidit circulum ferreum constipatum clavis acutissimis, in quibus quasi in chorea vertebantur plures compluti continue igne sulphureo, quorum etiam viscera corrodebantur usque ad ossa. Angelus requisitus quid haec essent? respondit: Tales sunt et tali supplicio plectuntur omnes, qui choreis et clamationibus impudicis vel saltibus, amplexibus, osculis, tactibus, ludis et verbis concitant ad libidinem alios et se.[36]

Those who played dice were threatened as follows:

Exemplum legitur, quod quidam miles in alea dum per oculos dei iurasset, mox ipsius proprii oculi de capite exsilientes super aleam ceciderunt.[37]

He wrote as a deterrent:

... quod mulier quedam vana in partibus Brabantiae quadam villa sepius choreas coniungere, et huiusmodi ludos solita erat facere. Accidit semel, quod iuxta choream colludentibus viris unus cum pilam ferire conaretur, baculo elapso de manu mulierem illam in capite percussit et mortua est. Presbytero autem veniente ad dicendum vigilias defunctorum ecce demon in specie tauri nigerrimi cum mugitu occurrens feretrum cum corpore deiecit, et cum cornibus illud dissipavit ita,

[35] Karthauzi: 391.

[36] Pelbartus de Themeswar: Pomerium sermonum de tempore. Hegenau, 1509, pars aestivalis, 44 G (referred to as Themeswar 1509).

[37] Pelbartus de Themeswar: Pomerium sermonum quadragesimalium. Hegenau, 1509, pars II, 33 D.

ut visceribus hincinde dispersis fetorum tolerari non poterat, fugientibusque cunctis tandem altero die corpus eiectum extra sacrum locum sepultum est.[38]

According to Pelbárt even those who do not play themselves may be punished if they provide space for gambling. He illustrated this as follows:

... quod quidam tabernarius vini omnes quoscunque pessimos homines suscipiebat in domum suam, permittens illos in aleis ludere, inebriari, meretrices inducere et similiter peccare; et huiusmodi mala libere ibi fieri. Quisque forte ipse tabernarius ad ecclesiam et ad missam diebus festis more aliorum christianorum ire non dimmitteret. Ecce autem quadam die dominica cum de cellario exiret vinum deferens hospitibus, vento turbinis commoto demones eum rapuerunt in conspectu totius populi.[39]

In order to express his anger against gamblers he quoted Job:

Exultant lusibus: gaudent ad sonitum organi: ducunt in bonis dies suos et in puncto ad inferna descendunt. Dicam igitur vobis sentenciam Christi o miserrimi peccatores. Ve vobis, qui nunc ridetis quia flebitis. Ve in praesenti ve in corpore et anima ve in morte ve in gehenna. Rogemus igitur Christo.[40]

Another preacher, Péter Bornemisza[41], published a work in 1578 entitled *Ördögi kisértetekről avagy röttenetes utálatosságáról ez megferteztetett világnak* (On the Diabolic Temptations or the Infernal Abominations of this Tainted World). He wrote the following story trying to deter people from playing:

Mediolanomot, midőn meg vőttec volna az Német Lantzmanok, keszeritőttec az gazdakat, hogy ételt, italt, ingyen hordgyanac, es êtel vtan

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[38] Themeswar 1509, pars hyemalis, 47 H. On the basis of footnote 2, ball games played with rackets must have been popular in Hungary as well.

[39] Themeswar 1509, pars aestivalis, 7 F. The end of this story is that the innkeeper prayed to God for his soul among the devils. As a result the devils released him so that he could go home, close his inn down and lead a virtuous life.

[40] Themeswar 1516, pars hyemalis, sermon 46.

[41] Péter Bornemisza (1535–1584): writer, Lutheran preacher and superintendant. He studied in Kassa (Košice) and subsequently became Melanchton's student in Wittenberg. After several years spent in Padua and Venice, he was enrolled at the University of Vienna in 1558. Since his work contributed to the ever increasing propagation of Protestant ideas, he suffered persecution many times.

iatekra, kartyara es kotzkara, minden fő Nemetnec egy egy aranyat adgyanac: Ha meg nem adtac, minden marhaiat sakmanra hantac: O ki czuda mestersegi ezec az ördőgnec, es ki bőlcz ostori az Istennec: Mert netalam azoc csac lakasra es íatekra takartac, azert im arra kőlteti marhaiokat velec, de mérgekre.[42]

(When Mediolanum was occupied by the German soldiers, all burghers were forced to provide free food and drinks and to give one gold coin to each German superior for the playing of cards and dice. Should this not have been forthcoming, all the person's wealth was taken in forfeit. What manipulation of the devil was this and what wise whip of God. Perhaps they saved only for living and playing and now their wealth must be spent on them with rage.)

The chapter of the same work discussing *Friss torkosokról* (The New Avarice) says:

Mínden rendbeli ember, feiedelmec, nemessec, paraztoc, mikor vendegsegben vadnac, ha az ket vagy harom poharotska meg haladgya őket, ottan meg zaiosul, Esze mihent meg valtozic, oztan minden dolga csac szerenczere, vgy forog mint az szel malom: Mint az kís gyerme[t]skec értelem nekűl, valami eszekbe iűt, es valamit egyic emlit, imezt, amazt iattzuc, porba pősőlősdit, louagossagot, kőruelyeset, futosast, es akar mit egyic az masiknac mond, ottan az tőbbijs vtanna, sem eleit, sem vtollyat nem gondoluan semmi iatekoknac. Illyec az őreg emberek is, mihent meg zaiosodnac, akar Predikator, akar itelő Mester, akar biro, akar Feiedelem legyen, Ezer bolondsagot űznec: Ki barat tantzot kezd, ki tapogatos tantzot Es azba mind fűlet, szaiat, orrat, mellyet, czeczet, mínd talpig el tapogattya, Es vgy izgattya az Sàtan soc fele férteimessegre. Az vtan sőuen tanczot, Es olly tantzot, hogy az laboc kőzőt által vetic az kezeket. Nemelly az fele őrdőgi mulatsagotis talaltac, hogy egy mas kezet veriec, es őc hegyes, auagy sarkantyus gyűrőt czinaltac, es vgy űtic az leany kezet, hogy az vér ki iű az tetemekből.[43]

(Whenever people of all orders, sovereigns, noblemen and peasants are in a party, two or three small glasses overwhelm them, they turn

[42] P. Bornemisza: Ördőgy kisirtetekről avagy rőttenetes vtalatossagarol ez meg ferteztetett vilagnac. Sempten pinkősd tayba. 1578, ed. Eckhardt Sándor. Budapest, 1955, 183 (referred to as Bornemisza).

[43] Bornemisza: 210.

drunken. As soon as their minds change all they care for is luck, turning like a windmill. They behave like senseless little children, having ideas of all sorts. One says let's play this and that, pissing in the dust, horseyback, roundelays or simply running around. Whatever one says, the others all follow and neither the beginning nor the end of the game is to be seen. The elderly are the same when they turn drunken even if they are preachers, court masters, judges or sovereigns. They pursue thousands of insanities: some start a monk's dance, others the groping dance fingering ears, mouth, nose, breast, nipples all the way to the soles of the feet thereby being titillated by Satan to do all sorts of hideous things. Thereafter they start the hedge dance and another dance in which hands were flung between the legs. Some found a diabolic game in which they slap each others hands: some prepared pointed or spurred rings for the purposes of this game therewith beating the girls hands until their bodies started bleeding.)

Laws explicitly prohibiting games are relatively infrequent in Hungary. Only the resolution of the Buda synod of 1279 is known which banned playing dice among priests:

> *Clerici officia vel commercia non exerceant maxime inhonesta, minus histrionibus, et joculatoribus intendant, et tabernas prorsus evitent, nisi forte causa necessitatis in itinere constituti. Ad aleas et Taxillos non ludant, nec hujusmodi ludis intersint, Comam, et tonsuram patentibus auribus habeant congruentes, et in officiis Ecclesiasticis, et in aliis bonis studiis se exerceant diligenter.*[44]

Some lines below, dice are mentioned again in the following context:

> *Prohibemus Sacerdotibus, et aliis Clericis in sacris ordinibus districte ne secum prolem habeant, quam in sacro ordine genuerant propter scandalum, et ne hujusmodi Parochialium Sacerdotes in domibus suis habeant aleas, vel taxillos districtius inhibemus.*[45]

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[44] Leges ecclesiasticae regni Hungariae, et provinciarum adiacentum opera et studio Ignatii comitis de Battyán episcopi Transsilvaniae. 1827, II, 436 (referred to as Battyán).

[45] Battyán: II, 436. The prohibition of playing dice naturally included a ban on the possession of dice as well, so that no special emphasis should be necessary in this regard. When a real reason is sought for, it seems likely that dice were seen as symbols of sin

Of the Hungarian legal documents the Selmec (Banská Štiavnica) (1270), the Szepes (Spiš) (1370)[46] and the Buda (first half of the 15th century)[47] law books contained articles referring to games. The following clauses of the Selmec law book concerned gamblers:

> *28. Von Spilernn. Keines menschnn swn noch frwnnde, der nicht seines protts lebt, der mag nicht mer verspielen, den das er mit dem gwrttll umbfanngen hat, und wer Im mer mit spil ongewinnet, des ist er vngewertt. Wer dem andernn ongewinnet mit falschnn würffln, und des vberwundnn wirt mit czwein geczewgnn, der denn verlornn hat, der anttwurt dem gewinner nichts nicht darumb, und man sol den felscher die würffll durch die hannt slagen.*[48]
>
> (On the gamblers. Nobody, who does not earn his daily bread, can gamble away more than what he is wearing, and whoever wins more in the game, that gain is not valid. If someone wins using loaded dice, and this can be proven by two witnesses, the loser owes nothing to the winner and the die should be struck through the cheat's hand.)

Paragraph 46 of the Szepes-Szombat (Spišská Sobota) law book says the following about gamblers:

> *Wy nymand mer vorspilen mag den her gelt hot und von falschen Wurfl.*
> *Auch hab wir das czu einem rechten, wen czwen mittenander spilen, das keyner mer czuvorspilen hott wen das her um und an hot, und*

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equal to the children sired by priests. Violations against celibate and saintly life were associated with the hideousness of gambling with dice. The mention of dice in such a context as early as 1279 shows how widespread it must have been in those days.

[46] Both of these law books were written in German, and part of the laws were brought by settlers to Hungary. It is for this reason that although they developed an organic connection with Hungarian reality, they originated elsewhere. Since, however, these groups of settlers lived in Hungary and they had a royal permission to obey their own laws they became part of Hungarian history and their laws were assimilated as well. Only two later copies of the Szepes (Spiš) law book offer information that may be quoted in the context of gambling. One of these is the Szepes-Szombat (Spišská Sobota) law book (from the first half of the 15th century), the other is the Lőcse (Levoča) law book (1540).

[47] Although the Buda law book was written in German, it incorporated laws based on the Hungarian legal developments.

[48] G. Wenczel: Árpad-kori új okmánytár. Budapest, 1860–1874, III, 215.

man sal yn nicht fessern, noch vnder ein bute stossen, und auch keine getwang anlegen, vnd ab ymand off eines manes erbe adir off sein hawsfrawen cleyder spielen wolde, des wellen wir mit keynerley sache gestaten. Ob ymand off sein phand spilete, es were vil adir wenig, so mag dy frawe das phant mit sechs grossen losen, vnd ab eines erbir manes sun adir knechte mer vorspilte, wen her phenig hette, vnd dorczu seyn gewant vorspilete, vnd ander phand, so spricht Vnser recht, daz des jongen fater adir des knechtes her dy phand mit drey grosen mag gelosen. Op sich darvbir ymand wolde widerseczen, und daz recht nicht halden wolde, als es gemacht ist, und einen fessert adir fing, vnd dy phand zu losen nicht wolde geben, so sal der richter ein marg birse von ym nemen, vnd dy phand an gelt wider sal geben, wnd pey welchem spiler man falsche wurfel fynt, den salman bruen.[49]

(No one can gamble for more than the money that he has and about fixed dice.
We declare it by law: If two play with one another, neither of them may gamble away more than what he wears, and neither of them should be fettered, neither of them should be punished, no force should be applied. However, gambling for someone else's chattels or his own wife's clothes should, in any case, never be permitted. If someone was playing for his pledge, were it be much or less, the wife should redeem the pledge for six groats, or if a respected person's son or servant gambled away more money than what they had, and even their clothes and someone else's pledge was lost, then the following order should be applied: the pledge should be redeemed by the father of the son or the master of the servant for three groats. Should anyone resist and violate this law as written, and fetter or capture the other or should the pledge not be returned, the judge shall fine him a mark and force him to return the pledge without payment; gamblers found with loaded dice should be dipped in hot water.)

Paragraph 51 of the Lőcse (Levoča) law book sets the following rules concerning gamblers:

Das kein Man mer vorspielen mag wen er vmb unnd an hoth. Wir wellen auch das czw eynem Rechten haben wen tzwen mitt einander

[49] K. Demkó: A szepesi szászok ősi jogélete. Lőcse, 1896, 56, 58 (referred to as Demkó 1896).

spylen das keyner mer vorspielen magk wen das er vmb vnd an hatt vnd man soll in nicht fesseren ader vnder eyn bueth stuerzen vnnd ab einer wolde auff eins Mans Erbe ader auff sein hauszfrawen kleyder ader auff sein feder kleyder spielen wolde, das wel wir mit keinerley sachen gestatten, vnd ab eynes Erbarn Mans sone ader seyn knecht mee vorspiltt wen er pfhenigkh hett vnd dorczw sein gewath vorspiltt das er an hette, vnd er meer pfhant, seinem spyler seczt: Wyr wellen, das des jungen Vater ader des knechtes Herr das gewath mit 3 groschen gelessenn mag das phanth, welcherley das sey, vnd die fraw yre kleyder es seyn viel ader wenig mitt 6 groschen mag loesszenn. Vnnd ab das were das sich do wider imant woltt seczen und das Recht nicht halthen wolde, als es gemacht vnnd yn fesserth ader fing vnd die phannth nicht zwloesen geben wolde, Wyr wellen das der Rychter I Marg byrsche von ym neme vnd die phanth an geltth widergeben solle. Vnd bey welchem Spiler man mehr wan 3 würffell finth dem sal man alles nemen was er bey im hath, vnd findet man bey im falsche wurffel man sol in bruenn.[50]

(No one is allowed to gamble away more than what he is wearing. We declare it by law: If two play with one another, neither of them may gamble for more than what they wear, and he should not be fettered, or be punished any other way; no one should be allowed, however, ever to gamble for someone else's immovables or his own wife's or father's clothes. If a respected person's son or servant gambles away more than he possesses in money or clothes or pledges more, the following order should apply: The pledge should be redeemed by the father of the son or the master of the servant for three groats regardless of what it is. The wife's clothes can be redeemed for 6 groats whether many or a few. Should anyone resist and violate this law as thus ordered, and fetter or capture the other or should he refuse to return the pledge, the judge shall fine him a mark, and the pledge should be returned without payment; gamblers found with more than three dice should be deprived of all their dice. Gamblers found with fixed dice should be dipped in hot water.)

In the Buda law book, the following paragraphs were listed on the subject of gamblers:

[50] Demkó 1896: 57, 59.

190. Was dÿe spiler verfallen Vnd dÿ sÿe haltenn Man schôl nicht gestathen, daß man kainerlaÿ vnfûr mit wûrfeln treib yn der stadt. Thût das eyn hand wercher, den schol man pûßen In den peûtel, Als oft er pegrieffen werd, vmmb I margk. Thuen iß dÿ freihait ader dÿ pûben, Man sol sÿ mit knôtteln dar von schlaen vnnd In dem pranger setczen. Vnnd peÿ welchem man ainen falschen wurffil find, dem sol man eÿnen wûrfel durch den tener schlaen. Auch eÿn itczlicher wirt, der das würfel spil gestat In seynem hauß, der verfelt III margk dem gericht.[51]

(How gamblers and their defenders should be punished. No abuse with dice should be tolerated in town. If such an offense is committed by a craftsman, he should be fined to the limits of his purse. Subsequent violations should be punished to the extent of I mark each. When the same offense is committed by drifters or idlers they should be dispersed with clubs and put on the pillory. Those who possess loaded dice, should have a die struck through their palm. All owners who permit dicing in their house should be fined III marks.)

345. Wÿ man den hant spilern sol thuenn Von hant spilern. Mann schol yn nicht gestaten kainerlaÿ vngefûr mit wurffeln czu treiben In der stat. Thut daß eÿn hantwercher, den schol man ÿm peutel, Also oft vnnd er pegrieffen wirt, vmmb eÿn marck. Thuen eß dy freÿhait, man schol sÿ mit knotteln dar von slahen.[52]

(How one should proceed against gamblers. No abuse with dice should be allowed in town. If such an offense is committed by a craftsman, he should yield up his purse as many times as he is caught to the extent of I mark each time. When the same offense is committed by drifters they should be chased away with clubs.)

330. Von Vngeratin chinder, dÿ man mag enterben. Dÿ vndanck nemen ader Vngeraten chinder. Mann enterbt eliche chinder. so sy vbel gerathen, vnnd das mag thuen Vater vnnd muter czum ersten, Ap das kint vndancksam ist vater vnnd mûterlicher trew mû vnd arbait, dÿ sÿe mit yn paiden ader ir eynes alleyn gelitten haben. Vnnd so iß daß ir czaiget mit werchen, Also das es seine eltern smêcht mit vbil

[51] Das Ofner Stadtrecht. Eine deutschsprachige Rechtssammlung des 15. Jahrhunderts aus Ungarn, ed. Karl Mollay. Budapest, 1959, 126 (referred to as Mollay 1959).
[52] Mollay 1959: 173.

handelung petrůbt vnnd leidigt mit schlegen ader deß gleichenn. Auch mag man sy enterben, Op eß czu eynem offinparen luderern, Rasler, spiler ader hurer wurde Ader ap er gaidende wůrd czeren, Ap er aber In vnglaůben trete ader sůst wurde eyn dipp, eyn rauber, eÿn fůlscher Vnnd den sachen gleich, In deß allen můß er seines rechten erbtailes darben unnd emperenn.[53]

(About idle children deprived of their inheritance, who are ungrateful. Legal children may be disinherited if they become corrupted. This act may be primarily taken by their father or mother if the child is unthankful for their father's and mother's love, care and solicitude whether against both or only one of them. Ungratefulness is produced by deeds whereby children make their parents sad by an evil act or hurt them by beating or in other ways. They may also be disinherited if they are evidently rascals, dice players, gamblers, whores, if they lead a lavish life, they apostatize or become thieves, robbers and forgers or anything similar; in all these cases, children can be deprived of the right of succession.)

Since games usually were only of small value, they were but infrequently included in wills and inventories. No such data have yet been found in the Hungarian material in sources of this type. On the other hand, references have been discovered in account-books. The account-book of the Polish prince Sigismund, who subsequently became king of Poland (1506–1548), should be cited here. The prince was left out of the power struggle that followed the death of his father (Kasimir) and ended up in the Buda castle of his brother Wladislaw II, where he had his own small court.[54] Although information concerning games in this account-book cannot be cited in full detail here it is worth delineating the picture that emerged during the analysis of this body of data.

Altogether 79 items of various significance were recorded which had relevance to games.[55] In ten of these cases, the game itself could be identified (the dice as *alea*, cards as *carta* and the chessboard as *schachownycze*;

[53] Mollay 1959: 169.

[54] Zsigmond lengyel herceg budai számadásai (1500–1502, 1505), ed. A. Divéky. Budapest, 1914, 4 (referred to as Divéky).

[55] *Kulki* is a Polish word meaning "marbles" (Divéky: 246).

each were mentioned three times, while marbles occurred once under the term *kulki*).[56]

An exception is represented for October and November 1500. This was the time of a military expedition to the southern frontiers. During this time, he played 17 times, and the kind of game was specified in 13 of the cases. Top (named *crisolki*) was the game described in all of these instances.[57]

Aside from this period of the previously mentioned military expedition, only the general term play (*ludus*) was used fifteen times, while the time of playing remains unknown as well. Out of the ten specified games the time of playing was not recorded in eight instances. The time of playing is known, however, for the remaining cases.

When the data are studied from the viewpoint of timing, it becomes clear that during this southern military expedition 12 of the 17 games were played in the evening (*vespere*). One occasion took place after the evening meal (*post cenam vespere*) and two after the meal at noon (*post prandium*). In the remaining two cases the time of playing is unknown. Aside from the military expedition, games were played 16 times after the meal at noon (*post prandium*) and once the term *prandium* is used by itself. Games were held 18 times in the evening, while two records refer to occasions after the evening meal (*post cenam vespere*). Only in one case playing was recorded after sleeping time (*post dormitionem*). (This may have been an opportunity for some curious sort of gambling, though the source does not elaborate on the details.) Playing before a meal (*ante cenam*) is mentioned once.

Out of a total of 39 occasions games were played 21 times in the evening hours. Games pursued at noon or during the early afternoon were relatively common (seventeen cases) as well. On the other hand, no reference was found to games having been played during the morning hours or before noon.

As far as the seasonality of these data is concerned, it is surprising that only five records originate from the three winter months (three of them

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[56] Two data were not taken into consideration due to the unreliability of their sources. One of these is: *Item pro reformatione alee dedi II den. ung.* (Divéky: 89). The other is: *Item pro coloribus ad lapides depingendos pro alea domini principis dedi IIII den. ung.* (Divéky: 91).

[57] *Crisolki* is a Polish word meaning "top" (Divéky: 254.)

are related to dice). Eleven of the recorded games were played during the spring while seventeen took place during the summer. Twenty-nine occasions were recorded during the fall. In two cases, the place of play was documented as well. One of them took place in the Nyék garden (*in zagrada*[58] Nyek), and the other on a boat trip from Visegrád to Buda.[59]

Several items related to games played during the southern military expedition were recorded on the same day. The dates mentioned were November 19, 1500[60] and other occasions such as March 1, 1500[61] and November 16, 1502.[62] This shows that on certain "playful days" the prince had more time left for games, and could afford playing several times a day.

The 79 occasions recorded during these three years do not necessarily mean that the prince only played this number of times, since that type of source mentions only gambling with financial consequences. Plays which lacked this monetary aspect were not recorded because they represented no expense. On the other hand, three records are indicative of repairs made on chessboards.[63] (The text also describes how one of these was decorated with precious stones and that the prince kept another chessboard exclusively in his room.) However, no direct reference is made to actually playing chess in this text, although, if these objects had not been in use, repairs, as ordered by Sigismund, would not have become necessary.

The possibility may not be ruled out that this account-book was not written with the expected accuracy. There is evidence that the prince played dice on February 8, 1501,[64] February 11, 1501[65] and February 15,

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[58] *Zagrada* is a Polish word meaning "garden" (Divéky: 249).

[59] Divéky: 50.

[60] Divéky: 75.

[61] Divéky: 21.

[62] Divéky: 178.

[63] March 10, 1500: *Item eodem die a reformatione schachownycze dedi V den. ung.* (Divéky: 23). *Schachownycze* is a Polish word meaning "chessboard". June 25, 1500: *Item a reformatione schachownycze de stuba domini principis per manus Wawrzynyecz dedi V den. ung.* (Divéky: 43). March 9, 1501: *Item eodem die aurifabro, qui margaritas ad scacos osszadzal domino principi dedi a labore et pro argento quod suum apposuerat I flor. et ortt.* (Divéky: 94).

[64] *Item eodem die Oczyeski ad ludum alee domino principi dederat III ortt. quos sibi eodem die dedi minus V den. ung.* (Divéky: 89).

[65] *Item eodem die per manus Oczyeski pro ludo in alea domino principi dedi XX. den. ung.* (Divéky: 90).

1501, when he bought 33 yew dice for one and a quarter florins[66]. At the same time, records related to dice do not occur after February 15, 1500, although the 33 dice could only have been used for playing. Thus, it may be assumed that the 79 items in this account-book only represent the minimum number of games played by Sigismund and should not be regarded as a complete list.

Games were mentioned in medieval Hungarian poetry as well. The following poem, vagrant in character, may be read in the formulary book by János Magyi:[67]

Plenitudo temporis venite exultemus
Licet ramos arborum calvari videamus
Quamvis proptuaria plena non habemus
Venite omnes Socii fortiter bibamus
Et si nummis careas jubeas taxillum
Fortiter in tabula girare fac illum.[68]

In the elegy entitled *Blasio militanti Janus fabricitans*, Janus Pannonius[69] wrote the following:

Luditis in mediae securi sidera noctis,
Hostiles, vallo nil metuente minas.
Fert clypeus talos, dat pocula cassis, et altum
Ebrius ante ignem carmina lixa canit.
Succedit ludo somnus, pallentibus astris,
Curantur rapto, corpora fessa cibo.[70]

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[66] *Item feria II.-a post Sancti Valentini pro lapidibus triginta tribus de taxo arbore ad aleam domini principis dedi I ortt.* (Divéky: 90).

[67] This *colligatum* composed of 28 booklets dates from 1476, the time when Magyi was a notary in Óbuda. Additions to this text, however, took place even after he became a notary in Pest (1490–1492). A magyar irodalom története 1600-ig, ed. T. Klaniczay. Budapest, 1978, I, 178 (referred to as A magyar irodalom).

[68] Márton György Kovachich: Formulae Solennes Styli in Cancellaria, Curiaque Regum Regni Hungariae olim usitati. Pest, 1799, XI.

[69] Janus Pannonius (1434–1472): humanist poet, bishop of Pécs after 1459. He spent eleven years in Italy starting in 1447, and obtained a doctoral degree there. Following his return to Hungary, he joined the humanist court of king Matthias. However, in 1471 he participated in a conspiracy against the king.

[70] Jani Pannonii opera latine et hungarice. Budapest, 1972, 328.

Sebestyén Tinódi[71] refers to games in his poem describing *Sokféle részegösröl* ("Many kinds of drunkards") as follows:

Igen iszik az tizedik,virradatig iszik,
Nagy gazdagnak véli magát tizenegyedik
Az hásárton mindent elveszt tizenkettödik.[72]

(The tenth is drinking very much, a plenty till dawn,
The eleventh feels quite wealthy,
The twelfth loses everything while gambling.)

The same author wrote in his poem entitled *Enyingi Terek János vitézsége* ("The Heroism of János Enyingi Terek"):

Tudományokat ö kezde tanulni,
Játékokban, vadászásban ott lenni.[73]

(He started studying science,
participating in games and hunting.)

In a poem written on *Gonosz asszonyembereknek erkelcsekről való ének* ("The Moral of Evil Female Folk") Kristóf Ambrust[74] wrote as follows in 1550/1551:

Asszonyembert az Uristen egy csontból teremte,
mert jól tudá őnékiek hasznotlan voltokat,
mint az csontnak, kinek ember hasznát nem veheti ,
hanem hogyha őbelöle kockákat csinálnak.
Mely kockának játszásával gonoszság sok lenne,
öszveveszés és nagy feddés, káromlás, mordulás,
emberhalál, gyűlőségek és nagy sok gonoszság,
marhavesztés, lélekvesztés és egyéb gonoszság.[75]

(God made women from a bone,
since he knew how useless they were:

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[71] Sebestyén Lantos Tinódi (between 1505 and 1510–1556): minstrel, an outstanding representative of 16th century Hungarian epic poetry.

[72] Tinódi Sebestyén összes művei 1540–1555. Budapest, 1881, 226.

[73] Tinódi Sebestyén: Krónika. Budapest, 1984, 314.

[74] Kristóf Ambrust was born in Szeben (Sibiu) and became an official of the Szeben chancellary (A magyar irodalom I, 408).

[75] Hatvanhat csúfos gajd. XVI–XVIII századi magyar csúfolók és gúnyversek, ed. E. Hargittay. Budapest, 1983, 39–40.

just like bone, which is of no use
except when carved into dice.
When playing the dice, there is plenty of evil,
quarrels, accusations, swearing, growling,
death, hatred and a great deal of evil of all sorts,
Wealth as well as soul are lost and other
wicked things happen.)

Having quoted data from the written sources it may be said that it is impossible to present a homogeneous picture of contemporary attitudes to game with the exception of the unanimous condemnation of dishonest gambling. It is possible to encounter the rejection of dice, backgammon and mundane vanities in general, though these and other games could be found in the environment of kings and other dignitaries, without having been condemned by the authors. On the one hand, it is possible to find resolutions that ban games, while on the other hand, in addition to prohibitions, written regulations specified the rules of certain games as well as the value of legal gains. The simultaneous existence of such mutually exclusive phenomena is not typically Hungarian. Burning luxury items as well as games in Italy and France had been a widespread custom long before Savonarole ordered the "vanities" onto the pyres in Florence. Following sermons by famous monks, women and men alike rushed to collect all sorts of games, decorative items and other fancy objects in order to burn them in a celebratory way.[76] John of Capistrano had also had many things to burn all around Europe in the 15th century.[77] The moral condemnation of games was actually not sufficient to keep people away from gambling. Once the preacher left, people soon replaced their games which had been burnt by themselves paying no attention to prohibitions or punishments promised for the other world. Since these norms were far from those of everyday life, their enforcement became impossible: One could not continuously punish masses of people.[78] This is why, while prohibitions were

[76] J. Huizinga: The Waning of the Middle Ages. Harmondsworth 1972, 13 (referred to as Huizinga).

[77] In Nurimberg, for example, in addition to 40,000 dice, 3600 backgammon boards were burnt in 1454 (Endrei–Zolnay: 27).

[78] The punishment for gambling was milder or often even ignored when no cheating was involved. For example, when Mihály Hyrt stole malt in Löcse (Levoča) in 1551, sold it and gambled with the money thus obtained he was pardoned in the hope of

repeatedly spelled out, gambling was also continuously regulated in order to at least minimize conflicts and keep gamblers at bay.[79]

The background of gambling fever that broke the moral dams in the Middle Ages is difficult to trace in the Hungarian written sources. It seems most likely that in those days, people were in need of another world, in which the rules of everyday life were not valid anymore. This not only helped them to forget their troublesome everyday problems but also offered temporary relief in an oppressive atmosphere loaded with evil forces of the other world (hell, devils etc.) which was a source of constant suffering. Under these circumstances, playing must have represented a "valve" which made their lives bearable. This is why not even moral pressure could force them to give up games. The necessity of such psychological outlets in those days is clearly manifested by a number of behavioral patterns displayed during some of the festivities.

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improved behavior thanks to interventions by the rector, the preacher and other honest people. By the end of the Middle Ages, Saxon towns in Transylvania entrusted the magistrate with the punishment for gambling [Brassó (Braşov), 1577. Corp. Statut. 541]: K. Demkó: A Felső-Magyarországi városok életéről a XV–XVII. sz.-ban. Budapest, 1890, 194 (referred to as Demkó 1890).

[79] The fact that fighting was commonplace was already mentioned in note 23. This was so much part of the game that it was even depicted in stone statues. A 14th century keystone from the Diósgyőr castle shows two knights fighting over some sort of a not exactly identifiable boardgame (perhaps backgammon; see fig. I). I. Czeglédy: A diósgyőri vár. Budapest, 1988, 39. Data gathered so far, and the fact that one third of the rare pictorial representations of gambling (other examples will be discussed subsequently) shows the participants fighting undoubtedly explains why prohibition or at least regulations were required.

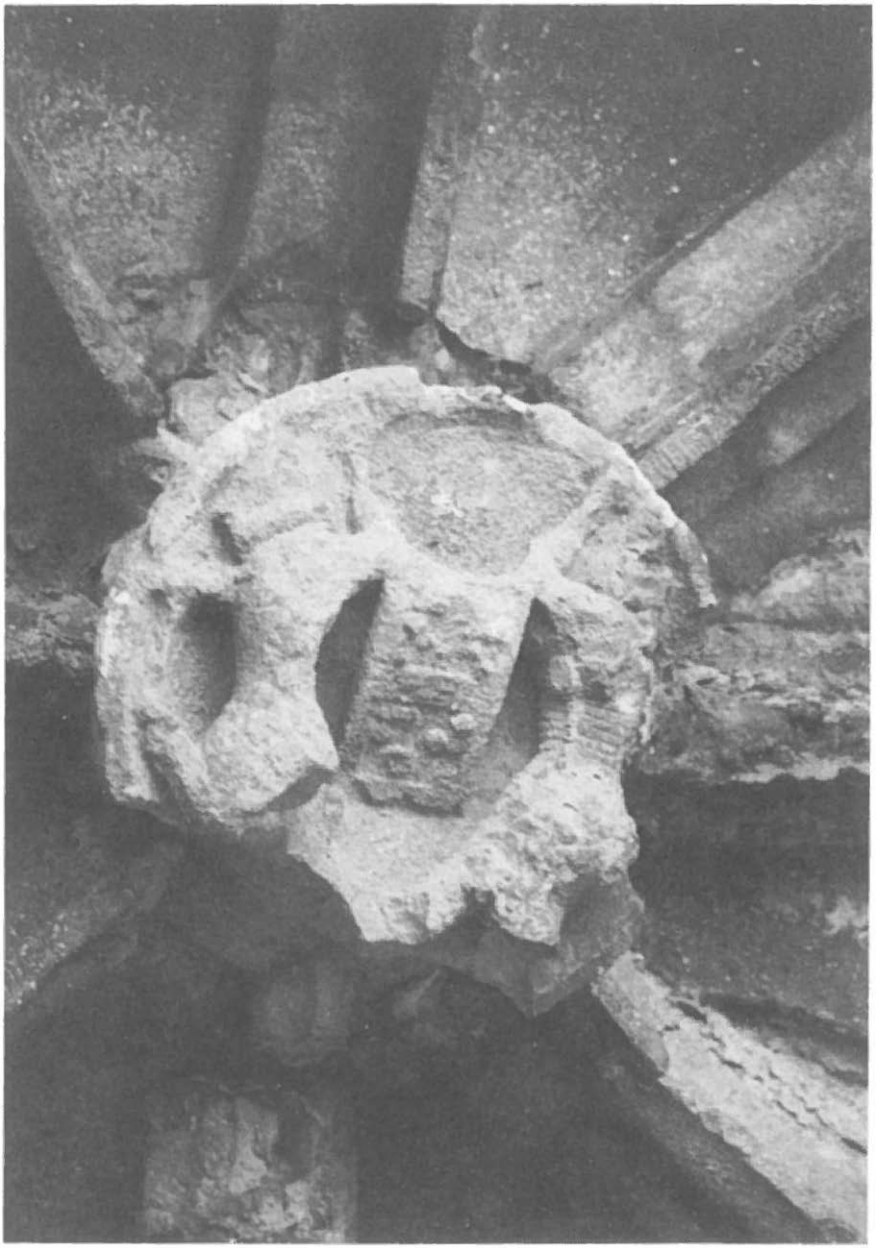

Figure I

Some holy days were two-faced, one being the official-religious celebration, while the other was cheerful,[80] offering temporary relief from valid social rules, limitations and the immutable, timeless hierarchical order of the Middle Ages.[81] One of these was the "Feast of Fools" (*festa stultorum, fatuorum, follorum*).[82]

Celebrating this holy day was justified as follows in Paris during the 15th century:[83]

> "However, we – they said – are doing these things as jokes, not for real, as has been customary since the old days. We only want to spill and evaporate all our congenital foolishness once a year. Wine goatskins and barrels would crack more often if one did not open their faucets every once in a while, would they not? We are old leather bottles, half-cracked barrels; thus, all the fizzy wine of wisdom retained in the service of God throughout the year, would leak uselessly if we had no opportunity to play and fool around sometimes. Consequently, we must make jokes every now and then to make sure that we will have the strength to contain all our wisdom."[84]

This holy day was celebrated by students and petty clergy on St. Stephen's

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[80] M. Bahtyin: Francois Rabelais művészete, a középkor és a reneszánsz népi kulturája. Budapest, 1982. 105 (referred to as Bahtyin).

[81] Bahtyin: 104.

[82] Bahtyin: 95.

[83] At the beginning, celebrations on the Day of Fools did not exceed legal limits. They were banned in most cases by the the High Middle Ages. One form of such celebrations was the so-called Donkey Feast, when special "donkey-masses" were celebrated. However, no data on such festivities are known from Hungarian sources.

[84] Translated from Chartularium Universitatis Parisiensis, ed. H. Denifle. Paris, 1897, 652-656. In Hungarian see: Világosság 11 (1983) 677–678. It is part of a letter of the theological faculty of the university of Paris dated March 22, 1444. It was also published in Bahtyin: 96. – The "safety valve" function of some medieval festivities probably has historical precedents. This is shown by similar phenomena observed by anthropologists during ethnographic field work in remote areas (e. g. Roger Caillois, Mircea Eliade, Max Gluckmann) who also regarded popular feasts as safety valves. Such an outlet for tensions accumulated during everyday life, the temporary suspension of norms, is supposed to make social limitations acceptable on an everyday basis (G. Klaniczay: A karnevál szelleme. In: idem, A civilizáció peremén. Budapest, 1990, 39–40).

Day, on New Year's Day, Childermas Day, Twelfth Day and on St. John's Day (Midsummer). A great deal of drinking and eating took place right at the altar[85] especially at New Year's and Twelfth Day. Dicing took place there and obscene gestures were common as well. During these celebrations fool monks and fool bishops were elected. The places of high rank officials were taken by people of lower status who mockingly performed their functions as well. Masses were celebrated according to this upside-down hierarchical order, the bells were rung haphazardly and the stinky smoke of burning footwear replaced that of incense. A chorus of fake verses and flat singing was heard. Dancing and pretended confessions took place.[86]

Celebration of such holy days may have been a custom in Hungary as well, at least one may speculate as much from reading a note in a work entitled *Stauromachia* by Stephanus Taurinus[87] recorded at Gyulafehérvár (Alba Iulia) in 1519. He wrote the following:

> *Huc pertinet quod paucissimis admodum diebus: Saturnalibus inquam vel stultorum feriis in quibus, ut fit, justitium edixeram, clamosi fori a strepitu hos commentariolos raptim congressi.*[88]

Interpretations of this text differ depending on the researcher. According to Tekla Dömötör[89] it refers to the Carnival while Tibor Kardos regards it as a description of the Feast of Fools.[90] Here it is suggested that the expression *stultorum* used in the text undoubtedly relates to the Feast of Fools. This word refers to a number of events marked by noise, clamour and the suspension of studies as was typical for this feast. Thus, regardless

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[85] Bahtyin: 95.

[86] T. Kardos: Adatok és szempontok a magyar dráma kezdeteihez. In: Filológiai Közlöny II (1957) 332.

[87] Stephanus Taurinus (late 15th–16th century): Moravian humanist, canon of Gyulafehérvár (Alba Iulia). He gave a contemporary account of the Dózsa peasant insurrection written in five cantos (M. Stauromachia, id est cruciatorum servile bellum. Vienna, 1519).

[88] T. Dömötör: Naptári ünnepek – Népi színjátszás. Budapest, 1983, 87 (referred to as Dömötör). The reference to the official celebration of this feast suggests that a long tradition and legal forms of this holy day had already been in existence in previous times.

[89] Dömötör: 87.

[90] Régi magyar drámai emlékek, ed. T. Kardos. Budapest, 1960, 58.

of the actual aim of activities described in the work of Taurinus, the Feast of Fools may have been known in Hungary as well.

The games, however, may have been related to Carnival as well. There is no doubt that the courts of the Anjou kings[91] and Sigismund[92] were also the scene of Carnival celebrations which were fashionable in other European countries those days.[93] Carnivals celebrated during the second half of the 15th and the beginning of the 16th centuries have been reported from several sources. According to Szerémi, for example, Lewis II accused the high priests after the Turkish occupation of Nándorfehérvár (Belgrade)[94] as follows:

> *Et insuper me in delirum feceratis tempore carnisprium omni anno, et luciperum deputastis semper in capite, (et) feceratis cornua bouina, in pedibus bouinam pedem, et nasum semper habebam ad modum cikonia, et caudam habebam serpentinam, que fuit contra Deum et contra omnes sanctos.*[95]

In 1519, George of Brandenburg wrote the following:

> "The royal court is horribly poor, however, I held a great Carnival feast with him, just to show the lords that people around the king still stand on their feet."[96]

In fact, George of Brandenburg also participated in a fancy-dress tournament costumed as a "savage".[97]

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[91] King Charles I (1288–1342) reigned between 1310 and 1342; king Lewis I "the Great" (around 1326–1382) reigned between 1342–1382.

[92] King Sigismund (1368–1437) reigned as king of Hungary between 1387 and 1437 and was crowned as king of Germany in 1410.

[93] Carnivals in the royal court reflect predominantly Italian and French influences. A mediating role of German settlers may be assumed in the case of Carnivals among the bourgeoisie (Dömötör: 80).

[94] August 28, 1521.

[95] Szerémi: 101.

[96] B. Radvánszky: Magyar családélet és háztartás a 16–17. sz.-ban, I–III. Budapest, 1879–1896, I, 416 (referred to as Radvánszky).

[97] Radvánszky I: 416. These data also serve as examples that the temporary suspension of hierarchy was not motivated by an opposition attitude. Kings and nobility abandoned their everyday life in much the same way as ordinary people.

Reports on another parodic Carnival tournament were filed by Ludovico da Bagno, a nobleman from Mantua on February 21, 1518 in the Hungarian town of Eger.

> *Et perché V. S. so se diletta de arme come se conviene a Signor naturale et di quella Illustrissima casa, parmi de narrargli il modo de una giostra che fecero alcuni gioveni qui in Agria el giorno di carnevale. La sorte de larme era un cossino grande sul stomacho, in capo un capelleto de lana allongaresca, per scuto alcuni pezzi de cerchi da vasselli commessi insieme li quali pigliavano da la cima de la fronte insino alla correggia et erano tanto larghi un da laltro, chel giostratore potea ben vedere lo inimico senza periculo che la lanza lo potesse offendere, et perché el dicto scuto el qual scusava scuto et elmo, stesse ben assettato alla fronte vi era in cima un circhiello come una ghirlanda el qual era attachato con li cerchi, e cosi se lo assettavano sul capelleto, le lanze havevano un tagliero in capo. Jo aspettava di veder romper collo e brazzi, pur tornorno sani a casa anchor che si dessero qualche sturlata.*[98]
>
> (Some of the lads fought a funny duel. First, they tied huge pillows on their stomachs and wore Hungarian-style woolen caps on their heads. From their forehead to their waist, they were covered by an armor woven out of barrel hoops. These were fitted so loosely to each other that the two knights could easily see one another, however, they could cause no injury with their lances since the thus described armor served as a shield and a helmet simultaneously. The barrel hoops were tied in a bunch above their heads, on top of their hats. Their lances were fitted with kitchen knives. I expected them to break an arm or their necks, however, they returned home without inflicting the tiniest wound on each other).

The royal court, including the higher clergy and nobility had its 1524 session in Pozsony (Bratislava). Although this political body was torn by political intrigue, power breaking and struggles for position, nothing could keep the participants from celebrating the Carnival at its proper time. On January 28, there were even two correspondents who recorded this aspect of the meeting. One of them is János Drágffy, a nobleman

[98] L. Óváry: A modenai és mantuai levéltári kutatásokról. In: Századok XXIII (1889) 392. Cited by Dömötör: 87.

who wrote: ... *in die saltem faciunt exclamationes et ludibria, de nocte autem coryzationes multas.* The other is a nobleman too, who travelled to Pozsony (Bratislava) together with Drágffy. He informed about the events in this way: ... *hastiludia et coria sufficientia habemus usque ad horam primam fere noctis.*[99]

The previously mentioned account-books of Sigismund, a Polish prince, also make references to the Carnival festivities. On March 2, 1500 a clown and an infant emperor were presented to please him,[100] while a sword dance was performed and masked mounted clowns entertained the prince on February 21, 1501.[101]

Carnival celebrations came under fire from righteous medieval as well as Catholic and Protestant personalities during the 16th century and subsequent periods. Pelbartus de Themeswar, for example, wrote the following:[102]

> *Scilicet hodie est tempus cuiusdam leticie, scilicet carnisprivii ... heu heu quam multi christiani his diebus a lumine gratiae christi avertuntur ad opera tenebrarum sc. ad gulam, ebrietatem, lasciuiam et huiusmodi in suo fassango suum deum quem praeelegerunt sibi, hoc est diabolum laudando per larvationes et cantus lasciuos contempto Christo ... Ve nunc mundo a scandulis et peccatis.*

He also posed the question:

> *... utrum homo exercens iocum vel vanum gaudium mundanum aut ludum et huiusmodi trufas – semper peccet mortaliter an non?*

In his opinion, although these people did not always commit deadly sins, they exposed themselves to the temptation of major wrongdoing for several reasons:

> *Tertio, ratione male intentionis, puta siquis larvationes faciet induendo veste aliena, scilicet vir veste muliebri aut mulier veste virili*

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[99] A. Kubinyi: A magyar állam belpolitikai helyzete Mohács elött. In: Mohács. Tanulmányok a mohácsi csata 450. évfordulója alkalmából. Budapest, 1986, 87.

[100] *Item blasznom cum cesare scolaribus, qui venerant ad dominum principem, ad mandata domini principis dedi II flor. feria II.-a privii carnis* (Divéky: 21). *Blasznom* is a Polish word meaning "jester". (Divéky: 258).

[101] *Item dominico carnisprivii die. istis, qui dimicabant ante dominum principem post prandium et choreas per gladios ducebant ad mandata domini principis dedi III flor.* (Divéky: 91).

[102] Themeswar 1516, sermon 45, K. III verso–K. VI. verso. Cited by Dömötör: 80–81.

intentione lasciviae; vel siquis hastiludia facit mere propter vanam gloriam, aut siquis ludit sola causa cupiditatis, vel siquis corizat vel saltat intentione provocandi ad libidinem, vel cantilenam carnalem canit, aut tale quid dicit intentione libidinis etc. ...

This feast was characterized by Miklós Telegdi[103] as follows: *Az poganoctul reiánc szallott test hizlalo es lelec öldöklő büdös fassang.* (The stinky Carnival, that was inherited from the pagans, fattens the body and butchers the soul).[104]

The opinion of Gáspár Heltai was not a great deal more flattering either:

Ur isten egy templomot épít: ott mindjárt az ördög kápolnát rak mellé. ... Mert mindjárt az urunk Jézus Krisztus születésének napja után következik az ördögnek nagy ünnepe a Regelő hét aztán a farsang. Akkor isznak az emberek, tobzódnak, lakoznak, és különb különbféle hiábavaló költségeket művelnek.[105]

(Wherever our Lord builds a temple, the devil erects a chapel nearby at once ... For right after the birthday of our Lord Jesus Christ follows the Devil's great feast, the week of secular song and Carnival. Then people drink, live in opulence and indulge in a variety of wastes.)

Whitsun was celebrated in a fashion similar to that of the Feast of Fools and Carnival. An "efemeral" king and queen were elected for one day[106] and the same kind of irregularities and reverse hierarchy were to be observed which were described in relation to the two previously mentioned holy days. The first information concerning the election of a Whitsun king in Hungary comes from a letter dating to 1528, written by János Kállay from Kompolt to András Báthory. In this letter, Ferdinand[107] is called *rex pynkesthyensis* several times:

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[103] Miklós Telegdi (1535–1586): Roman Catholic bishop, religious writer. He was born to a family of serfs. Telegdi studied in Cracow. He played a major role in organizing the counter reformation cultural center in the town of Nagyszombat (Trnava).

[104] He also explains why his opinion on carnival is so condescending: *Ó részegesec, oh torkosoc, oh ti fassangosoc. ... Gondollyátok meg, méltóe tinectec kártyát, hásártot, vertelyétjátszanotok.* (Oh you drunkards, oh greedy folks, oh you carnival people. ... You should think if it is worthy of you to play cards, hazards and dice.) (Dömötör: 88).

[105] G. Heltai: A részegségnek és tobzódásnak veszedelmes voltáról való dialógus. Kolozsvár, 1552.

[106] Bahtyin: 87.

[107] This is a reference to the younger brother of Charles V, Ferdinand of Habsburg.

Ubi vero Eadem scribit ut omni die vellem regem elevare pynkesthyensem ... Ubi denique scribit dominatio Vestra ut in elevatione Regis pynkesthyensis poterit in me cognoscere parva sapientia.[108]

Article 18 of the 1591 resolutions brought at the Csetnek synod is devoted to the issue of Whitsun as well:

In die Pentecostes de veteri more Reges creare, choreas ducere, ludos exercere etiam quibuscunque prohibitum sit."[109]

The "different world" of these holy days was also manifested in the fact that, for example, people jailed for smaller offenses in Buda were released until the bell marking the end of festivities was rung, at which time they were locked up again.[110]

When games were under way, as much as during the previously mentioned holy days, people exempted themselves from the laws and customs of official life, preferring a cheerful world in which the rules were different from those of everyday life.[111] In this way, an organic relationship developed between games and holy days, beyond the fact that holy days provided free time for play.[112]

Gaiety and play was present in the church as well as secular celebrations of other holy days as well.[113] This, however, did not by definition mean the violation of medieval order.[114] Among the sources relevant to

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[108] Dömötör: 111. Since king Lewis II had no descendants, following his fall in the battle at Mohács, the country was left without a ruler. There were two candidates who aspired to become the king of Hungary. One of them was Ferdinand of the Habsburg dynasty (December 16, 1526 – July 25, 1564), the other was János Szapolyai (November 11, 1526 – July 21, 1540). By calling Ferdinand a "Whitsun King" the noblemen of the Szapolyai lobby wanted to refer to the incompetence of that pretender, suggesting that he could be elected only on a temporary basis due to the expected victory of the Szapolyai party.

[109] Dömötör: 112.

[110] Mollay 1959: 160 (article 306). The same was done during yearly fairs.

[111] J. Huizinga: Homo ludens. Amsterdam, 1939, 20 (referred to as Huizinga 1939).

[112] The idea that there is an essential relationship between games and some of the holy days (the suspension of everyday life is characteristic of both games and holy days, the joyful atmosphere and clear definition of both time and space) occurred to Károly Kerényi and Jan Huizinga as well (Huizinga 1939: 35–36).

[113] Bahtyin: 101.

[114] These included Christmas, Easter, Corpus Christi Day, and St. John's Day.

Hungary, only two reports have survived which discuss the celebrations on Corpus Christi Day in Buda in 1501.[115] One of them was written by Tommaso Dainero, the envoy of Modena. The other source is a letter written by a servant of Ruprecht Haller, a citizen of Buda.[116] The Modena envoy wrote the following in his report entitled *La Festa del Corpus Domini, a Buda*:

> *Il di del Corpo de Christo, in signo de alegreza de la liga facta, fece Monsignor mio Reverendissimo, nanti a la casa de la sua habitatione, che è su il cimiterio de la giesa magior, quando era reportata la sacratissima Eucharestia ala prefata giesa, acompagnata da la maiestate del Re et da tuto il populo,*[117] *uno spectaculo over representatione, il cui subiecto era questo: fingeva, anzi intendo che fu il vero, che stava una profetia, che alhora la fede Maumetana serebe destructa, quando larcha de Maumeto ruinasse; mo dicono che la seata la percosse e fecela ruinare ne quello tempo che li Catholici Re de Spagna presono Granata. Hora, nanti la casa nostra, era fincta la Moschea de Maumeto, et dentro larcha sua, che stava pendula ne laere, et intorno stava il Gran Turcho in genochiono, cum una multitudine de Bassa et altri Turchi. Ecco apuncto, quando giunse ne dicto loco questa Mata cum la processione, se spico da alto uno gran raggio de fuocho, in similitudine de uno fulgure, et percosse la dicta archa, la qual era congegniata cum raggi, tal che bruso gran parte de epsa et dicti Turchi circustanti. Il residuo autem che resto, che non puote*

[115] The cult of Corpus Christi Day was soon supported in Hungary as well. This day is often used in the dating of charters as early as the late 13th and early 14th centuries [1271 Kolozsvár (Cluj): *quinta feria proxima ante festum SS. Corporis Christi*; 1301 Nagyszeben (Sibiu): *feria sexta post festum SS. Corporis Christi*; 1313 Nagyvárad (Oradea): *in festo Corporis Christi*; 1315 Székesfehérvár: *in quindenis festivitatis corporis Christi*]. Walloon merchants as well as connections of the Saxon settlers in Transylvania with the Rhine region probably both played a role in the distribution of this holy day in Hungary (S. Bálint: Karácsony, husvét, pünkösd. Budapest, 1976, 347).

[116] Ruprecht Haller was a member of the City Council between 1490 and 1513. He was elected judge five times. A. Kubinyi: Budapest története a későbbi középkorban Buda elestéig (1541). In: Budapest története II. Budapest, 1973, 140 (referred to as Kubinyi).

[117] The population of Buda and Pest was approximately 25,000 at the beginning of the 16th century (Kubinyi: 134). The "covenant" mentioned in the text must have been the alliance among king Wladislaw, pope Alexander VI and Venice.

brusiare, fu da gran moltitudine de Ungari circumstanti, che stavano a vedere, assalita, come da cani arabiati; et chi li bateva cum legni, chi li gietava pietre, chi cum mane, chi cum denti li straciava, tal che de la Moschea, archa et Turchi, non li resto peccio de la quantita de uno palmo. Era cossa incredibile et de gran piacere vedere cum quanto impeto irruerano in quelli, quasi come facessene una lor gran vendicta.[118]

Di poi usci su uno tabernaculo, molto bene ornato, uno vestito in similitudine de Sibilla, qual, facto signo de silentio, cum gran legiadria, dixe certe parole latine exponendo dicta profectia in persona de questa Matá che li stava presente. Ultra di questo era congiegnata in megio del piazale una fontana molto pulita, che tuto il giorno e la nocte sequente gieto uno optimo vino, Dio volesse che ala capsa del iubileo fusse stata la frequentia de le persone che era a quello vino, qual cum pinte, qual cum pignate, chi cum lo proprio capello et chi cum la bocha aperta, beato chi ne poteva haver meglior parte. Non se vedeva se non spingere urtarse et gietarse per adosso bochali e pentule. Non

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[118] Remains of a very important phenomenon in cultural history, the homoeopathic magic, may be discovered in this part of the envoy's report. The essence of this is that an attempt is made to harm the enemy by destroying his effigy in the hope that the real person will suffer as much as his representation, and once this latter is annihilated, the enemy will die as well (J. G. Frazer: The New Golden Bough. New York, 1959, 7–8). This kind of homoeopathic magic is known in the ancient history of almost all peoples and it is reasonably certain that shamans of the ancient Hungarians used this method as well. As was written in king St. Stephen's I lawbook (around 1001): *Ut creatura Dei ab omnium laesione malignorum remota, et a nullo detrimentum sui passura maneat, nisi a Deo, a quo augmentatur, secundum decretum senatus statutimus ad magni cautionem terroris veneficis et maleficis: ut nulla persona maleficio aut veneficio quemquam hominum subvertere a statu mentis, aut interficere audeat. Ast si quis vel quae, posthac haec praesumpserit, tradatur in manus maleficio laesi aut in manus parentum ejus, secundum eorum velle, ad judicandum. Si vero sortilegio utentes invenirentur, ut faciunt in cinere et his similibus, ab episcopis flagellis emendentur* [L. Závodszky: A Szent István, Szent László és Kálmán korabeli törvények és zsinati határozatok forrásai. Budapest, 1904, 43 (referred to as Závodszky)]. The pagan roots of this magic were long forgotten by the end of the Middle Ages. The sequence of events presented here became part of the *tableaux vivants*, scenes and mystery plays, otherwise it would not even have fit into the religious procession. On the other hand, the fact of the performance itself shows that some kind of beliefs may be preserved, at least the form of homoeopathic magic, which gave the essence of the whole performance.

fu mai la magior festa. Molti ebrii stravachati li dormevano acercha, in similitudine de quelli custodi del monumento de Christo, multi presi per mane e pedi, erane portati ale case lor. É cossa stupenda il piacere se detono tuto quello giorno. Agiungeva ale lor rixe, che dale fenestre nostre tutavia quando li era mai magior calcha, erane gietati giu caponi, papari, et pizoni, dove li concorreva tanti a pigliarli che erane discerpti in cente parte, uno non se ne haveva integro.[119] *Et questo basti pur tropo de la predicta festa.*[120]

(On Corpus Christi Day a spectacle was performed in front of Monsignore's house, which stands beside the graveyard of Our Lady's main church, a sign of the joy over the covenant; after the Holy Sacrament had been taken back to the aforesaid church, His Majesty the King and the whole people attended in this spectacle, whose subject was the following: according to an ancient prophesy the Moslem faith would only disappear if Mohammed's coffin were to be destroyed; but it has been said that when the Catholic Kings of Spain took Granada it was struck by lightning, and was destroyed. This was performed in the following manner: A painting of Mohammed's mosque was set up in front of our house, with his coffin hanging inside that mosque, and the Sultan, countless pashas and other Turks surrounding it. And when His Majesty and the procession reached the aforesaid place a huge flame of fire struck the coffin, as if a lightning, setting it ablaze. And that which did not burn was then attacked by a huge crowd of Hungarians, pouncing on it as a rabid dog, and destroying it with sticks and stones, even with their teeth, so that only a handful of ashes remained of the coffin and of the Turks. It was most unbelievable and a most joyous spectacle to see how wildly they charged, as if to take revenge. Then there appeared a lavishly ornamented taberna-

[119] The event described as the climax of festivities, that is throwing live poultry among the mob, clearly illustrates the nature of medieval animal games which were rather rough, to say the least. During this holy day music was provided by the city musicians. The Buda law book prescribed that these musicians had to gather in front of Our Lady's church on Corpus Christi Day and perform there. Should a musician absent himself, he was banned from entering the city for a whole year. Mollay 1959: 124, article 184. Using French and Spanish examples, Bahtyin also concluded that Corpus Christi Day was a feast strikingly similar to the celebration of carnival.

[120] Descrizione dell'Ungheria nei secoli XV et XVI. Edita nell'occasione del Congresso geografico internazionale a Venezia. Septembre 1881. Budapest, 1881, 16–17.

cle, with a person dressed as a Sibyl, who begged for quiet and then began to speak eloquently in Latin, explaining the meaning of the prophesy to His Majesty. A very pretty fountain stood in the middle of the main square, from which flowed excellent wines the whole day through. Would God grant that there were as many pilgrims on the jubilee pilgrimage, as there were people thronging around this wine, from which they drew with hats, cups and jugs, some only drinking with their hands, and all who drew near were most happy. You could see nought else but thronging, swarming, teeming crowd, which truly threw itself upon the cups and jugs. Never in my life before have I seen such joyous festivity . A number of drunks lay on the ground, akin to the guards who guarded Christ's grave. Many of these then had to be dragged home by their hands and feet. The countless pleasures which we enjoyed was truly wonderful. But the crown of the festivity was yet to come. The thronging was heightened by that when the crowd was its thickest, cocks, ducks and pigeons showered from above. All endeavoured to catch them and tear them apart. Let this suffice, I have perhaps already spoken too much of the aforesaid festivity.)

The other source reported the following:

Jtem an vnnsers lieben herren fronleychnams tag ist ain grosser Triumpff czů Ofen gewesen. Zum ersten hat der Cardinal Petrus auff vnser lieben frawen freythof ain saul auff lassen seczen; vnnd auff die saul eyn vesten; vnd auff die vesten eynen geharnaschten enngel dem ist durch den mund wein außgangen rot vnd weiß so lanng vnnd die procession geweret hat.[121] *Auch ist gemacht gewesen eyn grab darun-*

[121] Church dances and cemetery festivities banned and vehemently persecuted by the church stubbornly survived throughout the Middle Ages. Their origins may be traced back to Greek and Roman cultic tradition, but they may even have preserved ancient rites of other peoples (P. Morvay: A templomkertben, temetőben és halotti toron táncolás, s a halottasjáték népszokásához. In: Ethnographia 1951, 73–74). One may reckon with such rites in the case of the ancient Hungarians as well. Since their pagan roots were very obvious, the 1279 Buda synod brought the following resolution: *Prohibeant etiam Sacerdotes sub poena excommunicationis choreas in Cimiteriis, vel in Ecclesiis duci, quia, ut ait Augustinus melius est festivis diebus fodere, vel arare quam choreas ducere* (Battyán: 445). This information may be seen as the legalization of certain subversive and outlawed deeds by the church on Corpus Christi Day. In fact, the church not only tolerated but in a way supported activities during the holy days which would normally have led to the excommunication of its members.

der drey Türgken; vnd ist das grab Machometi gehangen frey auff dem freythof in der höhe; darumb gemacht vil instrument auff welliche mit pulfer als püchssen. Vnd so der Cardinal mit vnnsers herren fronleichnam fürgienge: do ward das grab Machometi ganncz erknischt vnnd zerfallen vor aller menigklich.

Jtem die Venediger auff irem tail haben auch gemacht eyn seul darauf ain lewen; darauß ist auch wein gerunnen so lang die procession hat geweret von morgens biß auff den mittag. Auch so habenn sy gemachet eyn prugk vor irer herberg von leinwat.

Jtem die Venediger haben gemacht zwo galeen auf zwayen wägen: auff ainer galea die Türgken: auff der andern die Cristen; die füren hinein für das schloß bey dem Senat; vnd stritten gegeneynander vor der künigklichen mayestat vor der vesper da was eyn groß auffsehen. Jtem darnach waren vnder dem schloß gestellt sechßvnddreyssig haubtstuck von püchssen davon ließ man abgeen dreyvnddreyssig.

Jtem darnach gar zů nacht wurden gemacht freüden feür; vnnd gesungen, Te deum laudamus, vnd in allen kirchen wurden die glogken geleüt; vnd was yederman frölich.

Jtem zů dem allerletsten gang auf die nacht do ließ der Cardinal zů vnser lieben frawen in dem pfarrhof in alle venster vnd auch auff die zynnen der zwayer thüren in dem pfarrhof vil der lateren mit liechten seczenn die můßten prinnen die ganncze nacht. Diser Triumpff ist geschehen an vnsers lieben herren fronleichnams tag got czů lob vnnd der heyligen můter der cristenlichenn kirchen zů eren.

Jtem ewer vest veißs zů morgens frů darnach fraget ich Růprechten haller zů Ofen der dann mein herr vndt wirdt ist: warumb die freüden feür gemacht worden wären an dem vergangen heyligen tag. Da sagt herr Jörg bischoff czů Vesperin dem haller meinem wirdt: das der künigklichen mayestat zů Vngern an dem tag vnsers lieben herren fronleichnams tag ain gewisse botschafft wäre kummen auß der Türgkey: das der Soldan dem Türgken het nydergelegt bey den LV tausent Türgken vnd das ist warlich geschehen: so hab ich das auch selbs auß des bischoffs mund gehöret: do ich mit dem haller zů jm gieng.[122]

[122] This letter is kept in the National Széchenyi Library under the title: Apponyi Hungarica 62. The correspondent gives a more moderate account of the events than Daneiro. Even this way, however, a colorful picture of Corpus Christi Day is presented. Tournaments were held, cannons fired, the bells rang, people partied in the cemetery

(Corpus Christi Day was a day of great celebration in Buda. First, Cardinal Peter had a column erected in the churchyard of Our Lady church. On top of this column stood a small castle and an angel in armor. From the mouth of this angel, red and white wine poured as long as the procession lasted. A grave was also prepared with three Turks in it, while Mohammed's coffin hung free at a height. Around it a number of military instruments were placed loaded with gun powder. And when the Cardinal passed in front of it with the Holy Eucharist, Mohammed's coffin was crushed and fell apart in front of the very eyes of the people present.

The Venetians erected a column on their own behalf as well with a lion on its top. The mouth of this beast spilled wine as well so long as the procession lasted from the morning until noon. In front of their quarters, however, they built a bridge out of canvas.

The Venetians also mounted two galleys on two wagons. One of these galleys was for the Turks, the other for the Christians. They were driven to the council in front of the castle where they fought with each other in front of His Majesty the King. This attracted great attention.

Thirty-six large cannons were installed under the castle: thirty-three of them were fired.

At night, bonfires were lit and people sang the *Te Deum laudamus*, bells were rung in all the churches and everybody was very happy.

Finally, at night, the cardinal had lamps placed in all windows of the rectory and on the sills of both church towers. These lamps were left burning throughout the night. This feast on Corpus Christi Day was organized in order to honor God and the Holy Mother of the Christian church.

Do you know that the next morning I asked Rupert Haller of Buda, my master, why the bonfires had been lit on the preceding holy day? Well, George, the Bishop of Veszprém told Haller, my master, that on

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and naturally a stream of wine highlighted the events. Although it is only indirectly relevant to the games, it is worth mentioning that the account-book of the Polish prince Sigismund makes no reference of any kind to what special events might have taken place in Buda on Corpus Christi Day in 1501. On that day, the prince paid the singer who performed during lunchtime, bought rose petals to fill his pillow, cheekbits for his horses and iron nails. He gambled only the day after (Divéky: 111–112).

Corpus Christi Day, His Majesty the King received a message from Turkey. The Turkish Sultan said he would withdraw some 55,000 thousand Turks, and it happened so. I heard this myself straight from the Bishop's mouth when I went to him with Haller.)

This chapter was not intended to give the impression that feasts which are formed of the composite systems of religious, mundane and ethnographic tradition, should be treated as play opportunities alone. It is important to point out, however, that play also had a place in these multi-faceted systems depending on the actual nature of the holy day.[123]

In relation to Hungarian holy days, it is also worth mentioning that although Article 38 of the first law book by king St. Ladislaus listed only 32 holy days[124], the number of such days had almost doubled by the second half of the Middle Ages. As many as 51 holy days were identified during the 1450 Esztergom synod.[125] This means that almost all 52 weeks of the year contained one of the 51 holy days as well, even if the distribution of

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[123] Not even Lent went without playfulness. Rabelais, for example, describes a game which is still played in Dauphine. The person who first says "The fast has nicely passed" to his companion following Lent wins (F. Rabelais: Gargantua. Hungarian translation: K. Kemény. Budapest, 1936, 156, referred to as Gargantua). In Hungarian ethnography *mancsozás* (pawing), that is hitting a wooden ball with a wooden stick (Gy. Ortutay, ed., Magyar néprajzi lexikon. Budapest, 1977, III, 515, referred to as Néprajzi lexikon), is considered a Lenten game which was most fashionable in the Ipoly region and Őrhalom (A. Dorner: A "mancsozás". In: Néprajzi Értesitő 1912, 195). However, there is a record known from Félegyháza in the Great Hungarian Plain dating to 1767, which shows that the playing of this game was not limited to fast days in other parts of the country: *A Leg közelébb múlt júniusának 10. napján Kun St. Mártonban és a 3.-a julij Halas Várossában tartott gyűlésen az Mancsal és karikával vala játék ell tilalmaztatott olly büntetés alatt, hogy az legények totiesquoties 24 pálczát, az gyermek pedig 12 korbácsot szenvedgyenek.* (In the nearest past, meetings held on the 10th of June in the town of Kun St. Márton, and on the 3rd of July in the town of Halas banned playing with "paws" and rings. Lads found guilty of playing these games should be punished by altogether 24 blows with a stick while children should be whipped 12 times) (Félegyháza, 1767, Prot. Curr. 77/1; I. Tálasi: Mancsozás az Alföldön. In: Néprajzi Értesitő 1937, 208).

[124] Závodszky 79. In addition to the 32 holy days the following was added: ... *et unaqueque parochia suum patronum et dedicacionem ecclesie celebret.* This means that if this day did not coincide with one of the 32 holy days, it must be reckoned with separately.

[125] Battyán: 491.

these days was uneven. Including the 52 Sundays, this meant a considerable amount of free time, in spite of the occassional overlaps between Sundays and other holy days. When special holy days of local significance are taken into consideration as well,[126] in addition to the fact that the opportunities for work as well as celebration were vastly reduced during the winter months, at least 100 days when the people of the Middle Ages were not allowed or simply were not able to work must be reckoned with.[127] The repertoire of medieval pastimes was relatively poor in comparison with this plethora of free time. Consequently, games and other forms of entertainment (which were not time bound) must have played a significant role during empty hours. The next chapter will discuss what games were played at such occasions, and the contribution of the archaeological record to our topic.

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[126] In Buda, for example, the king's arrival in town (Mollay 1959: 61) as well as the inauguration and retirement of public officials were special holy days (Mollay 1959: 74).

[127] In this case, 100 is an approximate, rounded value. Positive and negative deviations from this value may have been possible. The number of holy days and the availability of free time were influenced by, for example, wars or epidemics. However, some festivities were celebrated in spite of the often anarchic conditions. As was recorded in the Löcse (Levoča) chronicle of February 7, 1627: *Vmb fasznacht hatt mann ausz permisz des Neüen Herrn Richtersz vnd der Jungen herrn vnzeitigen erkändtnusz, vngeacht der trübseligen Zeit und der grossen gefahr darinnen wier gesteckt abgestochen beydes auff den Platz, vnd vor desz Herrn Richtersz hausz. Gott wolle die arme Stadt, solche vppigkeit nicht lassen entgelten, sondern seinen grimmigen Zorn vnd wohl verdinten Straffen noch ferner gnädiglich von vnsz sämtlichen abwenden* (Hain Gáspár löcsei krónikája. Löcse, 1910–1913, 182–183).
(Around carnival time, with the permission of the Judge and following the untimely decision of the young gentlemen, we celebrated on the market square in front of the magistrate's house, regardless of the sad times and the great danger we lived in. God should not take umbrage at this sumptuousness in our poor town, but should turn his anger away from all of us mercifully).

Artifactual Material

Chess

Chess was introduced in Europe by Arabian and Viking mediation. Similarly to other forms of playing, this game was persecuted by the church at the beginning. This position, however, changed when chesspieces were renamed after representatives of the social hierarchy, thereby reflecting the feudal order of those days.[128] This game became truly popular following the Crusades,[129] especially among members of the upper classes where ladies and gentlemen equally played chess. Knowledge of this game was less characteristic of the lower classes.

The fact that chess was widespread in Hungary is clearly shown by the fact that in the 1429–1437 inventory of goods of the Veszprém Chaplain the term *ad modum scatorum* is used as an identification of squared patterns.[130] Similarly to several countries in Europe, chesspieces in Hungary followed the Arabian type and its variants. Figured chesspieces, which are considered a rarity, have not yet been found in Hungary. Altogether six archaeological chesspieces are known. These were brought to light during the course of excavations at Visegrád, Diósgyőr, Nagyvázsony and Pozsony (Bratislava).

The chesspiece found in the lower castle at Visegrád (fig. II.5), which according to the inventory book dates to the 15th century, is a representative of the classical Arabian type with no special variation or individual

[128] A. Vidmanová: Die mittelalterliche Gesellschaft im Lichte des Schachspiels. In: A. Zimmermann, ed., Soziale Ordnungen im Selbstverständnis des Mittelalters 1 (Miscellanea Medievalia 12/1) Berlin–New York, 1973, 322–335.

[129] The Secular Spirit: Life and Art at the End of the Middle Ages. New York, 1975, 210 (referred to as Secular Spirit).

[130] H. Horváth: Zsigmond király és kora. Budapest, 1937, 61.

characteristics. It is 4,4 cm tall with a conical body broadest at the bottom. A smaller, usually triangular bit, is attached to the narrow top of this cone. This form is characteristic of the knight in chess sets of Arabian type. Since this particular archaeological find follows the Arabian shape of knight with no particular features, many similar pieces may be found both in other artifactual assemblages abroad and on coeval depictions of the game.

The chesspiece brought to light during the course of excavations at Diósgyör castle (fig. II.4) was found among the remains of the palisade which defended the western curtain of the Sigismund period fort. The archaeological context was dated to the end of the 14th century.[131] This specimen was made out of red deer antler and represents a widespread variety of bishop in Arabian type chess sets. The body of this piece is segmented into three parts, while the top of it is carved into a two pronged fork. The height of this artifact is 2,8 cm, its base diameter is 1,6 cm.

The three chesspieces found at Nagyvázsony (fig. II.1, 2, 3) were carved out of red deer antler as well. They were recovered from a layer of refuse that has been dated to the second half of the 16th century but which contained material from the end of the 15th century as well.[132] One may assume that these pieces belonged to two different sets, since one of them, probably a rook (fig. II.1), is rather different from the two others.[133] The position within the set is less obvious in the case of the two latter chesspieces due to the lack of unambiguous analogies.

A chesspiece found in Pozsony (Bratislava) is known from the Slovakian literature. It was carved out of wood. This piece dates to the 15th–16th centuries[134] and represents a new stylistic generation of chesspieces which replaced the Arabian type commonly used throughout the Middle Ages.

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[131] I. Sz. Czeglédy: Középkori sakkfigura és sakkasztal a diósgyöri várból. In: Magyar sakkélet XV (1965) 97, 113 (referred to as Czeglédy 1965).

[132] These were found in the northwestern corner of the corridor that surrounded the palace (M. G. Sándor: Középkori sakkfigurák a nagyvázsonyi várból. In: Folia Archaeologia 1960, 249–251).

[133] The chess piece shown in fig. II.1 has been identified as a rook by other researchers too (Endrei– Zolnay: 68).

[134] B. Polla: Mittelalterliche Holzfunde aus der Grabung Bratislava – Brücke. In: Zbornik Slovenskeho Narodneho Muzea. Historia 14 (1974) 173.

During the evaluation of these chesspieces it became apparent that a dating of them based on stylistic features was unacceptable, since a number of variants existed even within the same period. In addition, these forms frequently survived, or sometimes reappeared depending on fashion or for other reasons. Regardless of historical age or country similar forms may have developed even after centuries, thus it is not at all surprising that, for example, chesspieces in a 12th–14th century Novgorod set[135] are to a large extent similar to those of a French set made in 1792.[136] The age of a chesspiece, therefore, must be determined on the basis of the archaeological layer in which it was found, regardless of its actual stylistic characteristics.

Chessboards are found during archaeological excavations even less frequently, since far fewer boards were necessary for this game than chesspieces. The manufacturing of these objects is mentioned by Pelbartus de Themeswar who speaks of those ... *qui faciunt taxillos et tabulas schacorum: alearum et huismodi scienter ad abusum.*[137] The possibility may not be ruled out that craftsmen in charge of repairing the chessboard of the Polish prince Sigismund, also manufactured new ones.[138] In spite of the relatively frequent written references, fragments of only one chess table are known. It was recovered from a 15th century destruction layer by a pillar in the small gatetower along the southern curtain of the Diósgyőr fort.[139] Five cm long squares incised into a red marble plate alternate with similar squares left on the stone's original surface. One may hypothesize that the engraved squares originally were filled with another kind of material, different in color. Various incisions, names and numbers may be found on the marble surface framing the squares. Since, however, the condition of this find was exacerbated by burning, in the present state of preservation only the names Chanad (Cenad) and Bornemisza may be spelled out.[140]

The evidence of the chessboard and chesspieces, together with data

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[135] The Novgorod specimen is published: Drevnij Novgorod. Moscow, 1985, 33 (referred to as Novgorod).

[136] Hans and Siegfried Wichman: Schach. 1960, 48. These are the same chesspieces that were cited in the *Encyclopédie Méthodique* (Paris, 1792).

[137] Pelbartus de Themeswar 1516, pars aestivalis, sermon 20.

[138] See note 63.

[139] Czeglédy 1965: 113.

[140] I. Czeglédy: A diósgyőri vár feltárása, Ph. D. dissertation. Budapest, 1980, 133–134.

from written sources allow us to conclude that there was a significant chess culture in medieval Hungary.

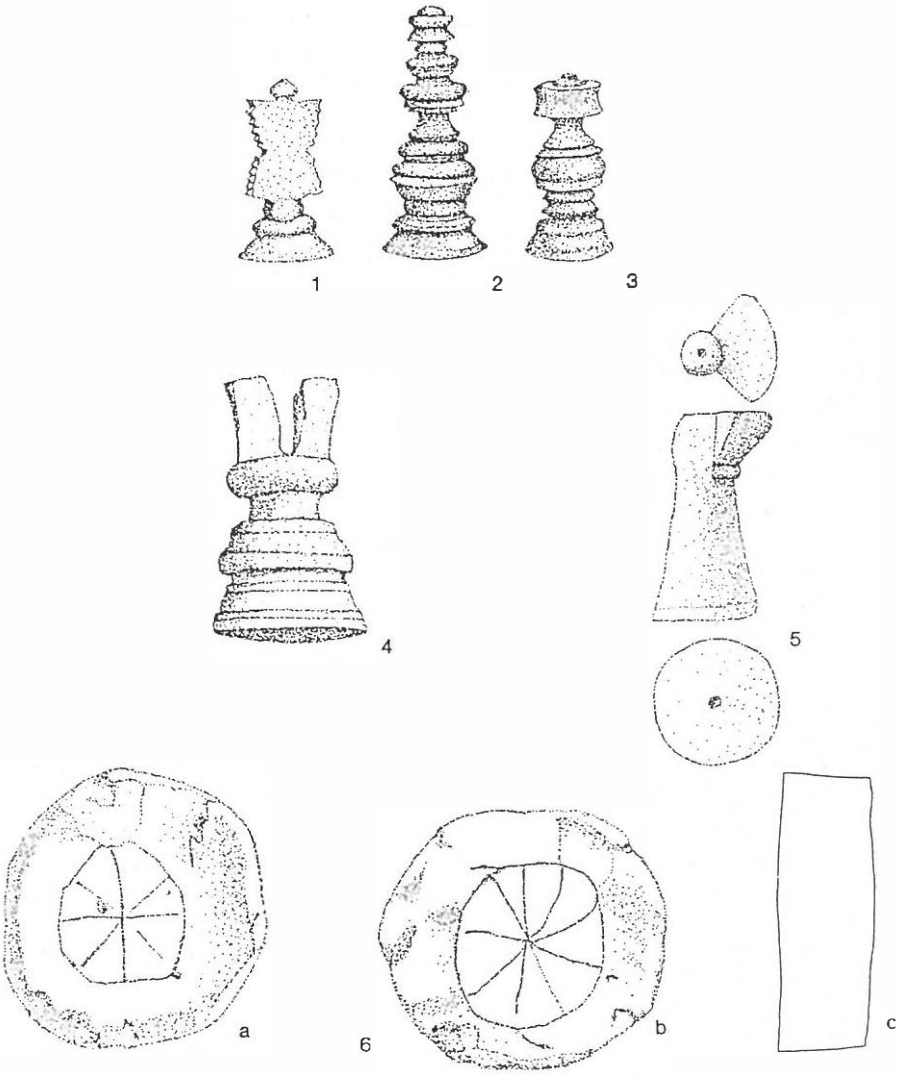

Figure II

Backgammon

During the analysis of written sources it has already been noted that the moral condemnation of backgammon actually stopped no one from playing it. The popularity of this pastime is especially well illustrated by the information provided in the Székelyudvarhely Codex.[141] An additional sign of this game's popularity is that people playing backgammon were depicted on a bone saddle carving as well.[142] Boards necessary for this game were produced in a variety of forms. Poorer people had it made from wood, while more precious raw materials were used in the manufacturing of boards for the rich.[143] Such pieces are found but infrequently during the course of excavations, although six triangular bone plates with incised foliage decorations from the 15th–17th centuries material of the Fülek (Filakovo) castle may, in all probability, have formed the fields of a backgammon board.[144] These artifacts are uniform both in terms of size and decoration, and their shape unambiguously corresponds to the pattern dividing backgammon boards.[145]

The tremendous contradiction between the relative frequency of references to this game in the written sources and the single archaeological find related to it clearly exemplifies the difference between the importance of games in medieval times and the actual material evidence usually available to researchers.

There are, however, two types of artifacts which are found relatively often. Although their use should not be exclusively associated with back-

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[141] See note 34.

[142] This artifact was published in Endrei–Zolnay: 38. The saddle may be seen in the Hungarian National Museum, inventory number 55.3118. It is dated to the beginning of the 15th century.

[143] For example, an ivory backgammon board was inventorized among Rákóczi's movable goods presented in Szinna by Ilona Zrinyi, the wife of Imre Thököly. Radvánszky: II, 387.

[144] J. Kalmár: A füleki (Filakovo) vár 15–17. századi müemlékei. In: Régészeti Füzetek 4 (1959) 19 (referred to as Kalmár 1959).

[145] These artifacts have been republished in the Slovakian literature as parts of a cross-bow. (M. Slivka: Mittelalterliche Erzeugnisse aus Bein und Horn in der Slovakei. In: Archaeologica Historica 1983, 345; referred to as Slivka). Neither functional parts nor the inlay of a cross-bow should exclusively look this way. The author gave no explanation for his interpretation.

gammon, they may well serve as evidence of this game. Such objects include gaming discs and dice.

Gaming discs

Rounded sherds, broken from the walls of vessels or from roof tiles, are often found during the course of excavations. Of these artifacts, one may hypothesize that those which had incised patterns on them may have functioned as gaming pieces. In the case of undecorated discs this assumption is less justified. In Hungary, decorated discs made out of tile fragments were brought to light in a cradled shaft adjoining the 13th century wall of the Buda castle. A drawing of an eight and a nine spoke wheel respectively, decorated the two sides of this artifact (fig. II.6abc).[146]

Varieties of bone discs with figured and geometric patterns are known as well. Representatives of the figured group first appeared in the area of Germany during the 11th century.[147] Usually, only one of their sides was decorated,[148] so that bone discs with carving on both sides are regarded as rarities.[149] Although several hundred figured pieces are known in Europe,[150] no similar pieces have yet been discovered in Hungary. On the other hand, discs with a geometrical design are known from here as well: incised patterns enclosed by two circles may be observed on a 16th century antler object. This artifact was found in the southernmost room of the three room living quarters excavated outside the fortification wall of the church in Ecsér.[151]

No medieval wooden playing discs are known from Hungary. Indirect evidence, however, is provided in the previously mentioned written source from 1494 which mentions *ligna ad okch in sacculo* (wooden pieces

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[146] L. Zolnay: Az elátkozott Buda – Buda aranykora. Budapest, 1982, 436.

[147] B. Scholkmann: Burg Baldenstein. Das *Alte Schloß* bei Gemmartigen. 1982, 40 (referred to as Scholkmann).

[148] Scholkmann: 41.

[149] Scholkmann: 40.

[150] Such pieces were even used as late as the 16th century (G. Himmelsheber: Spiele. 1972, 59–60).

[151] I. Sz. Czeglédy–T. Koppány: A középkori Ecsér falu temploma. In: Archeológiai Értesitő 1964, 54.

for backgammon in a bag). Comenius[152] also mentions this game saying *Szerencsével és mesterséggel jádzanak rovátolt fákkal az ostáblán* (they play with grooved wooden pieces luckily and with skill).[153]

The manufacturing of medaillons (serving both as game pieces and souvenirs) depicting the portraits of kings, noblemen and rich citizens became fashionable from the 15th century onwards, especially in the territory of Germany. Many of these were made out of wood, but more noble stones were used for the same purpose as well.[154] Medieval examples of this type, however, have not yet been reported from Hungary although several such pieces are known from later periods.

Dice

The earliest bone die in Hungary[155] is dated to the 13th century.[156] With the exception of one piece (fig. III.8), subsequent specimens all belong to the cubic type (fig. III.1–7) which was widespread from France[157] to Novgorod[158] and is based on the "septimal" system which means that the sum of dots marked on opposing sides of the cube is always 7. The size of the smallest die is 0,5 cm. Dice were made with both straight and concave edges and they came to light at major feudal centers and towns (Esztergom, Visegrád, Buda). The sources of origin are similar for 14 pieces known from the northern part of medieval Hungary (Slovakia).[159]

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[152] Johannes Comenius (1592–1670): Bohemian pedagogue and writer. He was invited by Zsuzsanna Lorántffy to teach at the Sárospatak School between 1650 and 1654. He also reorganized that institution, where he wrote a pioneering handbook on visual education titled *Orbis sensualium pictus.*

[153] Comenius: Orbis sensualium pictus. A látható világ. Budapest, 1959, 246 (referred to as Comenius). This book was published following the 1669 version. However, the first publication took place in 1658.

[154] Secular Spirit: 213.

[155] Although such pieces were made from wood as well, this fact is known only from written sources (see note 66).

[156] This piece was found in Buda.

[157] Aspects de la vie au Moyen-Age et à la Renaissance. Strasbourg, 1973 (referred to as Aspects). Specimens from the 13th–14th centuries were published.

[158] Novgorod: 101. Dated to the 11th century.

[159] Slivka: 345.

The manufacturing of these pieces may be reconstructed on the basis of material found in a bone manufacturing workshop in Erfurt dated to the second half of the 13th and the first half of the 14th century.[160] Similarly important evidence on the making of dice comes from the 14th–15th centuries layer of refuse recovered from a bone working workshop in Visegrád.[161] The production of rosaries seems to have been the main profile of the Visegrád establishment: Several thousands of bone plates were found as by-products of bead making. Three-pronged drills used in the turning of these beads were recovered as well.[162] On the other hand, a number of carved bone rods with square cross-sections were also found which represent the half product in the making of these dice.[163] The dots were drilled with two kinds of drills.[164]

In addition to specimens of a regular, cubic shape, dice in other forms were used as well. A fragment from a probably hexagonal die, hollow inside, and characterized by rounded short ends as well as an oblong side was reported as a 15th–16th century stray find from Buda (fig. III.8). Dice of various shapes are depicted in one of the tables of the book by Alfons the Wise entitled *Juegos diversos de Axedres, dados y tablas* published in 1283. The Buda specimen may belong to the same stylistic sphere.[165] Some dice which were used had no drilled dots on their surface but rather letters or words engraved in their sides. Rabelais, for example, mentions

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[160] H. J. Barthel–H. Stecher–W. Timpel: Eine mittelalterliche Produktionstätte für Knochenspielwürfel. In: Alt-Thüringen 1979, 137–170 (referred to as Alt-Thüringen) Another dice making workshop was discovered in Göttingen which is coeval with the Erfurt workshop (S. Schütte: Das Haus eines mittelalterlichen Knochenschnitzers an der Johannisstraße in Göttingen. In: Göttinger Jahrbuch 1978, 62).

[161] P. Gróf: Rózsafüzér és játékkocka. In: Élet és Tudomány 1988, February 12, No. 7, 196 (referred to as Gróf).

[162] Unfortunately, the workshop itself was not found, only the pertinent refuse deposit. This, however, contained tool- and knife handles as well as awls and a cross-bow toggle (Gróf: 197). The composition of this material is also interesting because it shows that in this workshop sacred objects of the religious life were produced along with games condemned to bonfires by the church itself.

[163] Similar, elongated bone sticks were found in the Erfurt workshop as well (Alt-Thüringen: 157).

[164] The use of these two kinds of drills may be observed on specimens from Germany as well (Alt-Thüringen: 162).

[165] Endrei–Zolnay: Picture XX.

such a specimen, and similar pieces were brought to light during the course of excavations in Göttingen.[166] These all show that one must reckon with a great variety of games that were played with dice in the Middle Ages.

When side number one across from side number six on a commonly used cubic die was leaded, a fixed die was obtained which usually fell on its heaviest surface resulting in a greater probability of scoring six.[167] This is why the weight of dice made a difference: sometimes it was even verified by weighing before a game started.

The dice were shaken most often in a wooden cup or in a hard leather dish sewn into the same shape. But, in the case of soldiers gambling for the clothes of Christ in a miniature of the Anjou Legendary,[168] in the absence of such implements, dice were shaken and cast using the bare hands (fig. IV).[169]

Another piece of written information to be included to the previously cited sources is a report on the conviction of Péter Czetswasser, a citizen of the town of Pozsony (Bratislava), in 1404. Czetswasser was an infamous dice gambler in the town, who cheated several of its citizens in cooperation with his partners in crime. When the gang was tracked down by the City Council, most of the accomplices were sentenced to death. Czetswasser,

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[166] S. Schütte: Spielen und Spielzeug in der Stadt des späten Mittelalters. In: Aus dem Alltag der mittelalterlichen Stadt. 1984, 207 (referred to as Schütte 1984).

[167] A reference to loaded dice was made by Villon in his work entitled *Le Grand Testament* (Budapest, 1963, 166). He bequeathed three such fixed dice (*Trois dez plombez, de bonne quarre*) to Pernet de la Barre, a Moral Inspector, who was a renowned gambler as well. The City Magistrate of Selmecbánya (Banská Štiavnica) must have been suspicious about such machinations as well. In 1592, a petition for a public, professional gambling place was filed since this body decided that people who scored 54 after casting three dice three times in row should not be allowed to play. Namely, the occurrence of three identical combinations in a sequence is so rare that it could not happen without cheating (Demkó: 195).

[168] Dated to the 14th century. This book belonged to Andrew, the son of king Charles Robert.

[169] Magyar Anjou Legendárium. Budapest, 1973, picture 69. On paintings showing the Crucifixion of Christ, dice were often depicted in addition to the instruments of torture. According to tradition, dice were used by the guards when they gambled for his clothes. Such dice may also be seen in another picture of the Anjou Legendary (fig. V) and in a miniature from a Franciscan mass-book which king Matthias had prepared for a monk who went on a mission abroad. This latter manuscript was illuminated in Vienna (figs. VI–VII; see Bibliotheca Corviniana. Budapest, 1967, 64).

however, who had married into a family of good repute, was pardoned.[170] He immediately carried on with his evil craft robbing people in various inns after having persuaded them to play with him. Finally, the City Council had enough and brought a new sentence. They decided that Czetswasser should be exiled from Pozsony (Bratislava) and its three mile surroundings for 101 years. Should he have violated this resolution during the defined period, he would have been captured and beheaded.[171]

This story illustrates nicely, how widespread gambling with dice was in Hungary. On the one hand, as mentioned in the text, there were many people to be cheated. On the other hand, it is also documented that this form of gambling was pursued on a large scale by tricksters organized into gangs. The broad distribution of this game is also indicated by data from the already cited resolutions of the Buda synod in 1279 and other law books. Thus, it is perhaps no accident that the earliest known depiction of a game in Hungary shows dice: These were carved into the head of one of the halfpillars surrounding the mainchoir in the early 13th century Benedictine abbey at Vértesszentkereszt (fig. VIII).[172]

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[170] The degree of punishment not only depended on personal connections. As is shown by the law books, it was also influenced by the legal status of the "offender".

[171] Demkó: 196. The charter containing the description of this event is kept in the City Archives of Pozsony (Bratislava), Prot. act. 18 (published by Mályusz: II/I 419).

[172] É. Kozák: A vértesszentkereszti románkori templom feltárása. In: Archeológiai Értesitő 1970, 277. The size of this limestone carving is 32,6 x 45 x 28 cm. Parallels to the juggler depicted here are known from early and mid 12th century in Western Europe. The motif, however, occurred only later in Hungary (Kozák: 277–279).

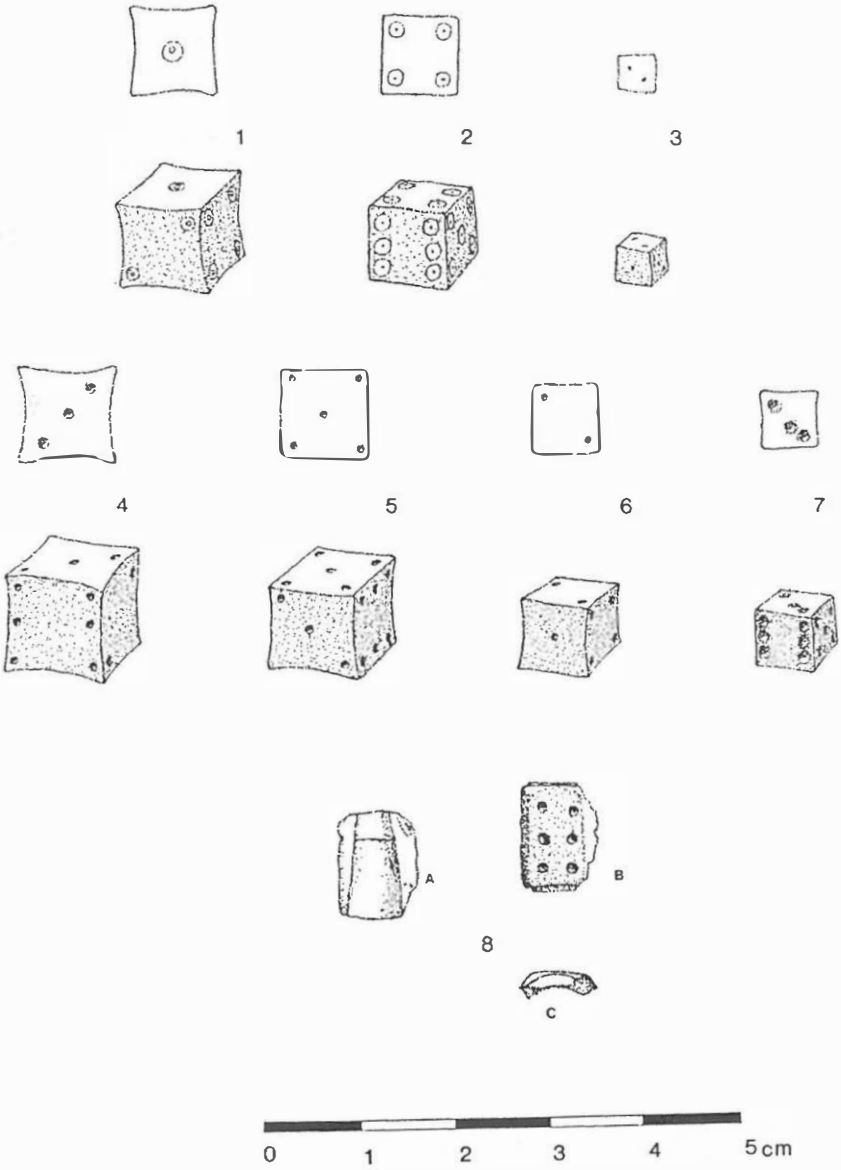

Figure III

Figure IV

Figure V

Figure VI

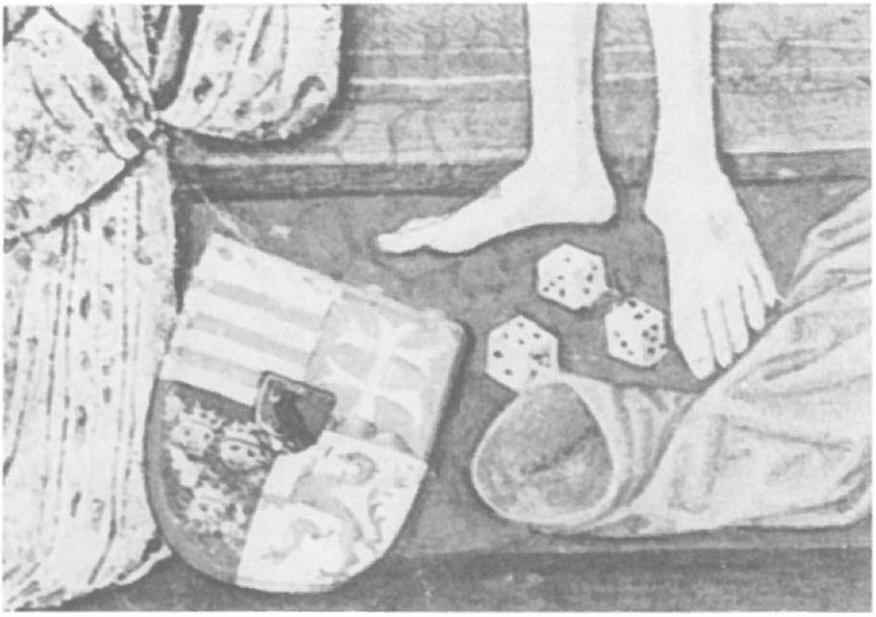

Figure VII

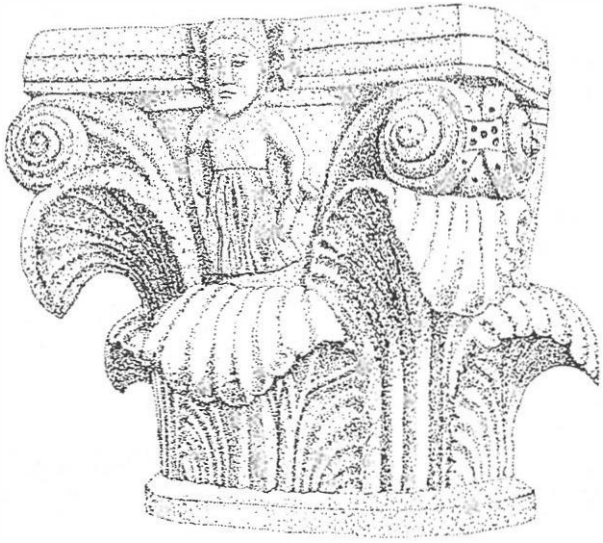

Figure VIII

Tokens

The age of square-shaped bone plates marked by various numbers of circles found at Buda (fig. IX.1–10), Visegrád and Somogyvár may be placed to between the end of the 13th and the 15th century.[173] Their main dimensions vary between 2 and 4 cm while their thickness never exceeds 1 cm. There are no written sources mentioning such pieces in Hungary and no pictorial representations are known either. Consequently, the role of these artifacts is impossible to identify unambiguously. However, with reasonable probability, they functioned as tokens.

As is well known, the church condemned and denounced gamblers. At the same time, however, gambling was one of the most popular pastimes. Thus, all those who wanted to obey the moral requirements set by the church but loved gambling as well were forced to find a compromise of one sort or another. One such possibility is described in the autobiography of Miklós Bethlen (1642–1716). Although this is a relatively late source, the thus described situation should not be considered a new one. Bethlen was invited to play cards with his company. However, he should have turned this offer down since his pledge barred him from gambling for money. The problem was solved by taking a bag of copper coins along. Each of the participants were given a handful of them, but at the end of the game both winners and losers put the coins back into the bag.[174]

The possibility should not be ruled out that the bone plates under discussion here were used as tokens to replace money. The circular patterns incised on their surfaces may have represented winning numbers or stood for a symbolic value to be accounted for at the end of the game. This possibility may be indirectly supported by the fact that one of these plates was found during the excavation of the Benedictine abbey at Somogyvár.

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[173] The age of the Somogyvár specimen is not known. Published by K. Bakay: Jelentés a somogyvári bencés apátság feltárásáról. In: Somogyi Múzeumok Közleményei 1975, 195 (referred to as Bakay 1975).

[174] Cited by Radvánszky: I, 423.

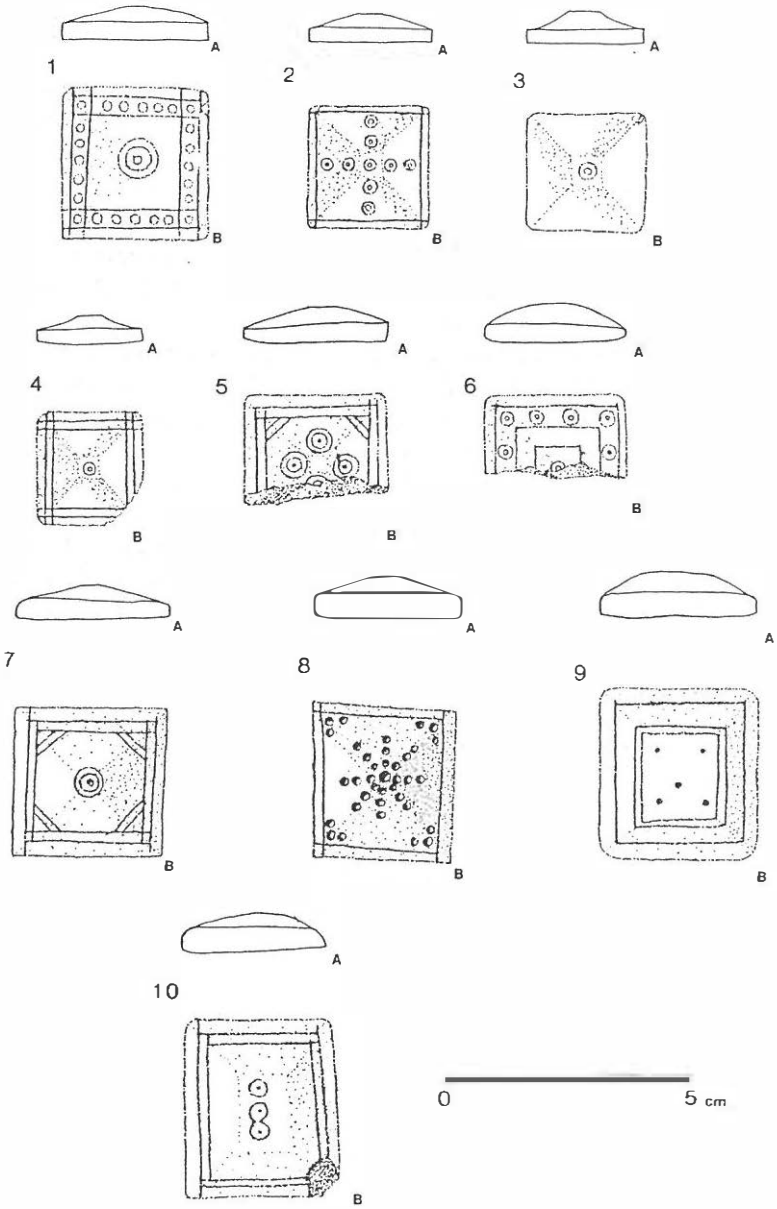

Figure IX

Nine-men's morris

This game was a favorite throughout classical times and was not forgotten in the Middle Ages either. Its popularity may have originated in the simplicity of its rules and by the fact that its scheme was easily drawn even into the sand, if no other medium was available. The procurement of game pieces (for example pebbles) was similarly simple. It is no surprise, therefore, that nine-men's morris may even be found among the games played by the lower classes both in villages and major feudal centers. Usually, schemes incised into stone or bricks survived (figs. X–XIII). Although the basic patterns of this game must have been frequently carved into wood as well, such surviving pieces count as rarities.[175] The earliest Hungarian nine-men's morris [in Hungarian *malom* (mill)] game is known from the 11th century (Kardoskút[176], Somogyvár[177]).

The thought inevitably arises that if this game was widespread as early as the 11th century; it may have entertained the common people as well. The scheme of the Kardoskút nine-men's morris was incised into the clay of the brick before firing.[178] Due to the early appearance of this game one may speculate that it was learned by the conquering Hungarians on their way from the east and thus introduced into the Carpathian basin.

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[175] This form is absolutely unknown in Hungary, however, the outline of the game was carved into a piece of wood found in Norway as mentioned by G. F. Poljakova – M. V. Fechner: Mühlespiel in der alten Rus. In: Slovenska Archaeologia XXI/2 (1973) 444. A 10th century specimen was found near Sanderfjord (R. C. Bell: Board and Table Games. London, 1969, 93; referred to as Bell). English records from the 14th century also bear witness of schemes for the game carved into chairs in monasteries (Bell: 92).

[176] I. Méri: Árpád-kori népi építkezésünk feltárt emlékei Orosháza határában. In: Régészeti füzetek 12 (1964) 7. The brick into which this scheme had been carved, was recovered from the wall of a church which was built not later than the beginning of the 13th century. Originally, however, it was prepared and used during the construction of an earlier church which was erected at the same spot around the end of the 11th century.

[177] K. Bakay: A magyar államalapítás. Budapest, 1981, 179. I have collected five specimens of nine-men's morris myself (one of them in Visegrád, the rest in Buda). Even more occurrences are known from publications; for example, I. Feld – L. Jakus – Cs. László: Csővár. In: Studia Comitatensia 7 (1979) 34–35. The authors of this paper described specimens of nine-men's morris from Sárospatak, Solymár, Fonyód and Csővár.

[178] Méri: 7.

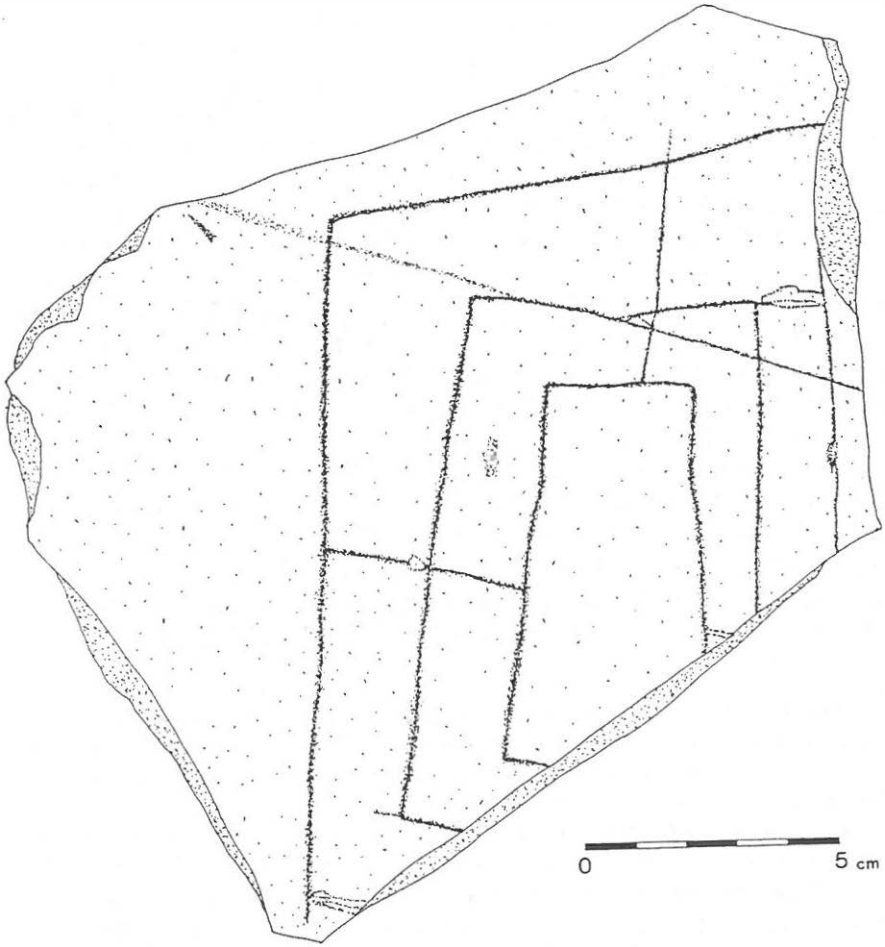

Figure X

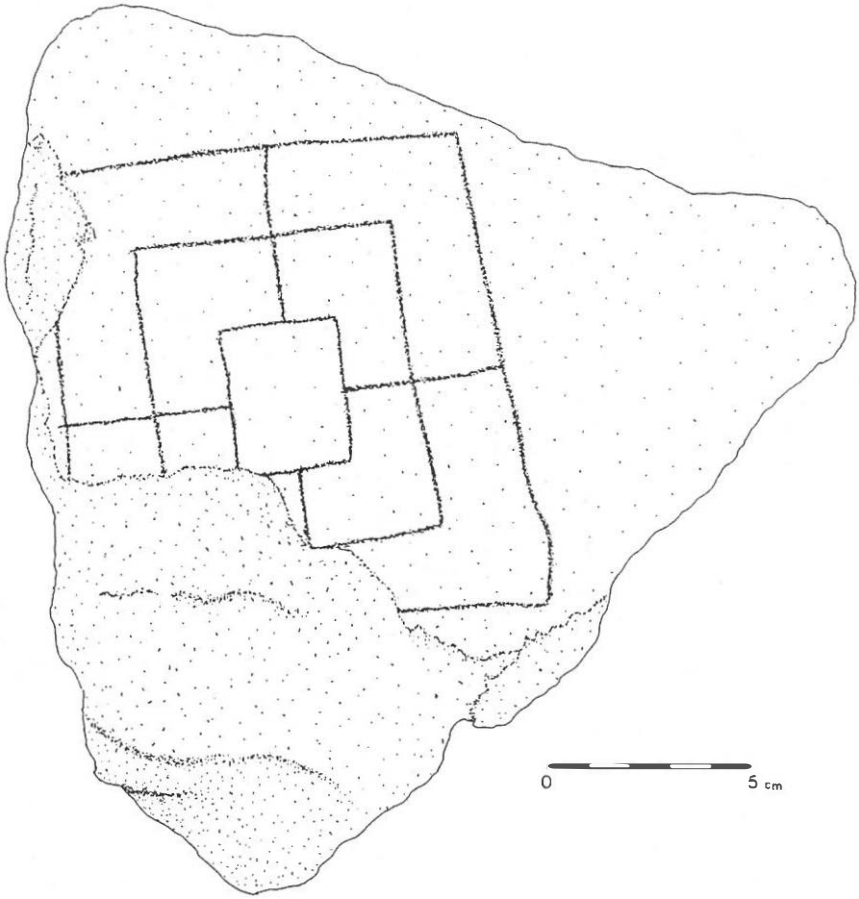

Figure XI

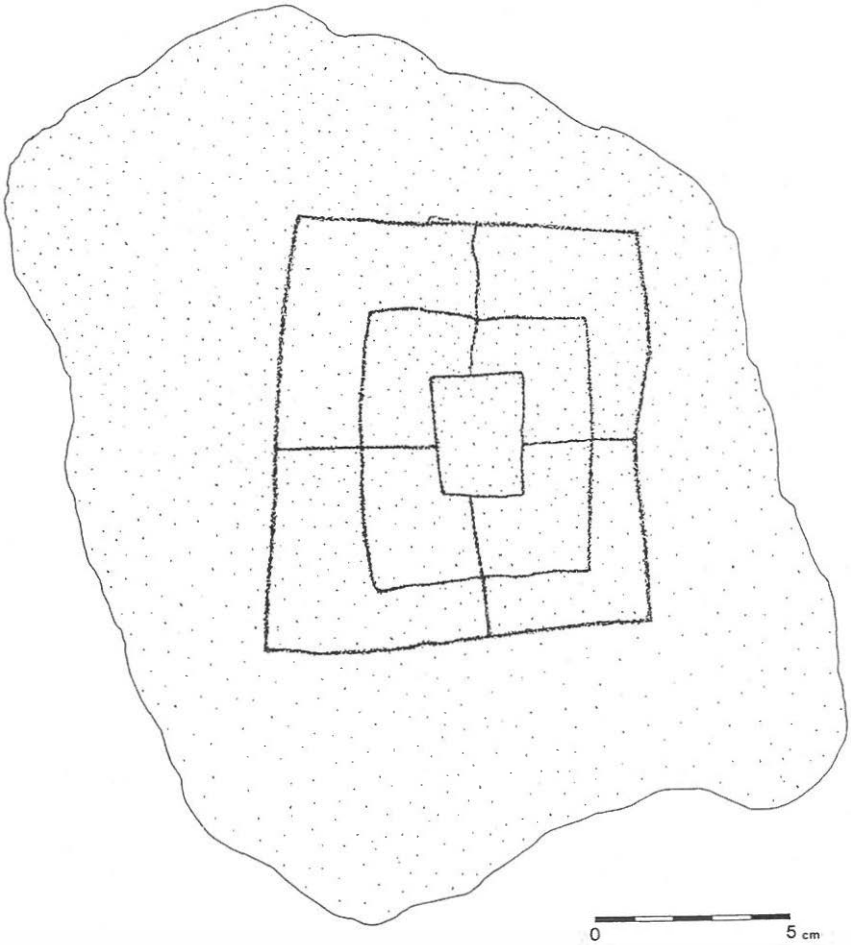

Figure XII

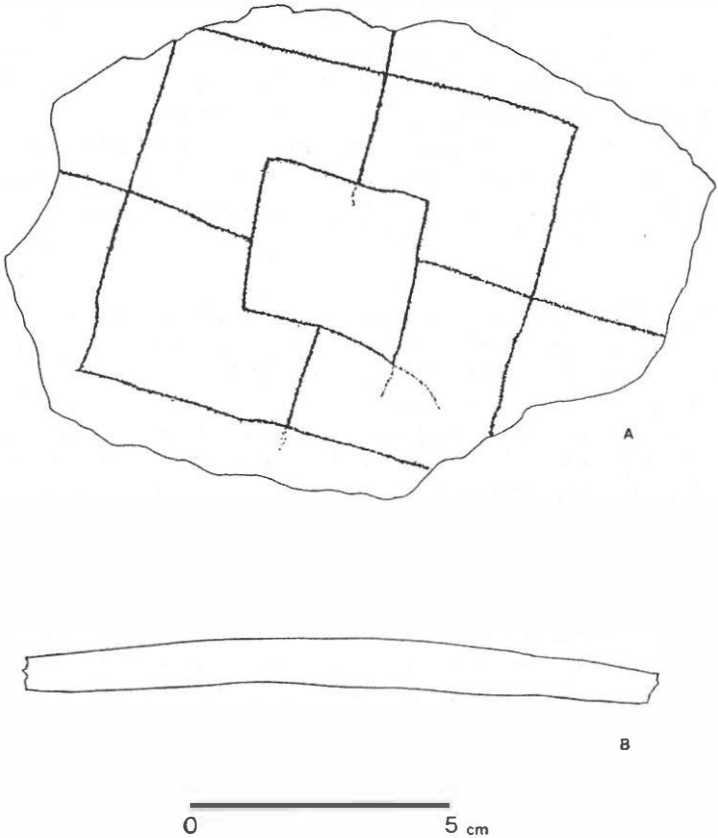

Figure XIII

Should this game have been imported from the west, it would have become popular in the royal court and among the nobility since it was predominantly these social strata which maintained contacts with the west. According to this version the game would have only subsequently become widely popular. In this case, however, it is difficult to imagine that in spite of the simplicity of its rules, nine-men's morris could have become so popular in a mere 50 or 100 years after the founding of the Hungarian state, so that it would have been played by common people in a remote village.[179]

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[179] A comment by Braudel may be relevant to the possible eastern origin of certain elements in the Hungarian game culture: "Whenever the barbarian won, it was because he was already more than half civilized. He had spent a long time in an antechamber and knocked not once but ten times before gaining admission to the house. He was, if not completely civilized, at least deeply imbued with the adjacent civilization." (F. Braudel: Civilization and Capitalism, 15th–18th Century 1. London, 1981, 94).
Hungarians were a group of people which were the last to settle and organize themselves into a state in Europe. However, Hungarians continuously assimilated information and developed their culture during their migration from the east, an area which in many ways was more civilized than Europe in the 9th–10th centuries. Since even in those early days games were part of everyday life as any other activity, the general cultural development must have been paralleled by the amplification of gaming culture as well. This was even more so, since game and entertainment were close to the heart of conquering Hungarians, as was shown in one of the episodes in the so-called "Sankt Gallen histories". The following was recorded about Hungarians raiding the monastery of Sankt Gallen: *Ipsi vero cum armos et caeteras victimarum portiones semicrudas absque cultellis dentibus laniando vorassent, ossa obesa inter se unus quidem in alterum ludicro iecerant.* (Catalogus fontium historiae Hungaricae aevo ducum et regum ex stirpe Arpad descendentium ab anno Christi DCCC usque ad annum MCCCI. Collegit Albinus Franciscus Gombos. Tomus I. Budapest, 1937, 450).
The documentation of this early gaming culture, however, is mostly indirect due to the scarcity of at least approximately coeval sources and artifactual evidence. Nine-men's morris, dice and chess were known by the Arabs, Vikings and Byzantians who maintained intensive contacts with the Hungarians. Naturally, this does not necessarily mean that Hungarians adopted all these games, though the possibility existed. Unfortunately, the question, at this point, cannot be answered because the material culture of the conquering Hungarians is mostly known from burials. It may be expected that with the increasing number of settlement excavations the picture will be enhanced and games from this early period will be brought to light as well. Even if subsequent research will not demonstrate the adoption of certain games from the east, it should be kept in mind that many earlier connections survived the foundation of the Hungarian

Knucklebones

Knucklebones (*astragalos*) as a game was widespread in prehistoric cultures,[180] and was known by Greeks and Romans as well as by the grassland and wooded steppe nomads of Central Asia.[181] This game was found in the graves of conquering Hungarians[182] as well as in settlements of the period of the Árpád dynasty.[183] Therefore, it is certain that Hungarians brought this game with them to the Carpathian basin. Knucklebones are known from late phases of the Middle Ages as well[184] and they were used, for instance, in fortune telling[185] in the same way as during early medieval times and the classical period.[186] A variety of games could be played with

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state. Thus, during the period of the Árpád dynasty the presence of Moslems and Jews should still be reckoned with while the influence of Byzantium also remained strong in every respect. Thus, the western origin of games known only from the High Middle Ages of Hungary should not be considered exclusive.

Among other things, knucklebones and perhaps rattles and eggs may also be looked upon as games of eastern origin. These objects, however, were additionally loaded with superstitious beliefs.

[180] Kovács: 103.

[181] A. Kiss: Baranya megye X–XI. századi sírleletei. Budapest, 1983, 170 (referred to as Kiss) Overlaps between the game functions of dice and knucklebones must have existed during the Archaic period of Greek history.

[182] Kiss: 169.

[183] Such pieces were found, for example, at Feldebrö: 11th–12th century (inventory number 81.51.76.C), 12th–13th century (inventory number 81.38.41.C); Bashalom: 11th–13th century (inventory number 68.17.1.B); Tiszalök–Újtelep: 11th–13th century (inventory number 65.50.1.B). These artifacts are kept in the Hungarian National Museum.

[184] I found two specimens at Visegrád, Mátyás Király Múzeum, which date to the 16th–17th century (inventory numbers 74.207.1, 69.12.1). Perhaps influenced by the popularity of this game, Erasmus devoted a study to knucklebones, in which he traced the history of this game back to the ancient Greeks (S. Hindman: Pieter Bruegel's Children's Games, Folly, and Chance. In: The Art Bulletin 9 (1981) 452; referred to as Hindman).

[185] According to Hindman, the essence of this game in 15th–16th century Europe was the interpretation of positions in which the bone fell. The alternatives were "dog" or "Venus". According to the rules, the person who first scored "Venus" could hope for a successful marriage (Hindman: 452).

[186] A plethora of data concerning the use of knucklebones in classical times was presented in the previously mentioned work by Kovács.

these bones too. Using Hungarian ethnographic analogies they may have served in grabbing games in the Middle Ages.[187] Frequently, all sorts of patterns were incised on knucklebones. They were sometimes drilled, even several times. Such holes were occasionally filled with lead to change the bone's center of gravity.[188]

The Ottoman Turkish conquerors reintroduced the knucklebone game to Hungary at the end of the Middle Ages and it may be assumed that they further enriched the spectrum of games played with this bone.[189]

Eggs

Many of the graves from cemeteries of the period of the Hungarian conquest contained eggs, suggesting that some kind of a belief was associated with them.[190] With the increasing consolidation of Christianity these pagan superstitions must have been superceded, although they did not disappear

[187] According to modern sources, the essence of this game is that the bones are thrown up in the air in a prescribed order. Then they are grabbed one-by-one or two of them together. Finally, all the pieces are thrown so that they fall back on to the back of the player's hand. Then they are thrown again and grabbed. Innumerable varieties of this game are known depending on the types of hand motions. One player can pursue this game by himself or herself, though it is more interesting as a party game. In this latter case, players can compete (Néprajzi Lexikon III, 43).

[188] Kovács: 103.

[189] Knucklebones found within the territory of the Szolnok fort may be of Turkish origin, though this is impossible to be proved unambiguously. (Kovács: 109).

[190] It is possible that eggs were treated as a symbol of origin. Such an interpretation of eggs is known from other regions of Europe as well; as is written, for example, in the Kalevala: Earth is formed out of the bottom of an eggshell. The upper half formed heaven, the yolk became the sun, the white represented the moon. Colored spots on the eggshell made the stars, while black spots were dark clouds (Kalevala. Hungarian translation I. Rácz. Budapest, 1980, 8). This verse is quoted by István Fodor in his work entitled "Verecke híres útján ...". Budapest, 1980, 65. That author also points out that wherever Finno-Ugric peoples lived during the Neolithic or Early Bronze Age, the representation of waterbirds is common. In the Kalevala, the eggs are hatched by a goosander. Representations of these water birds are made from wood and bone as well as flint. There are also clay vessels in the shape of eggs, decorated with waterbirds (Fodor: 64–65). In the symbolic painting "The Garden of Earthly Delights" by H. Bosch people in the background climb back into an egg when leaving the lake. This may also illustrate the meaning of eggs as a symbol of origin, which may have survived to as

entirely. For example, eggs were used as construction sacrifices at the site of Esztergom–Alsósziget. An egg was found together with three iron nails under an upside-down pot in the layer dated by a 12th century coin within the area of the Benedictine nunnery.[191]

An egg was buried outside the church wall together with four vessels, two glasses, a complete dog skeleton, seven chicken skulls and a cattle cranium at the northern end of the church built in Székesfehérvár at the turn of the 12th to the 13th century.[192]

Another possible construction offering may be represented by an egg found under a 13th century pot together with a hen skeleton at Jászágó.[193]

Clay pots buried in small pits were found at various points of the Esztergom–Szentkirály settlement. An iron nail stuck into the ground was found under each one of them. In two cases, the skeleton of a chicken was also found along the nails while eggs were added to the rest of the assemblages.[194] Since, however, these finds were not associated with houses, one may assume that they were not construction sacrifices but the requisites of some other superstitious rite.

The variety of environments in which eggs were found suggests that they may have been associated with a multitude of traditions and served the purposes of a variety of rituals. The list of these possibilities may also be enriched by studying written sources. Péter Apor,[195] for example, wrote the following:

> *Nem akarom elmúlatni azt is, hogy noha nem értem, de hallottam a régi emberektől, hogy mikor valamely leányos házhoz leánynéző ment, tyúktojást főztek, s az legény eleibe tették, azt három szégyen nélkül*

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late as the end of the Middle Ages. Eggs, however, may have inspired a variety of associations at the same time.

[191] Found during the excavations led by Zs. Lovag [Régészeti füzetek, Ser. I, No. 38 (1985) 96].

[192] Found during the excavations led by A. Kralovánszky [Régészeti füzetek, Ser. I, No. 22 (1969) 71].

[193] I. Fodor: Középkori építőáldozat Jászágón. In: Communicationes Archaeologicae Hungariae 1986, 139–144. A few bones of this hen skeleton are missing according to the author, however; these were probably lost following the excavation.

[194] I. Horváth: Esztergom–Szentkirály. In: Dunai régészeti hiradó 1 (1979) 42.

[195] Péter Apor (1676–1752): Transylvanian aristocrat, historian. He studied in Kolozsvár (Cluj) and Nagyszombat (Trnava). He was granted the rank of baron in 1713.

kellett megenni. Elsőbben azt kellett megtudni, híg-e vagy kemény, mert ha az híg tojást kemény gyanánt vagy az keményt híg gyanánt bontotta fel, első szégyen volt, másodszor: mikor megsózta s felkeverte, s valami kifolyt az tojásból, második szégyen volt, harmadszor: mikor ette, úgy keverte fel, hogy mikor az kenyérrel mártogatta, semmi róla le ne hullott, és az tyúktojáshoz is annyi kenyeret metélett, hogy megérte vele, s meg is ette az tyúktojást véle,másként harmadik szégyen volt.[196]

(Although I do not fully understand it, I should mention something that I heard from the old people. When a lad went wooing to the abode of some nubile young girl, a boiled egg was placed in front of him which he had to eat avoiding three shames. First he had to decide whether the egg was hard or soft, since if he broke the egg in an inappropriate way he was shamed for the first time. The second shame came about if he spilled any of the egg when stirring after salting. Finally, when he dipped bread into the egg no drops were allowed to be lost. In addition, the amount of bread sliced had to be enough but not too much to completely finish his egg. Otherwise he was shamed for the third time.)

The beliefs related to eggs did not inhibit their use as cosmetics[197] or in play. Egg games were mostly associated with the spring and the Easter period.[198] The chapter dealing with Easter eggs in the book of Péter Bod entitled *Szent Heortokrates* published in 1757 contains the following:

Hogy akkor sokkal inkább észik mint másszor: mellyet bizonyit a sok Tojás haj, melly mindenfelé hever. ... a gyermekek sok Tojásokat koldulnak egybe s azokkal mulatják magokat.[199]

(At that time they are eaten much more than would be otherwise common: This is also evidenced by the multitude of eggshells which lie all around the place ... the children beg many eggs by which they entertain themselves.)

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[196] P. Apor: Metamorphosis Transylvaniae (1736). Budapest, 1987, 80–81 (referred to as Apor).

[197] During the Middle Ages, egg white was used for making the hair curly (P. Kulcsár: Kapisztrán János. Budapest, 1987, 108). In the account-book of the Polish prince Sigismund, cited several times previously, notes like this occur commonly: *Item eodem die domino principi ad ova pro crinibus dedi I. den. ung.* (Divéky: 94).

[198] Néprajzi lexikon V, 307.

[199] Dömötör: 98.

A variety of games utilized eggs. One of the most widely pursued of these involved the rolling of eggs.[200] Eggs were usually rolled down from an elevation nearby while the crowd at the bottom of the slope was charged with catching them. There are ethnographic records of wooden tracks made for this purpose from Styria and used by the Bukovina Ukrainians,[201] however, as is apparent from a depiction in a 14th century Flemish codex, neither tracks nor slopes were indispensable for playing this game (fig. XIV.1).[202]

Clashing eggs was another very popular game in Europe. The essence of this play was that the two competitors faced each other and hit the eggs held in their hands together by the pointed ends. The person whose egg survived the clash intact won. The term *dies concussionis ovorum* was even used in the written form of dating, since the Monday following Whitsunday was named after this game. The earliest mention of this game in the Hungarian charters comes from 1380.[203] It was also possible to cheat in this game by using fake eggs carved out of limestone or wood. Ferenc Benkő, a teacher from Enyed, published his book entitled *Mineralogia* in 1786. He describes a kind of limestone as follows:

> *d, tojás kréta, C. schistosus, schieferkalkstein. Enyeden, Déván, mellyből Tojásokat készitenek.*
>
> (d, egg chalk, C. schistotus, schieferkalkstein. Serves for making eggs in Enyed and Déva.)

According to ethnographers, the term "egg chalk" refers to nothing else but a kind of tufa which was used to fake eggs even in the not very distant past.[204]

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[200] The act itself was already known by the ancient Germans. Huizinga mentioned that the old German legal tradition used to test suspects by making them turn or roll an egg (Huizinga 1939: 134).

[201] Néprajzi lexikon V, 307.

[202] L. M. C. Randall: Images in the Margins of Gothic Manuscripts. Berkeley, 1966, XX.

[203] Néprajzi lexikon V, 308. The following expression can be read in the dating of a charter from 1453 too: *Dies concussionis ovorum seu feria secunda proxima post dominicam Quasimodo geniti* [Századok XI (1877) 539–540].

[204] Z. Szilády: Néprajzi forgácsok Nagycnyedről. In: Néprajzi Értesitő 1905, 111. Aside from the games mentioned here, a number of others may be reckoned with. These, however, are known exclusively from the ethnographic literature in Hungary. They include, for example, egg dancing and the collection of eggs.

Drums, pipes, whistles, bells, flappers and various rattles may also be regarded as games. Huizinga wrote in "The Waning of the Middles Ages":

> "The contrast between silence and sound, darkness and light, like that between summer and winter, was more strongly marked than it is in our lives."[205]

Silence in itself must have been a frightening phenomenon. This feeling must have been exacerbated by the fact that hell was a reality for medieval people. They felt threatened by devils, witches and incubi. Usually, such characters were seen behind negative phenomena for which no rational interpretations were found. Due to the general fear of silence, noise makers must have sold well during the Middle Ages. Many times buttons were made to rattles, and people often hung small bells on themselves.[206] Therefore, it is rather realistic to assume that when they wanted to break the silence using rattles and other noise makers, they also wanted to rid themselves of evil forces and anxieties. It is for this reason that these instruments and rattles above all must have had a magic function as well.[207]

The occurrence of small bells in burials from the time of the Hungarian conquest may be associated with some sort of superstitious use as well. Such bells are usually found immediately next to the skeleton, but sometimes they may also occur in the fill of the grave. They were made out of bronze with a predominantly round or pear-shaped form. A slit may be observed in the lower section. During the Middle Ages such pieces were attached to the clothing or were hung on a string or small chain alternatively. Adults and children, noblemen and serfs wore them.[208] Since

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[205] Huizinga: 10.

[206] A person with a bell may be seen, for example, on a knightly tapestry from the Upper Rhine region dated to the beginning of the 16th century (Endrei–Zolnay: picture XXX.).

[207] Such a function is attributed to rattles, for example, in the Polish and German literature [L. Kunicka–Okuliczowa: Early Medieval Toys and Games from Gdansk. In: Gdanskie Torvarzistwo Naukowe I. Gdansk, 1959, 141 (referred to as Kunicka); Schütte 1984: 207.

[208] This is perhaps similar to the representation as shown on the little girl's arm standing in the foreground of Bruegel the Elder's painting entitled "Peasant dance". Another representation on the main altar of the Iserholn Church of the Virgin Mary

such pieces were easy to lose, they may be found relatively frequently as stray finds in the excavated material of settlements.

Rattles served as toys as well. Figured rattles discovered in increasing numbers are suggestive of this possibility. A 13th century chicken-shaped piece is known from Göttingen.[209] Other, similarly 13th century specimens from the Strasbourg area depict women with their hands placed together.[210] A horse with rattles from Höxter (Westfalia) is mentioned by S. Felgenhauer.[211]

Making noise could be a game in itself; as the preacher Geiler von Kaiserberg wrote in the 16th century:

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shows such a piece tied on a belt. (This statue was published by W. Pinder: Die deutsche Plastik von ausgehenden Mittelalter bis zum Ende der Renaissance I. 1924, 223.) The same may be seen on figures on a knightly tapestry from the Upper Rhine region. Gonella, the jester of Nicolo III, the marquis of Ferrara, had small bells attached to his collar as may be seen on the picture painted by Van Eyck around 1435. On a miniature in the Wladislaw Gradual, those bells may be seen at the end of a sleeve and on the top of a hat (fig. XIV.2). [This gradual was made in Bohemia during the first decade of the 16th century by Janicek Zmilely z Pisku, a Czech miniature painter, probably in Prague, for king Wladislaw II to be used in Hungary (Magyarország műemléki topográfiája I. Budapest, 1948, 356).]

[209] Schütte 1984: 207.

[210] H. Fritz: Alte Puppen. In: Kunst und Kunsthandwerk 1912, 417–418.

[211] S. Felgenhauer: Tönerne Spielzeugpferdchen des Mittelalters in Österreich. In: Jahrbuch des Oberösterreichischen Musealvereines 1974, 51 (referred to as Felgenhauer). Rattling as a game must have existed earlier as well, since figural rattles could not have occurred without precursors in the 13th century. It is possible that metal rattles functioned as toys as well. The magic role of rattles probably decreased during the Middle Ages since metal rattles or small bells could even be attached to the neck of cats. Such an animal was depicted by Bruegel the Elder in the painting entitled "Flemish proverbs" illustrating the saying that "cats with a rattle catch no mice." The main group of customers is represented by a child riding a hobby horse and reaching out for a rattle on the picture showing a rattle making workshop in Hans Sachs' *Ständebuch* (1568). This shows that rattles served predominantly as toys. During the Middle Ages the neck of domestic hens was also used to make rattles (Schütte 1984: 207), as is also known from modern ethnographic examples in Hungary. It was recorded in 1943 that when a goose was slaughtered, its trachea was given to a child. He put stones in it and then fit the small end of the trachea into its big end. This piece was hung to dry in a well aired place, and the rattle was ready (D. József: A nyikómenti gyermek magakészítette játékszerei. Kolozsvár, 1943, 16).

> "When a pig is slaughtered, the evil boys take its bladder, blow it up and place three or four peas inside it. Then they make a great loud noise with it, enjoying this more than having two full tables of bacon."[212]

The fact that making noise may have served as a game in itself is further evidenced by the numerous medieval depictions of children with drums, bells and flappers in their hands.[213]

In relation to these objects (as well as pipes[214] and whistles), however, it would be quite erroneous to assume that they served exlusively as toys. The problem does not lie in the distinction between magic objects and toys as much as between musical instruments and toys: No criteria exist for the identification of the function of the recovered artifacts as toys versus instruments.[215] With a few lucky exceptions, the activities of children using such equipment in pictorial representations are similarly difficult to interpret.

It is only the so-called gurgling whistles made out of clay which may be unambiguously considered toys. Sound with these instruments was produced with the mediation of a liquid. Two types of this artifact are known. One of them is vessel-shaped, the other is figurative.[216] No representatives of the vessel-shaped gurgling whistles have yet been found in Hungary.

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[212] Endrei – Zolnay: 18. Dried peas put in a blown-up pig bladder are mentioned as a rattle in *Gargantua* by Rabelais. This toy was also known by the Romans, who called empty talk *pisa in utre perstrepentia* (M. Lever: Korona és csörgősipka. Budapest, 1989, 39).

[213] Drum and flappers may be seen, for example, on Bruegel the Elder's "Children Games".

[214] A significant number of flute fragments (including a five hole pipe) and a whistle were found during the course of excavations at Buda castle.

[215] In the case of artifacts with only one hole, it cannot be ascertained if they really served as musical instruments. They may also have been, for example, needle holders or bird-call whistles as well. Such pieces are also known from villages [Muhi elpusztult középkori falu tárgyi emlékei. In: Régészeti füzetek 6 (1959) 39], from castle wells (F. Müller: Die Burgstelle Friedberg bei Meilen am Zürichsee. In: Zeitschrift für Archäologie des Mittelalters 1981, 66), and from a monastery (Bakay 1975: 195). Although no contemporary description or pictorial representation of their use is known they are considered whistles in the international literature.

[216] Some types of dish-shaped vessels may depict, for example, human heads.

On the other hand, several figurative specimens have been found[217] in places such as Buda[218] (fig. XV.1,2), Esztergom[219] and Lenti.[220] Such bird-shaped whistles have been known since the 15th century.[221] One completely intact specimen (fig. XV.1abc) was covered with white engob while its head, beak and semi-circular tail were covered with a green glaze. A hole may be seen directly behind the neck, while a perforated cylinder is attached to the left wing. On another, more fragmented specimen (fig. XV.2abc) the hole behind the neck is marked by brownish paint. Horse-shaped whistles are made out of clay fired to a red color. They are decorated with a stamped design. These latter pieces date to the 15th and 16th centuries (fig. XVIab).[222]

When the previously discussed groups of artifacts are reviewed, a special set of objects may be distinguished (knucklebones, eggs, rattles and perhaps whistles and pipes) which may have served several functions simultaneously. These uses did not necessarily exclude each other, and one of them may have been that of play. This single characteristic, however, does not necessarily mean that they should be considered games in the same sense as, for example, chess or backgammon. This dual purpose illustrates only that the concept game may not be restricted to specialized toys and that medieval artifactual material related to playing does not necessarily refer to a special object used exclusively for games.

The difficulty in identifying games is clearly reflected by the use of the Latin word *ludus* as well. This expression did not simply demarcate specialized game artifacts, toys or the activity of playing. *Ludus* was a term used not only for nine-men's morris or chess. Dancing,[223] mystery

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217 These objects are analyzed in detail by P. Király: Tongefäßflöten aus ungarischen Ausgrabungen. In: Volkskunst 7 (1984) 45–49.

218 Three bird- and one horse-shaped whistle were brought to light there.

219 A horse-shaped gurgling whistle, almost completely identical to the Buda specimen, was found in the castle.

220 A 16th–17th century gurgling whistle, similar to those found in Buda, came to light there. P. Király: Magyarországi cserépsípleletek a 15–18. századból. In: Ethnographia 1 (1985) 81.

221 L. Gerevich: A budai vár feltárása. Budapest, 1966, 220 (referred to as Gerevich).

222 Their function could be determined using a completely intact specimen dated to the 15th (?) century, kept in the Dunapataj Museum. (Since the dating of this piece is uncertain, it may not be included to its medieval counterparts.)

223 The fact that dancing, more exactly some types of dancing, were considered a game

as well as Bethlehem plays and other acting related to holy days were referred to it in the same way. This was the case in spite of the fact that participating in these plays was part of the religious obligations fulfilled by both the players and their audience rather than simple entertainment as one might expect on the basis of this Latin word. Literature performances in schools fell into the *ludus* category as well as the display of dwarfs and midgets during feasts or shows presented by jugglers and other performing artists.[224] The relation between these activities and specialized games is convincingly illustrated by the previously mentioned pillar head from the Benedictine abbey at Vértesszentkereszt on which a juggler or some sort of other performer is shown together with dice (fig. VIII). It seems reasonable to assume that the word *ludus* included both specialized games and entertainment in a more general sense because these two concepts were not distinct from one another in the medieval way of life.[225]

The fact that playing was not limited to the use of specialized toys, but largely corresponded to entertainment as a whole has already surfaced during the discussion of feasts and holy days. These details do not simply show that play fit into medieval life as its organic component. They also illustrate the important role of play as an outlet under the pressures of everyday life.

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throughout the Middle Ages is clearly shown by a note in the book entitled *Daz guldin spil* (Augsburg, 1472) written by Ingold, a Dominican monk. He looked upon games as remedies against the seven main sins and recommended dancing (as a game) against laziness (Endrei–Zolnay: 10). P. Apor describes a dance (under the name "mousey dance") which was more of a game of tag than a dance (Apor: 25–26).

[224] In the previously mentioned work by Szamota–Zolnai, the following may be read (p. 427): 1546: *Ebedkor attam az hegedősöknek es az yatekosoknak* (I gave at lunch to the fiddlers and players).

[225] This is contrasted to the modern situation in which not all entertainment is game, but all games are entertainment.

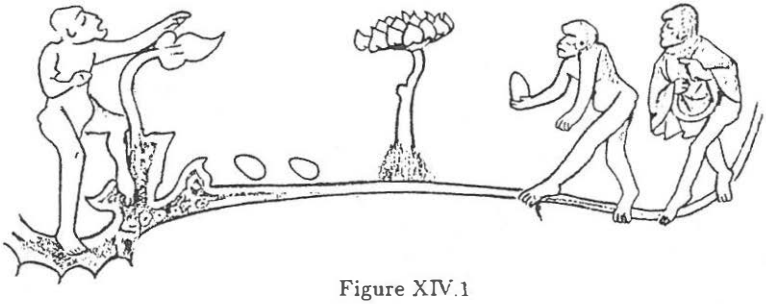

Figure XIV.1

Figure XIV.2

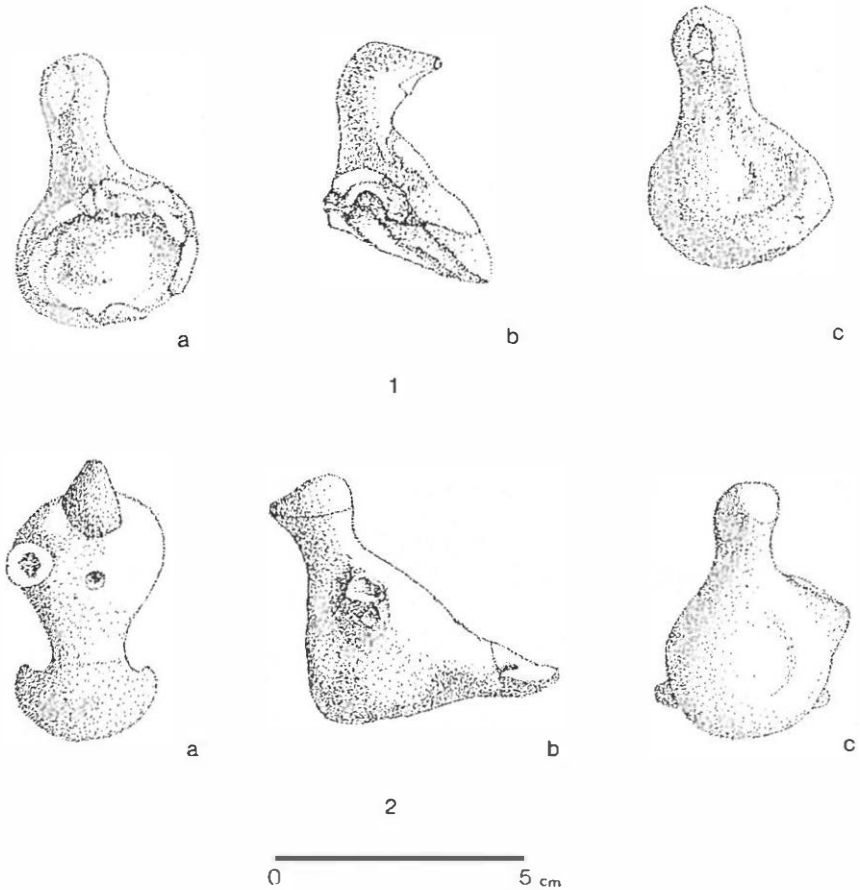

Figure XV

Figure XVIa

Figure XVIb

Medieval pictorial representations of toy dolls are unknown in Hungary. Dolls, however, occur in the artifactual material and there are written references to this kind of a toy as well. In 1525, Burgio Papal Nuncio wrote in his report on the Rákos assembly:

> *Hoc die Pueri ex Armario Regio abstulerunt Statuam Ligneam Pueri Armati omnibus Armis, quam Rex fieri jussit filio Regis Poloniae mittendam, hanc portarunt ad Rákos in medium Nobilitatis, et dixerunt: Videte in quas res Pecuniae Regni impendantur, videte quali cum exercitu Rex velit Regnum Suum defendere! Tales pariunt Domicellae Reginae, et cum vilipendio eam ex arbore suspenderunt.*[226]

Only clay dolls are known from the available artifactual evidence. The pieces considered earliest were found in Visegrád (fig. XVII.1, 2).[227] On the basis of their clothing these dolls were dated to the 14th century. The dress, which is tight above the waist but folds into slightly broadening plaits below, was typical of the 14th century and reflects the fashion documented in the miniatures of the *Chronicon Pictum* (fig. XVIII).

Information on several dolls has been published in the international literature and similarly to the Visegrád figurine their hands and forearms are placed together. This arrangement, however, is not strictly defined[228] which makes a cultic meaning unlikely. The mundane character of the clothing may be another argument against the cultic use of these dolls.

Two greyish doll fragments found in Buda date to the second half of the 15th or to the 16th century.[229] The better preserved doll wears a dress which tightens toward the waist, has a deep decolletage, and broadens in a bell-shape below the waist. This form recalls Renaissance times. Both dolls were hollow inside and depending on the open or closed nature of

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[226] Johann Christian von Engel: Geschichte des Ungarischen Reiches und seiner Nebenlaender II. Halle, 1798, 51.

[227] Both of them were hollow inside.

[228] In the case of a hypothesized religious function, one would expect a more strictly defined position of the hands, not to speak of the fact that rattling dolls from the Strasbourg area hold their hands together as well. It is unlikely that a noisy children's toy was designed following the shape of a Christian cultic statue.

[229] Fig. XIX.1 and Budapest Historical Museum, inventory number 51.1654. They were found during excavations at Buda castle.

their missing bases they might have served as rattles or decorations fit onto sticks. This question, however, cannot be answered due to their fragmentation.[230]

A doll covered by a yellowish brown glaze and decorated with two braids down to her waist was found in the Szécsény castle (fig. XIX.2). The decoration running in the middle of her richly folded skirt dates this piece to the late 16th or 17th century.[231] In spite of its hollow interior and closed base this doll did not serve as a rattle.[232]

[230] A doll of similar type was found among the 15th–17th century artifacts from Fülek (Filakovo) castle (Kalmár 1959: table 74). In addition, almost identical specimens, fastened to a stick, may be seen on a German engraving from 1698 (K. Gröber: Kinderspielzeug aus alter Zeit. Berlin, 1928, 19).

[231] Although this doll from the Turkish period falls beyond the chronological boundary of the Middle Ages under discussion here, with the exception of its glaze it is not greatly different from the medieval specimens.

[232] The pieces published were complete dolls. However, sometimes only the head was made (from clay or perhaps wood), and the rest had to be prepared by the customers at home using a variety of materials (for example rags). Such dolls have not yet been found in the Hungarian material.

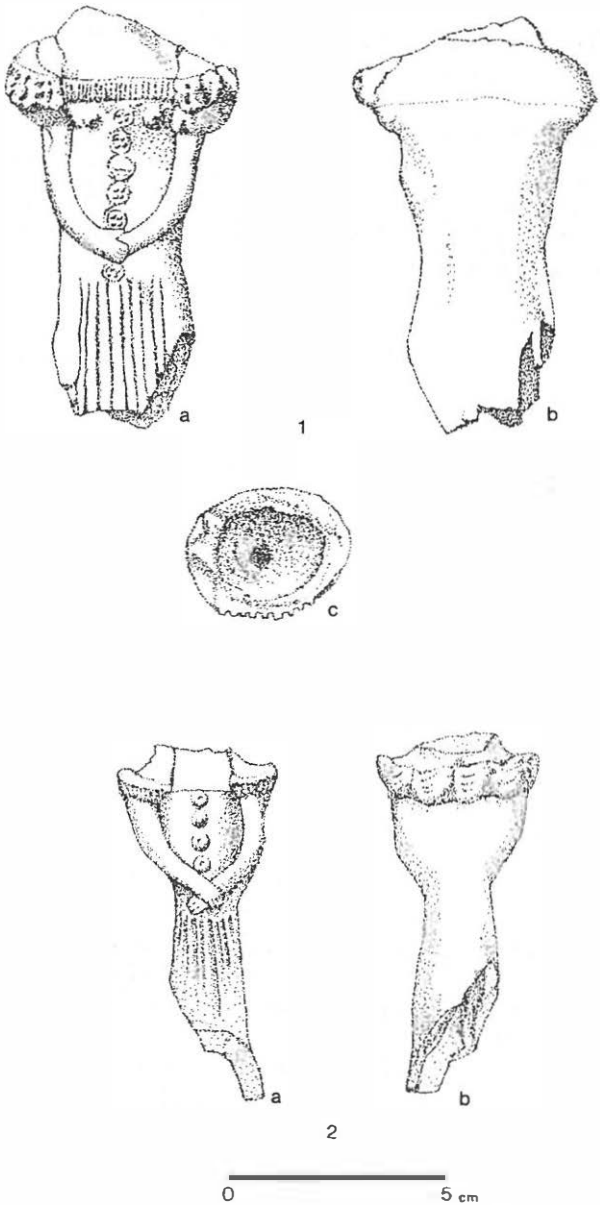
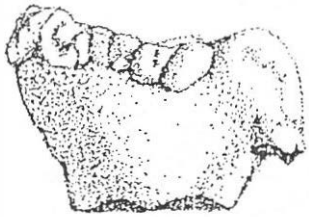


Figure XVII

Figure XVIII



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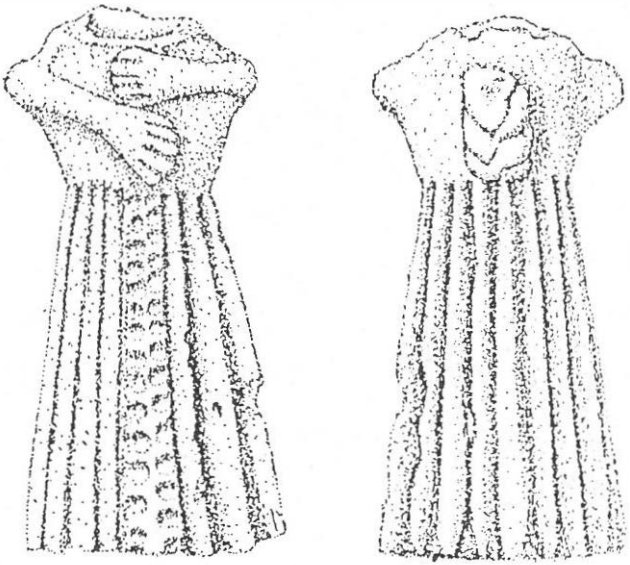

a b

2

0 5 cm

Figure XIX

The work entitled *Tactics* was written by Leon the Wise (886–912 AD), emperor of Byzantium, after 904. He remarked on the semi-nomadic Hungarians as follows:

> "During the battle it is chiefly the infantry units arranged in fighting order which will damage their lines since they are horsemen who would never get off their horses; they are not capable of resisting on foot since they grew up on horseback."[233]

As a consequence of "having grown up on horseback" it may be assumed that a number of equestrian games were pursued by mounted Hungarians. Of these, however, only horse racing was documented during the Middle Ages. Even king Matthias entered horses in the Vienna horse race which was organized twice a year on the occasion of annual fairs. Since he happened to storm Eggenburg during the autumn of 1487, on November 12 he asked that the November 25 race be postponed by a week. (The Vienna race at that time was called the "Scharlach Run" since the price was given in form of Scharlach cloth.)[234]

The previously cited account-book of prince Sigismund contained the following note recorded in Cracow for the year 1506:

> *Item sabbato ante Oculi*[235] *ad mandata domini principis Lypnyczki pro expensis versus Transyluaniam, quum duxit zawodnik*[236] *domino woywode Transylvanio et contra Glogouiam debuit duxisse duodecim equos de equirea, dedi XX. flor. scilicet veniendo restituit VII. Flor. et consumit XIII.*[237]

A horse race was organized in Kelenföld as well on May 1, 1525 in the presence of king Lewis II.[238]

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[233] Gy. Moravcsik: Az Árpád-kori magyar történelem bizánci forrásai. Budapest, 1984, 21.

[234] R. Perger: Matthias Corvinus und Wien. In: Matthias Corvinus und die Renaissance in Ungarn 1458–1541. Exhibition catalogue. Vienna, 1982, 246.

[235] March 14th.

[236] *Zawodnik* is a Polish word meaning "race horse" (Divéky: 231).

[237] Divéky: 221.

[238] Radvánszky: I, 401.

Since a number of activities were associated with horses, and the world of children more or less reflected that of the adults,[239] it is not surprising that horse representations played a major role among toys as well. Clay horse figurines of various types were common among toys. Lanced horses had a hole in the breast to accomodate a toy lance. The "hobby horse" type is characterized by an abdominal opening for the stick. Both of these types have varieties with knights and saddles respectively, though toy horses were also made with no additions whatsoever.[240] A Central European stylistic group may be distinguished within the rich range of variations characteristic of clay horses. This group includes a great number of specimens known from the territories of Austria, Bohemia, Poland and Germany. On the basis of accompanying media, glaze, the depiction of saddles and the clothing of riders, these artifacts are dated to between the 14th and 16th centuries.[241] Such figurines from Hungary, however, somewhat modify the general character of this group. During the course of excavations in Hungary, two representatives of the lanced type were found. One of them is a find from the Buda excavations and was dated to the 13th century (fig. XX.1ab). The other piece comes from Sopron. It was found in a layer dated to the 13th century using ceramic evidence. This layer, however, contained finds indicative of the 14th century as well.[242] A similar piece was found in Gaiselberg (Lower Austria) in a pit containing ceramics from around 1400, although some of the sherds already represented the 14th century. The Linz specimen recovered from a medieval habitation layer belongs to the same type and is similarly dated to the

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[239] The close connection between the worlds of adults and children is clearly reflected in the artifactual material as well. Thanks to the excavations in Gdansk, it was possible to document how changes in the adult world were followed by similar changes among children. As long as animal keeping and craft activities were more important than fishing in medieval Gdansk, the relevant archaeological strata contained a multitude of animal figurines, including wooden horses. From the 12th–13th century onwards, when fishing became feudal duty, the number of toy barges increased, while a decline was observed in the quantity of animal figurines. It was also apparent that toys unrelated to the actual way of life (such as whip propelled spinning tops) did not reflect such changes (Kunicka: 141–143).

[240] Felgenhauer: 43.

[241] Felgenhauer: 45.

[242] I. Holl: Sopron középkori városfalai. In: Archaeológiai Értesitő 1973, 205.

years around 1400.[243] Dating to the end of the 14th or beginning of the 15th century is based on the chair-like shape of the saddle.[244] An additional piece of information is that although glazed ceramics had been known in Lower Austria since the beginning of the 13th century, this technique does not occur on local mundane household ceramics at that time as evidenced by the import of such pieces in the 13th century pottery inventory from Buda.[245]

A green glazed horse head was found in the Wartenberg castle within a layer dated between 1225–1265.[246] Fragments of two toy horses glazed in yellow are also known from the bone manufacturing workshop in Erfurt.[247] A glazed horse figurine was brought to light from a layer in Göttingen dated to the years between 1270–1300.[248] If the Sopron specimen recovered from a late 13th to early 14th century layer is included into this group, the 13th century dating of the Buda horse should not be considered too early just because of the presence of glazing, more exactly, the presence of glaze alone does not contradict this early dating. This would also mean, however, that glaze was used earlier on some of the toys than on vessels circulated for everyday use.

Dating on the basis of saddle forms does not seem justified since they were modeled in a stylized way and the chronology of medieval saddles is difficult enough in itself. The chair-like saddles shown on the horse figurines under discussion here is characterized by high front and back saddle bows. This type of saddle was already known in the 13th century and did not make its first appearance in the 14th century. In addition, it remained in use during subsequent centuries as well.

On the basis of these arguments, it would seem unwarranted to move the 13th century dating of Hungarian finds forward to the 14th century on the basis of Austrian analogies. One may hypothesize that glazed toy horses of the Central European stylistic group were manufactured as early as the 13th century.

Toys of the hobby horse type within the same sphere of artifacts

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243 Felgenhauer: 44.

244 Felgenhauer: 46.

245 Felgenhauer: 45.

246 Felgenhauer: 46.

247 Alt-Thüringen: 153.

248 Schütte 1984: 207.

present a less complicated problem. Two fragmented specimens with yellow glaze are known from Hungary with the characteristic abdominal hole for the stick. The one found in Buda was dated to the end of the 14th or first half of the 15th century.[249] The other specimen recovered at Visegrád was dated to the second half of the 14th century (fig. XX.2abc).[250] The dating is facilitated by the pointed shoes on the horsemen which first occurred during the 14th century but which remained fashionable throughout the 15th century. The same shoe type may be observed on the rider of an analoguous specimen from Stillfried (Lower Austria) which was dated to the 15th century.[251]

The fact that both this group and the previously discussed type of lanced horses may be dated earlier in the Hungarian material than in the Austrian does not necessarily mean that these toys came into use earlier in Hungary. It rather reflects the chancy character of archaeological data, especially since the geographical distribution of the objects under discussion here delineates a narrow band along the Danube river (Sopron, Visegrád, Buda). The evidence of only six specimens from intensively excavated archaeological sites in Hungary would be a poor argument for local production.

A little horse with a fragmented saddle and no abdominal opening may be classed within the previously described group (fig. XXI.1ab).[252] It came to light in Layer 7 of the store building which had been demolished to make way for the construction of the so-called *Csonka torony* ("Truncated Tower") in Buda. Both this layer and thus the horse are dated to the 14th century by the *Denaria* struck by Charles Robert and queen Mary.[253] No Austrian analogy to this piece has yet been reported, similarly to the Visegrád specimen (fig. XXI.2abc) which has neither a saddle nor a rider

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[249] Budapest Historical Museum, inventory number 89/9. Measurements: length = 4 cm, height = 3,8 cm. This fragment shows that the horse and the horseman dressed in a cloak-like robe and pointed shoes were made separately. Before glazing, however, they were fitted together.

[250] This piece was found in the inner area of the Lower Palace of Visegrád (Művészet I. Lajos Király korában. Székesfehérvár, 1983, 362).

[251] Felgenhauer: 49.

[252] Inventory Number: 52.813. Measurements: length = 6 cm, height = 5,2 cm. This find is covered with a yellowish-brown glaze.

[253] Gerevich: 76–77.

on it although its abdominal opening is suggestive of use as a hobby horse. It may have been mounted on a stick. This piece dates to the 14th century as well.

A figurine depicting a horse with its rider was found in the Turkish period fill above the 13th century market place of Győr (fig. XXI.3ab).[254] This specimen shares a formal resemblance to members of the previously discussed groups, especially the 14th century Visegrád specimen. However, it was not glazed. This may be a sign of the production of cheaper specimens without glaze. The possibility may not be ruled out that this horse is simply a local copy of the glazed ware.[255]

Naturally, innumerable individual forms of horse toys may be encountered as well. A relatively large, hollow 14th–15th century horse from Buda (fig. XXI.4)[256] is a good example which may have been some sort of a noise maker, rattle or whistle, but a number of other functions may be hypothesized as well. No pictorial or artifactual analogies to this piece are known and the fragment available does not permit a more precise identification. Whatever conclusion may be drawn, the key to real recognition should lie in the missing section.

Toy horses were mostly used in playing war games or tournaments[257] which could be performed using both the already discussed clay horses and special tournament kits.[258] Such kits were usually cast in bronze.[259] These

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[254] This is a red artifact without glaze. Since the Turkish period fill contained sherds from both the period of the Árpád dynasty and the 14th–16th centuries respectively, this specimen cannot be exactly dated.

[255] There is another geographical area, namely the Rhine region, where an independent group may be separated. The material of these pieces is markedly different from that of the Central European specimens. A very fine, white pipe clay was used in the manufacturing of these pieces and the figurines were made significantly larger. As is shown by the Worms find assemblage, in addition to toy horses, this material was also used in making Madonna figurines and religious statuettes of other saints.

[256] This piece was made from finely silted clay. The pink body of this horse is painted red on the breast, head and the mane.

[257] H. Nickel: The Little Knights of the Living-room Table. In: Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin 1966, 173 (referred to as Nickel).

[258] Nickel: 175.

[259] Tournament toys may have been made from wood as well. Their armor was manufactured from metal, providing accurate copies of actual armor down to the last detail. These toys had no wheels but were pushed against each other. Such a piece may be

expensive and carefully executed toys were accurate copies of knightly equipment[260] and became fashionable among aristocratic youth during the reign of Maximilian I who revived and cultivated the tradition of tournaments. The horses had wheeled pedestals, and the players pulled them on strings toward one another trying to knock out the opponent rider with the lance of their own knight.[261] These pieces may be dated to the late 15th or early 16th centuries on the basis of the special thigh armor seen on the surviving knight figurines since this particular kind of armor first occurred around the 1480s in real life tournaments.[262]

A cast bronze horse kept in the Hungarian National Museum (fig. XXII), although it is not of Hungarian origin,[263] was part of such a tournament kit.[264] On the other hand, a grey clay figurine was brought to light from above the 15th century layer north of the Gothic home chapel of Buda castle.[265] It has the same arms and clothing as do the bronze specimens (fig. XXIII). When this figurine is compared to the best preserved analoguous specimens from Vienna, several similarities become apparent. The back contour of the clothing as well as the oval, concave shield look identical. In all cases a small, round hole may be seen under the knight's right shoulder which probably accomodated the toy lance. The key to

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seen on the engraving by H. Burgkmair among the toys of the child Maximilian. Subsequently, a similar piece may have been sent by the adult Maximilian himself to the young Lewis II. That model was ordered from Master Coloman in Augsburg (J. Kalmár: Régi magyar fegyverek. Budapest, 1971, 52; referred to as Kalmár 1971.).

260 A. Groß: Ritterlich Spielzeug. In: Festschrift für Julius Schlosser. 1927, 210.

261 Kalmár 1971: 52. Longitudinal ridges may be observed on the bottom of pedestals on these specimens. This relief was supposed to prevent the horses from being diverted when pulled against each other.

262 C. Blair: Two Toy Jousters. In: Waffen- und Kostümkunde 1966, 47 (referred to as Blair).

263 This specimen was made by the lost wax method.

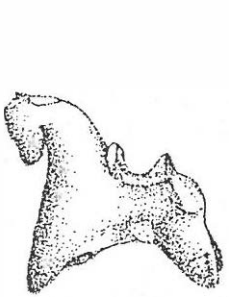
264 Parts of bronze kits are kept in collections in, among other places, Vienna, Kreuzenstein, New York, Schloß Baldern, Innsbruck and Canterbury. A complete set was published by Joseph Strutt "Sports and Pastimes" (1801). These pieces, however, have been lost (Blair: 43). Of the surviving assemblages, the Vienna kits may be considered most complete. Horse models in Budapest and Kreuzenstein are similar to those in Vienna, but their riders and the matching pairs of these mounted knights are missing. On the other hand, in some places the horses are missing but the riders were found.

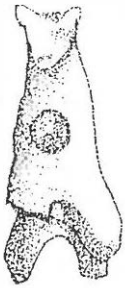
265 Gerevich: 222.

identification, however, lies in the thigh armor of this rider. Although the roundish shape depicted on the clay figurine is different from those of the Vienna pieces, the existence of this variety is clearly demonstrated on a detail from an engraving dating to the early 1500s. This picture shows a leather thigh armor which is a perfect match to that of the Buda clay figurine (fig. XXIV).[266] This toy was probably used in a game different from that played with the bronze knights, since the rider could not be knocked out of his saddle. This, however, does not change the fact that one should reckon with a clay variety of bronze tournament game kits. Consequently, it may be assumed that such toys were distributed beyond the narrowly defined elite of aristocracy between the end of the 15th and the beginning of the 16th centuries.

Another type should be mentioned at the end of this chapter. The classical hobby horse, carved out of wood to imitate horse riding was in all probability the most commonly occurring horse game of the Middle Ages. However, no such object has survived in medieval artifactual assemblages in Hungary. The existence of this toy, on the other hand, is evidenced by a painting in one of the initials of the Wladislaw Gradual. This picture shows a child riding on a typical hobby horse (fig. XXV).

[266] This engraving was made by Matthäus Zasinger around 1500.





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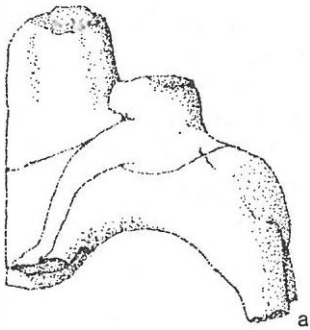

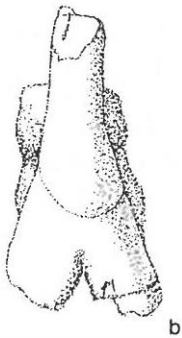

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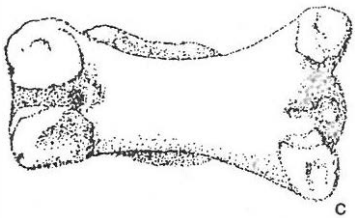

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Figure XX

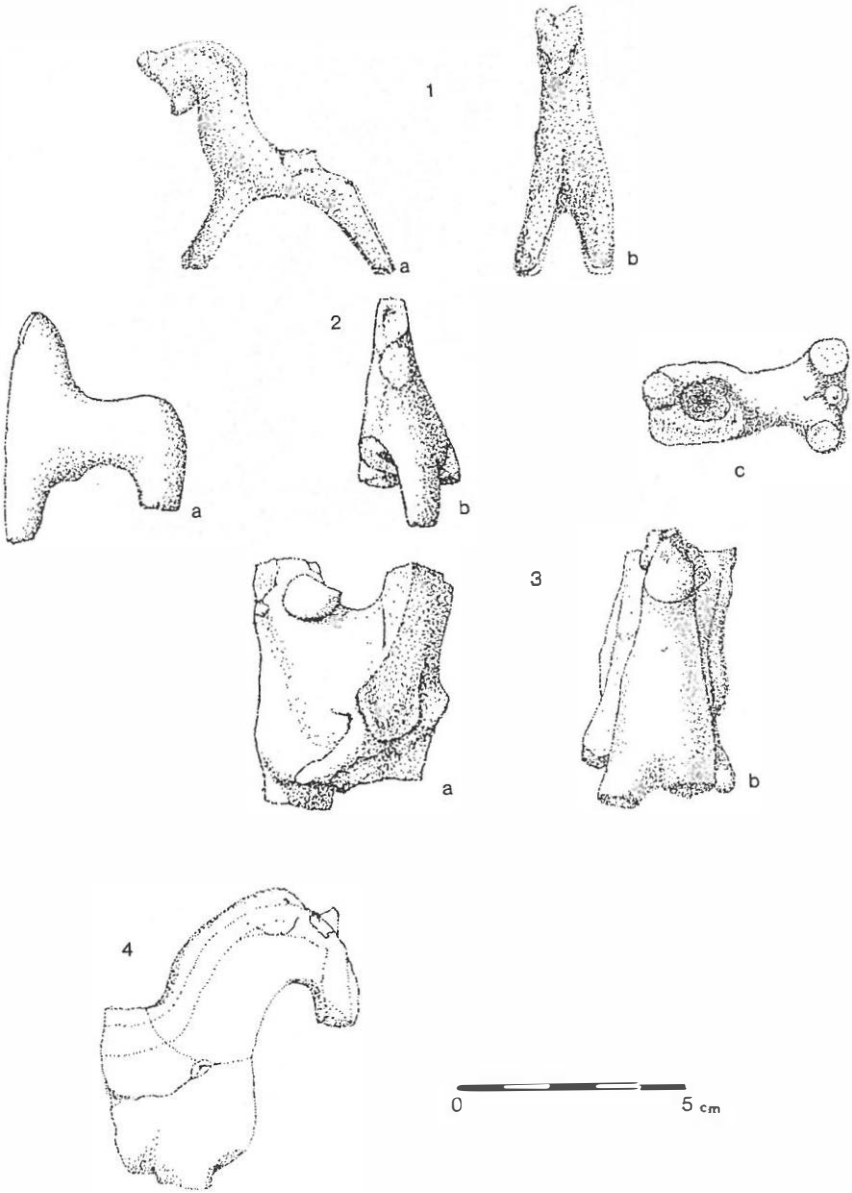

Figure XXI

Figure XXII

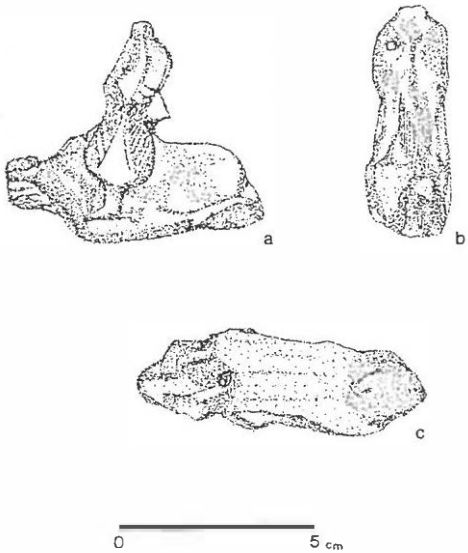

Figure XXIII

Figure XXIV

Figure XXV

Clay vessels

During the course of excavations small vessels are often found which look like reliable copies of large pots.[267] Such finds are usually considered toys since their small size would have limited their function to playing. An indirect reference to these objects was given by Geiler von Kaiserberg in the early 16th century:

> "... the children prepare safron, sweet root and ginger using brick powder; they run a household and cook. Then when night is falling it does not count any more: they knock the whole thing over."[268]

A pictorial representation made around 1420 shows a kitchen interior in which a very small vessel may be seen accompanied by a number of large specimens.[269] If, however, such small vessels were used by adults for any kind of purpose, the function of these artifacts would be rendered totally uncertain. Should this be the case, one of the most important criteria in the definition of toys, small size, could not be automatically linked with the toy function.

This problem may be solved with great certainty only in special cases. An outstanding example is represented by heating cups made in Dresden during the 17th century. Heating cups of similar form and decoration were found in both large and small sizes. However, as opposed to the large cups, the small specimens had solid walls and bases, thus preventing them from being actually used in heating.[270] Heating in these small cups was probably made impossible to make sure that children caused no fires during play. As long as potters made small copies of such vessels, it may be hypothesized that toy versions of other pottery, completely harmless in their original "adult" form, may have been produced for the purposes of play. These latter, however, would be so similar to the original pieces, that no specific features would help us to clearly distinguish them from the pottery used in the kitchen. Distinction would be possible at best in cases where such

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[267] Such pieces were found, for example, in Tata, Diósgyőr, Nyék, Feldebrő and Buda. This list, however, is far from being complete.

[268] Endrei – Zolnay: 14.

[269] Aus dem Alltag der mittelalterlichen Stadt. 1984, 166.

[270] H. W. Mechelk: Wärmeschalen aus dem Stadtkern Dresden. In: Arbeits- und Forschungsberichte zur Sächsischen Bodenkmalpflege 19 (1971) 245. The decoration of these artifacts is in late Renaissance style.

model vessels are hand thrown, poorly made and lightly fired suggesting that an older child, rather than a craftsman made them. It may be assumed that not only small vessels but other clay toys (whistles, dolls and horses) were made in the potter's workshop along with the ware prepared for adult everyday life. As late as the early 20th century, potters in Hungary sold their vessels and toys (for example clay whistles)[271] together in fairs and patronal festivals. Toys and religious as well as erotic figurines came to light from the same deposit in Cologne dated to the second half of the 15th century.[272] On the basis of these finds the hypothesis may be put forward that by the end of the Middle Ages some workshops were specialized in the manufacturing of figurines. However, to date no workshop exclusively producing toys has been discovered.

Spinning tops

Spinning tops were usually turned from wood. Their bodies were decorated with a variety of patterns. The toy was given momentum by first wrapping a string attached to a whip around it. The top lay on the ground, then the whip was suddenly pulled upwards. Subsequent whipping could keep the top spinning for as long as an hour.[273] This game required a flat and horizontal surface such as, for example, ice during winter.[274]

Since no depiction or artifactual analogy is available, the 14th century spinning top found in a Buda well must be considered a unique specimen (fig. XXVI). A pattern composed of concentric circles may be seen on the upper surface of this 2,1 cm thick wooden disc. A small, stubby protuberance also occurs on this surface, though it does not seem to have had a particular function. It looks rather like a remnant from turning the wood during manufacturing. The narrowing end of the long peg is rounded.

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[271] Néprajzi lexikon I, 497.

[272] Zeitschrift für Archäologie des Mittelalters 10 (1982) 238 (conference report by H. Steuer).

[273] F. H. Gabnai: Gyermekjátékok. In: Néprajzi Értesitő 1903, 234.

[274] Spinning tops are used on ice in several paintings by Bruegel the Elder including the "Betlehem census", "Winter hunting" and "Winter landscape with skaters and bird trap".

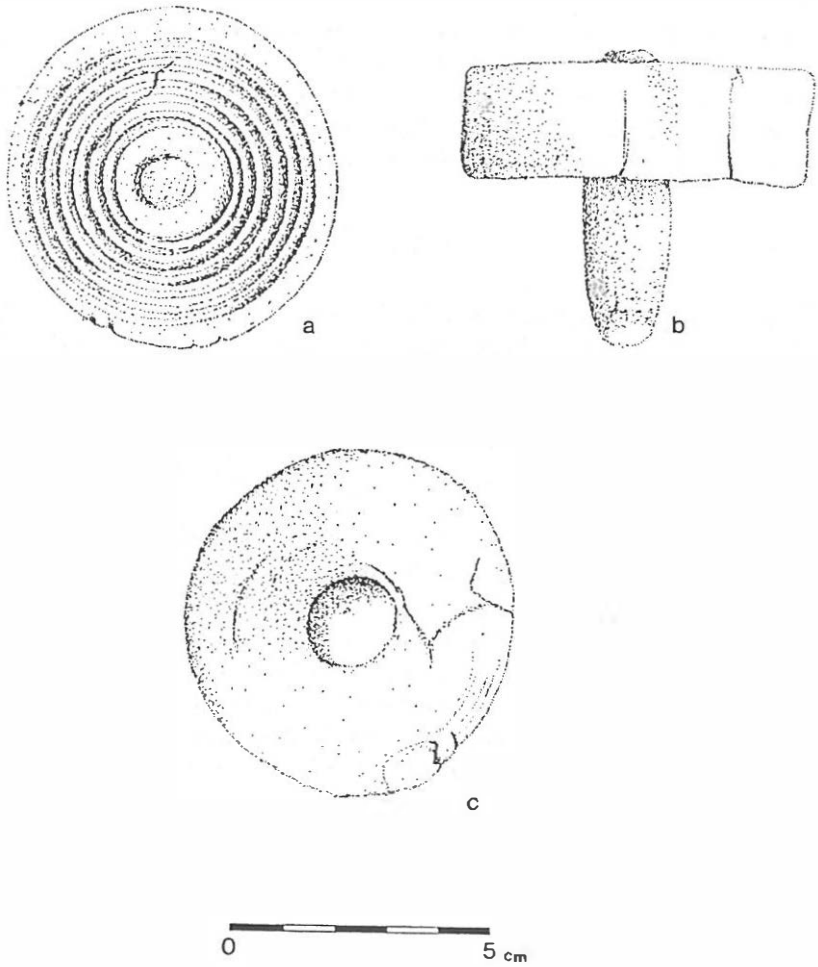

Figure XXVI

Children playing with spinning tops are most commonly shown in addition to those riding hobby horses on medieval pictures from abroad. This is suggestive of the fact that the spinning top must have been one of the most widely distributed toys and one may reckon with numerous pieces related to the single archaeological specimen found in Hungary.

Marbles

At the present level of archaeological collection, marbles are the most numerous finds.[275] They have been found everywhere in castles,[276] towns,[277] villages, and infant burials.[278] They may be considered one of the most typical stray finds which makes their dating tremendously difficult. The earliest piece that lends itself to chronological identification originates from the 13th–14th century.[279] All the marbles found in Hungary to date belong to the small size category.[280]

These were best suited to playing grabbing, casting and rolling (target rolling aimed at holes) games. It is likely that marbles represented different values depending on their raw material (glass, pottery, stone, marble, bone, wood), color and patterns incised on their surface. These all influenced the flow of the game. The single written reference to playing with marbles may be read in the account-book of prince Sigismund. The following record was made on September 23, 1502 in Buda: *Item Oczyeski dederat domino principi ad ludum kulki*[281] *XX den. ung., quos sibi contra*

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[275] Their number exceded 100.

[276] For example Hollókő.

[277] For example Esztergom, Buda.

[278] During the course of rescue excavations directed by G. Fehér at Mohács-Csele-patak three handmade clay marbles with diameters ranging from 1,4 to 1,8 cm were found trampled into the floor level of a house. The same excavation yielded another marble from an infant burial, grave 43. This grave, however, was disturbed. (G. Fehér Jr.: Az 1949. évi Mohács-Csele-pataki mentőásatás. In: Archaeológiai Értesitő 1955, 233, 218).

[279] This piece was found in Buda (Budapest Historical Museum, inventory number 83.295.15).

[280] The diameter ranges between 1 and 2 cm in the majority of cases. A specimen with a 4 cm diameter should be considered rare and relatively large in comparison to the others.

[281] See also note 55.

dedi.[282] In addition to the artifactual evidence and written references a pictorial representation of this game may also be found in the gradual of Wladislaw. People fighting over marbles of various colors in this picture suggest that, as was usual with games, playing with marbles was not always a peaceful occupation either (fig. XXVII). Another fight was depicted in relation to another game, skittles, documented on the margin of the same page in this gradual (fig. XXVIII). People attacking each other with swords remind us of the keystone from Diósgyőr and the duel provoked by playing dice described by Szerémi. The lonesome ball and abandoned pins provide a reliable picture of the kind of set used for skittles in those days.

Figure XXVII

[282] Divéky: 167.

Figure XXVIII

Two main types of skates may be distinguished. One of them is drilled through and could be tied to the feet (fig. XXIX). The other form was not drilled and as such could not be fastened to the feet (fig. XXX).[283]

The front part of both types is usually carved into a narrowing shape both laterally and from the direction of the surface resting on the ice. When drilling was used at all, the holes ran horizontally in the front section, while they were somewhat diagonal relative to the skate's long axis.[284] They were usually made using the leg bones of horse or cattle. The mode of manufacture in modern times, as explained by a skating child in Gyergyóújfalu (Suseni), was recorded at the beginning of the 20th century:

> *Mikor megszáradt a két esső lábszárcsont, hát vettem a fészit osztán elöl-hátul már itt a talpánál lecsaptam, hogy legyen srégen s osztán itt elöl s hátul, ahova a lábujkóm s a sarkam jő – hát itt ahol egy kicsit kiemelkedik, mind egy gerinc, átalfúrtam, mer osztan lássa, ebbe a két lyukba van fűzve az ispárga na s ... lássa az úrfi, amik ispárga elöl van azt a csidma vaj már a bocskor orrára húzom fel s amik hátul van, avval a bokámnál kötöm keresztül ... – de amik becsületes gilics, hogy egy kicsit görbül felfelé azt nem is kell erősen megkötni.*[285]

(When the two frontal leg bones dried, I took an axe and hacked it in

[283] To date, drilled specimens are known only from Esztergom. Others, undrilled, were found among other places in Doboz, Bashalom, Tiszalök-Rázom, Turkeve-Móric and Kardoskút. The earliest examples are dated to the 9th–11th centuries.

[284] The direction of drilling may have differed from that observed in the case of Hungarian finds. This is clearly shown by the skates found in 10th–11th century York. Of the 44 specimens recovered, seven were drilled in a vertical direction at the front of the foot. With the exception of four pieces, a horizontal groove was carved along the long axis of the skate from its back side. Wooden edges, tied to the ankle, were set into these notches (J. Radley: Economic Aspects of Anglo-Danish York. In: Medieval Archaeology 1971, 55–56). Since the skates could be drilled in several ways, no uniform manner of fastening could be reconstructed. In addition, no contemporary picture of these bone skates is known. Reconstruction using analogy from Hungarian ethnographic sources is based on a type (O. Herman: Ironga, szánkó, kece. Budapest, 1902, Figures 2 and 3; referred to as Herman) which has not yet been brought to light from medieval sites in Hungary.

[285] J. S.Kovács: Hogyan gilicseznek Gyergyóban. In: Erdély 1908, 17–20, 18 (referred to as S. Kovács). *Gilics* is a term used for bone skates in Gyergyó.

front and back to form a sole, then I hacked it obliquely in front and back where my toes and heel would fit – and here, where it is a bit elevated like a backbone, I drilled the bone through, because you see, this is where the string is threaded through, well ... you see, young mister, the string up front is pulled over my boots or moccasin while the ones in the back are tied across my ankles ... however, when the runner is really good and bent a little bit upwards, it does not even have to be tied.)

This shows that making skates was not a particularly complicated project and that even children could do it.

Skating techniques may also be reconstructed on the basis of modern observations. At the beginning of the century, the following were recorded in relation to the know-how of skating:

Az ironga hossza és talprészének sik volta, könnyűvé teszi az egyensúly megtartását,[286] *így a tovalóditásnak sajátos föltétele volt, mégpedig az hogy a két irongacsontnak egyközű fekvésűnek kellett maradnia. Mihelyt az ironga fekvése – előre értve – V fekvésbe került a két láb szétfutott, az irongáló láb szétterpedt, s a hirtelen leülés elkerülhetetlenné vált. ... Nem kevésbé fontos volt az is, hogy a két láb bizonyos és állandó távolságban maradjon egymástól azért, hogy a szegesbottal, gusztonnyal vagy vonyogóval való döfögetés könnyű és biztos legyen, minthogy az mindig lábközbe esett. ... A testtartás is lényeges volt; a térdeket meg kellett kissé ereszteni, a derekat hasonlóképpen és ebben a tartásban rejlett az irongálás fárasztó mozzanata, mert a megfelelő izmokat szokatlan helyzetben és tartósan meg kellett feszíteni. Mindezek a mozzanatok együttvéve úgy hozták magukkal, hogy az irongálás nyílegyenes vonalban folyt és erre vonatkoznak Hildebrand szavai, hogy a csont-irongán a kitérés lehetetlen volt.*[287]

(The length of runners and the flatness of their sole surfaces makes keeping the balance easy, thus advancing had only one special condition. The two runners had to be kept in a parallel position. As

[286] By appropriate balancing with both body and feet, bone skates without drilling or any sort of fastening could be kept under the foot as well due to the pressure exerted by the skater's body and the bone's rough upper surface (Néprajzi Lexikon II, 638).

[287] Herman: 9. Poles with nails, however, were also used by skaters who slid on fastened skates.

soon as the runners closed into a V-shape pointing in a forward direction, the feet became distanced and the legs spread resulting in a sudden and inevitable sitting position ... It was similarly important to keep the feet apart to a certain, constant distance when the forward movement was enhanced using a nailed cane, rod or stick, since the ice could always be pronged easily and safely between the feet with these instruments ... Posture was important as well. Both knees and waist had to be somewhat relaxed, which represented the most tiring aspect of using runners, due to the prolonged tensing of certain muscles in this unusual position. Coordinating all these details resulted in a straightforward movement of runners. The remark by Hildebrand that it was impossible to shun anybody when sliding on runners is relevant here.) (Fig. XXXI)

Skating was described in more or less the same way in other sources as well:

A gilics leginkább ló vagy (ritkábban) marha első lábcsontjából alkalmatosan készitett csontdarab, melyet korcsolya gyanánt használ s igen kedves játékszernek ismer a gyergyói székelyfiú. Csáklyabottal hajtja magát, amely legtöbb esetben fenyőfából készül: alsó végéből 4–5 cm hosszú jégszeg áll ki. Arra szolgál, hogy a lábak között a jégbe ütve az erős rugaszkodáshoz támasztékul szolgáljon.[288]

(Runners were a worked piece of bone made mostly from the front metapodials of horse or sometimes (less frequently) cattle, which were used as skates and greatly liked by Sekler boys. He pushes himself forward with a grappling rod which is made from pinewood in most cases. A 4 to 5 cm long ice nail is mounted on the bottom of such a rod in order to provide a firm hold when stabbed into the ice between the two legs.)

These descriptions recorded in modern times probably hardly differed from the way medieval skating was practiced since a document as early as 1620 mentioned forward movement aided by a rod.[289] Márton Szepsi Csom-

[288] S. Kovács: 17.

[289] A significant number of medieval games have survived to the present day thanks to children of various ages playing together. This guaranteed the continuity of their succession. Due to the conservative character of children games, many medieval forms of play were still known at the end of the last century, so that ethnographers could record

bor[290] recorded the following in his *Europica varietas* about his trip to Holland:

> *Esztendőként egyszer, télben harmadnap alatt az egész ország törvénye s szokása szerint pályafutásnak okáért bizonyos jutalom alatt (melyet az magisztrátus teszen le) a leányok az ő idejük szerint való hozzá hasonló ifjú legényeket az tengerre kihiják, az leány az férfiúnak az férfiú az leánynak lábára felköti a csontból vagy csak fából csinált csuszkondót, de ez nem igy vagyon, mint itt Magyarországban láttam, hogy egy nagy vassal megszegezett bot volt kezében az jégen járóknak, hanem szintén csak lábainak mesterségesen való félretaszitása által, felhányása és mozgatása által az egész nép láttára elindulnak, és oly sebességgel mennek, hogy ég alatt nincs oly ló, ki velük elérkeznék.*[291]
>
> (Once a year, during the winter, girls and lads of matching ages are called to the sea within three days according to the law and tradition

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them before the thirties of this century. An important link in the continuity between games in medieval and modern days is represented by the chapter describing games in the book of Comenius entitled *Orbis pictus*. This was written in the 17th century so that it would neither classify as a medieval nor a modern work. It hardly contains any games which would not have had precedents in the Middle Ages, but most of these games can also be documented in modern times. Thus, the ethnographic material has special significance for the research into medieval games. It is for this reason that it may be justified to use information from works written during the 17th–18th centuries in the reconstruction of games poorly documented in medieval sources. However, it should be taken into consideration that new games were also invented during the course of history. It is also noteworthy that as game and play was gradually ousted from the world of adults, most non-specific games lost their playful character as well. Among others, dancing clearly exemplifies this process. Actually, the ethnographic material may contain games which did not yet exist during the Middle Ages, but one must also reckon with phenomena which started as medieval games but evolved into something different through time. In the case of this study, ethnographic parallels and 17th–18th centuries written sources were used for games which were equally well known in the Middle Ages and modern times. Skating is one of these games.

[290] Márton Szepsi Csombor (1595–around 1623): world traveller, writer, Calvinist preacher. Between 1616 and 1619 he travelled all around Europe and studied among other places in Gdansk, Strasbourg and London. He returned to Hungary in 1619. His travel book *Europica varietas* (Kassa, 1620) is one of the first such works written in Hungarian.

[291] M. Cs. Szepsi: Europica varietas (1620). Budapest, 1979, 165 (cited by Endrei–Zolnay: 130).

of the country in order to compete on a course for a prize set by the magistrate. Skates made from bone or simple wood are tied to the feet of men by the maids and on the feet of maids by men. However, it is different here, from what I have seen in Hungary, where ice walkers carry a long rod with an iron bit nailed to it in their hands. People here start in front of a whole crowd of people by simply sliding their feet to one side then flinging themselves ahead and moving forward. They attain such a speed that no horse would be able to catch up with them.)

In addition to skates, sled runners were also made out of bones.[292] The lower part of sled runners is polished similarly to those of skates. Two round holes may be seen near their ends which were drilled in a vertical direction perpendicular to the bone's long axis. Two types of sled runners are known as well. On one of them, the hole is broadened on the lower side intended for the runner's sole. This accomodated the head of the nail which was used to fasten the runner on the base of the wooden sled (fig. XXXII).[293] In the other case, the sole was not perforated, no special sled base was prepared, but small pieces of wood were carved to fit directly into the holes, thus supporting the sled's little seat (fig. XXXIII).[294] The variety of sleds made from the mandible of horse and cattle was widespread in medieval Europe,[295] though no such objects have yet occurred in the archaeological find material from Hungary.[296]

Written information on sleds is available as well. Péter Bornemisza wrote the following:

Az mi Maximilian Czaszarunkhoz egy Beczi polgar megyen, midõn hadba hirdetnec es iger tiz ezer forintot, csak õ magat hon hadnac. Mond az Czaszar: Mikor en szankaztam, vtannam senkinec nem volt

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[292] Sled runners are also known from Muhi, Esztergom, Romhány, Pusztacsév and the northern part of historical Hungary, today Slovakia (Slivka: 345).

[293] Herman: 21.

[294] O. Herman: Halászélet, pásztorkodás. Budapest, 1980, 42.

[295] The most detailed study relevant to this topic was published by G. F. Ijzereff: A Medieval Jaw-Sledge from Dordrecht. In: Berichten van de Rijksdienst voor het Oudhedkundig Bodenonderzoek 1974, 181–184.

[296] The picture would not be complete without mentioning that skates and sleds were made from wood as well. Such pieces may be seen on numerous paintings by Bruegel the Elder and Bosch. They are also known from Hungarian ethnographic collections.

frisseb szankaia, mint teneked, azert ha velem együtt szankaztal, együt iöy hadakoznijs, es az tiz ezer forintual, keszits tiz fegyuereseket.[297]

(A Viennese burgher went to the emperor Maximilian at the time of mobilization and promised ten thousand florins if he was allowed to stay at home. And the emperor said: When we went sled riding nobody was doing it more briskly than you did. If you could go sledding with me, you should go to war with me as well. Use the ten thousand florins to prepare an armed company.)

Péter Apor writes about the good manners of Transylvanians in the old days. He tells that people long ago hardly swore at all while in his time adults and children alike indeed said ugly things to each other. Among other things he listed the following malediction: *ördög szánkázzék az szegény lelkeden.*[298] (The devil should sledride on your miserable soul.)

Winter not only provided extra time for playing, since constant working was limited by cold and snow, but also offered opportunities for entertainment. As is shown by the written[299] and artifactual data, both adults and children took advantage of these opportunities.

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[297] Bornemisza: 209. The text is ambiguous and the possibility may not be ruled out that the sleds in question were in fact animal drawn sleighs.

[298] Apor: 124.

[299] A story is mentioned in Endrei–Zolnay based on a 1438 charter, according to which a Dominican monk was bombarded with snowballs so intensely by a youth that he died of his wounds after 52 days. It is, thus, not an accident perhaps that a 1507 law in the city of Nördlingen warned: *Schnee werfens halb. Ain erber rat alhie hat auch angesehen und beslossen, das nunhinfüro niemantz den andern mer mit schnee werfen soll kains wege, denn wer das überfüre, es wern frawen oder mann, jung oder alt, der ieder oder iedes soll aim rat dreissig pfennig zu buss unablöslich zu betzalen verfallen sein und würden jung knaben in disem bot ergriffen, so werden die straf ir eltern an irer statt darumb verbüssen.* (The council considered snow throwing and decided that from now on no one should throw snowballs at others under any circumstances. Whoever does this, shall irredeemably pay a fine of 30 pfennig to the Magistrate whether the offender was a woman or a man, young or old. Should a young boy be caught throwing snowballs, the sentence has to be completed by his parents.) See G. Jaritz: Zwischen Augenblick und Ewigkeit. Vienna–Cologne, 1989, 94. Oblivious snowballers were immortalized in Bruegel the Elder's painting entitled "Bethlehem Census" and in the picture "Winter landscape" painted by Lucas van Valckenborch.

Figure XXIX

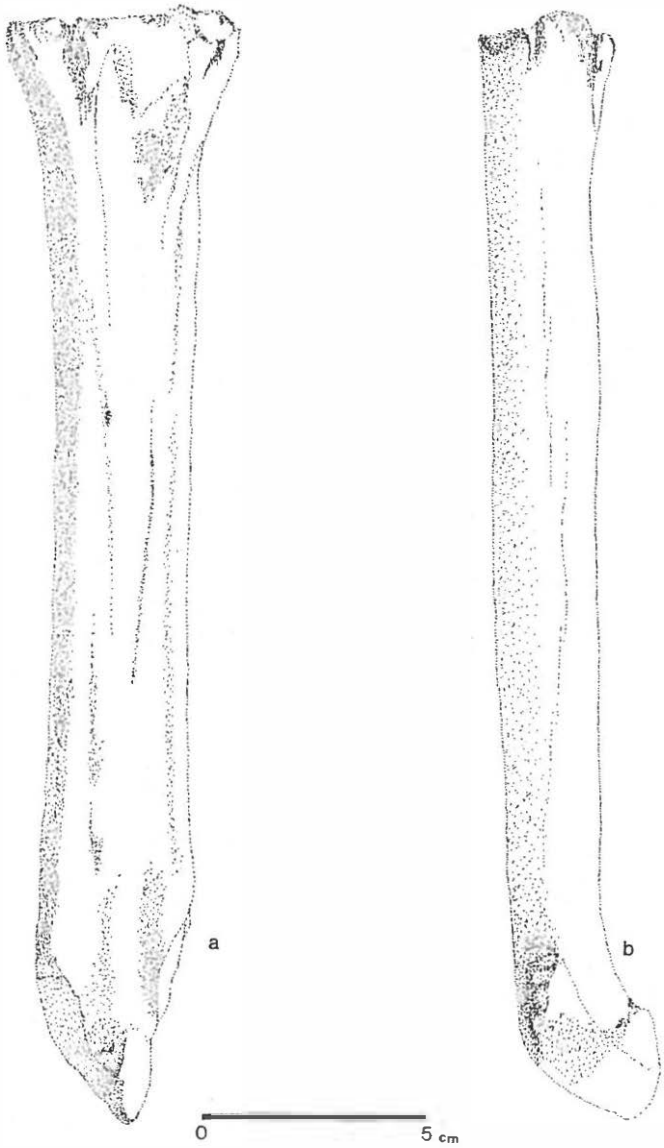

Figure XXX

Figure XXXI

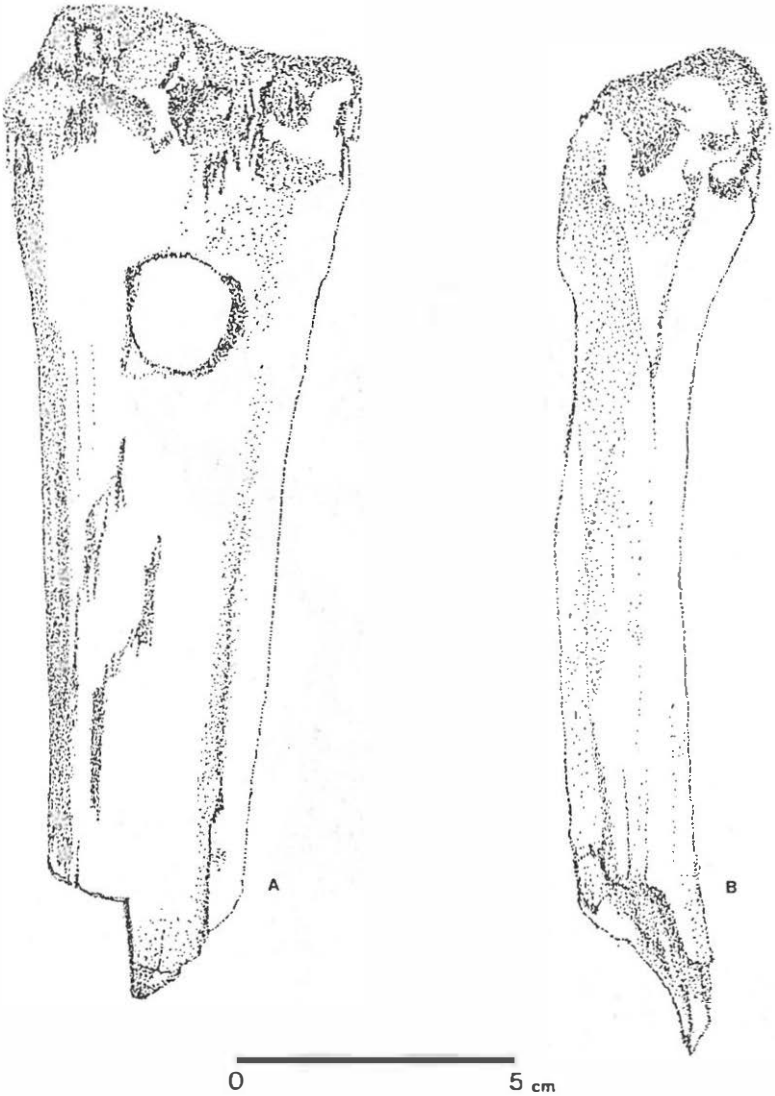

Figure XXXII

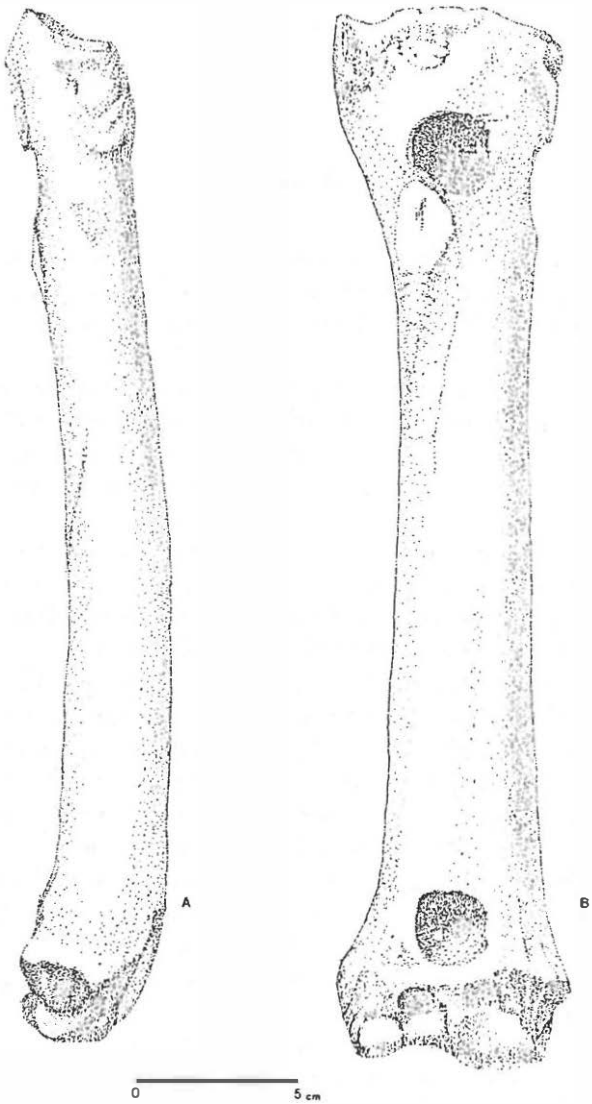

Figure XXXIII

Summary

This work was not meant to encompass the task of providing a comprehensive, encyclopaedic description of medieval games, since grasping the topic has proven extremely difficult both in written sources and artifactual assemblages.

On the other hand, notes, references and descriptions relevant to play were present in almost any type of document regardless of its character. In spite of its small scope, the artifactual material shows a varied picture. However, not even this information is sufficient to delineate a coherent image.

The scarcity of data is a major disadvantage, since the significant amount of free time does not seem to be matched by a proportionately rich repertoire of medieval pastimes, although entertainment must have played an important role during the hours of leisure.

On the other hand, with the exception of the unanimous condemnation of gambling, one may not speak of the homogeneous appreciation of gaming throughout the Middle Ages. People did not give up playing in spite of the uninterrupted and ever present moral pressure because it represented an emotional outlet providing relief from the oppressive feeling of an atmosphere loaded with evil forces from the other world and it helped to temporarily free them from their everyday life loaded with difficulties. During certain holy days, as well as when playing games, people ignored laws and customs of their official life, choosing a merry world in which the rules different from those of everyday life were valid. Thus, games and holy days were associated by their contents as well, not only by the practical fact that holy days provided free time for playing. Naturally, this does not mean that holy days which represent the complex system of religious, secular and folk tradition should be seen exclusively as opportunities for play. This multi-level system, however, accomodated games to varying extents as well, depending on the actual nature of the holy days in question.

It is also important to note that the medieval term *ludus* was not an exclusive term maintained for games or specialized game objects, that is, toys alone. It included the majority of activities described by the generic term "entertainment" nowadays. These two elements were not separated from each other in that time. Consequently games, and the previously detailed outlets for anxiety probably penetrated a broad spectrum of medieval life.

Some elements of the Hungarian game culture had became apparent before the time of the Hungarian conquest. The St. Gallen story of Ekkehart shows that playing was not an alien idea to the Hungarians who pilaged Europe. Following the foundation of the Hungarian state many eastern connections survived from the old days. It is for this reason that the origin of games first documented during the heyday of the Middle Ages but also known in the east cannot be explained by western influence alone.

During the discussion of game pieces it was found that in addition to the previously published chesspieces from Diósgyőr and Nagyvázsony, another specimen from Visegrád must be reckoned with, which is a knight of Arabian type. Following the analysis of this specimen it became clear that typological features may not be used in the dating of chesspieces.

Dice first occur in both the written and artifactual record in the first quarter of the 13th century in Hungary. Playing dice was the most popular and most fiercely persecuted game throughout the Middle Ages. The manufacturing of dice is evidenced by numerous finds in Hungary and written sources prove that a gang of gamblers was organized in 15th century Pozsony (Bratislava). The earliest pictorial representation of any sort of game to date is the pillar head with dice from Vértesszentkereszt which dates to the 13th century.

A special group of archaeological finds is formed by bone tokens, which facilitated gambling by helping to avoid the violation of declared moral norms.

Eggs, rattles, pipes and whistles may be regarded as non-specialized toys. It is most likely that the toy aspect originated from the closeness of everyday life and play. It is for this reason that the game character may not be separated from or contrasted with the other functions of such artifacts.

The archaeological material contributed a rare type of whip propelled spinning top to the all European inventory of toys. Another piece, a clay copy of bronze figurines showing mounted knights from the end of the

15th and beginning of the 16th century was found in Buda. Kits of such bronze figures were used to imitate tournaments, and the existence of the clay model illustrates that, by the end of the Middle Ages, the fashion of playing with tournament kits reached well beyond the social stratum of aristocrats in our region.

The majority of horse figurines found in Hungary form part of a Central European stylistic group. During the analysis of these objects it became clear that glaze had been applied on them earlier (13th century) than on mundane household pottery.

It was also observed that the small size in pottery does not in itself mean the vessel functioned as a toy. Only pieces with special features may be classified within this group.

On the other hand, clay dolls may be unambiguously distinguished from non-game figurines on the basis of their different execution, especially concerning their clothing and hairstyle.

Play was not even inhibited by winter. This season even offered additional possibilities as is shown by a number of paintings and the great variety of skate and sled types.

It is important to emphasize that a major part of children games were closely associated with the adult way of life and changes observed in it. Children's play followed these changes which in turn penetrated the games themselves. This is why elements of ancient adult customs were preserved in many children games.

Finally, it must be pointed out that as a result of children of various ages playing with each other a number of games maintained their continuity up to modern times. It is for this reason that ethnographic data as well as 17th–18th century written records, under certain restrictions, may be utilized in the reconstruction of the medieval situation. This material will possibly provide the firmest foundation for subsequent research.

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Fig. XXVIII: Fighting in relation with skittles. Wladislaw Gradual. D: c. 1500–1510.

Fig. XXIX: Skates. A: bone, B: Esztergom-Szentpálfalua, C: 24,5 x 3,5 x 2,3cm, D: medieval, E: Balassa Bálint Múzeum, Esztergom 56.781.1.

Fig. XXX: Skates. A: bone, B: Esztergom-Szentpálfalua, C: 26 x 4,7 x 2,5 cm, D: medieval, E: Balassa Bálint Múzeum, Esztergom 56.785.1.

Fig. XXXI: Skating technique at the beginning of the 20th century. Out of: O. Herman: Ironga, Kece, Szánkó. Budapest, 1902, fig. 2.

Fig. XXXII. Sled runners. A: bone, B: Esztergom-Szentpálfalua, C: 18 x 7 x 3 cm, D: medieval, E: Balassa Bálint Múzeum, Esztergom 56.778.

Fig. XXXIII. Sled runners. A: bone, B: Romhány, C: 32,5 x 6 x 3 cm, D: Arpadian Age, E: Kubinyi Ferenc Múzeum, Szécsény 77.35.3.