TRADITIONAL GAMES OF THE PEOPLE OF MOUNT KENYA REGION

A CULTURAL-EDUCATIONAL APPRAISAL

BY

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A THESIS SUBMITTED IN
FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE
DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY OF

KENYATTA UNIVERSITY

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Traditional games of the people of mount

JUNE 2001

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DECLARATION

This thesis is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any
other University or for any other award.

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We confirm that the work contained in this thesis was carried out by the candidate under our supervision.

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This thesis is dedicated to my parents, Pauline Wanjiku Mwangi and the late Stephen Mwangi Njihia, as well as to my wife and children, Mrs. Cecilia Wanjiku Wanderi, Martin Mwangi Wanderi, Catherine Wanjiku Wanderi and Clement Waiganjo Wanderi.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express my appreciation to my supervisors, Professor M.M. Patel and Dr. E.K. Wamukoya for their invaluable help and guidance.

My most heartfelt gratitudes go to *Katholischer Akademischer Ausländer-Dienst* (KAAD) for their sponsorship to Germany on a “Sandwitch” scholarship for literature review. Similarly, I am deeply indebted to Professors Georg Kenntner and Klaus Boes of the Institute of Sports and Sports Sciences, University of Karlsruhe, Germany, Timothy and Consolata Oketch, Bene Iyinboh and their families for their valuable assistance offered to me while in Germany. Likewise, my cordial gratitudes go to Professor March Krotee, who also organized for my travel to the University of Minnesota for literature review.

To Mrs. Jane Githua, who helped in typing this work, James Irungi and Belta Makato who drew the diagrams, I am also quite grateful. Lots of appreciation also go to Mr. Paul G. Chege, the then District Physical Planning Officer (Tharaka – Nithi district), Mr. J.J. Nyagah (Embu), Mr. J. Nyota Gathua (Meru) and to Mr. Gerald Mbae (Igonji) who directed and introduced me to various interviewees. Needless to mention my indebtedness to the interviewees and questionnaire respondents themselves. Gratitudes also to Prof. J.S. Nteere, Mr. J.K. Gathua, my wife Cecilia, as well as to Catherine Muthee for their concern, help, and encouragements.

Finally, I strongly acknowledge all the help I received from scores of many other people who are not mentioned here by their names. To them all, for the help they accorded me in the course of this study, I am indeed more grateful than words can adequately express.
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Abstract

The researcher was prompted into this study by two factors. These are, first, the continued disappearance of the traditional games in Kenya, and secondly, the apparent lack of their documented references for use in education. These were activities that existed and were highly educative in traditional Kenyan communities prior to colonial incursion. However, following the arrival of the Europeans, as well as the subsequent imposition of the Western lifestyles and their hegemony, these activities have ever since suffered a slow demise. The aim of this research therefore, was to avail these activities in written form as a cultural and an educational appraisal.

Due to the detailed analyses and presentation of the activities required, it was however not possible to cover the entire country. Consequently, the study was confined to the Mount Kenya communities, namely, the Kikuyu, the Embu and the Meru. The data collection instruments in their order of usefulness to this study were, (a) interviews, (b) documentary analyses, and (c) questionnaires. The information obtained was subjected to thorough internal and external criticisms through which facts were systematically analysed, compared, and classified. Accordingly, most of the data presented in chapter four of this study originated from primary sources of information while the bulk of the data from secondary sources was presented in chapter two.
The findings of this study include the establishment of a detailed written record of thirty nine (39) traditional games of Mount Kenya region. An analysis of each game is made in terms of its participants, facility and equipment, rules and procedure, as well as its cultural-educational value to the indigenous community. The games presented are categorized in a progressive continuum under three sub-headings ranging from the simplest to the most complex. The presentation is eventually summed up by discussions on, classifications of traditional games of Mount Kenya region, differences and similarities between traditional and modern games as well as on a scientific analysis of traditional games.

In its recommendations, the study calls for the formalization of the games so availed. Possible approaches to be followed in the formalization of traditional games and the benefits of such an effort are also highlighted. This shall enhance promotion of Kenya’s cultural heritage through the educational programme as stated in the pedagogical objectives of Physical Education. Finally, it was conclusively hoped that this research will herald a new commitment in games development in Kenya. Besides, the results of this study should inspire future researchers to focus their attention on other Kenyan communities and accomplish a similar task before their traditional games are forgotten and lost forever.
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1: Background to the problem.

A people's way of life is depicted in the elements of their culture such as arts and crafts, games, music and dance, folktales and language, social etiquette, customs, mannerisms et cetera (Feibleman, 1968; Catchpole, 1981; Procter, 1984). The significance of these cultural elements is that, first, they strongly reinforce the human relationships within the society that practises them. Second, they are a strong reflection of the individuals of that society where they serve as miniature windows through which the values and behaviour of that particular group of people are viewed and understood (Cheska, 1987).

These elements, truly African in origin, were abound among the tribal communities of Kenya and elsewhere in Africa before the advent of the Europeans (Achebe, 1977; Mwanza, 1977; Mwaniki, 1980; Cheska, 1987; Kenyatta, 1992; Van der Merwe and Bressan, 1995). Upon the Europeans’ arrival however, and the hegemony of the Western cultural styles that followed, Africans were indoctrinated into believing that, their traditional values were sinful and un-Godly. Thus, their cultural elements were made to be subservient to those brought along from the Western world, which were erroneously portrayed and conceived as superior (Njoroge, 1969; Ngugi, 1986; Odhiambo, 1987; Kenyatta, 1992; Van der Merwe and Bressan, 1995; Pufaa, 1999).
Specifically, one traditional cultural element that was common all over Africa was in form of games which were intricately interwoven in the communities' culture and were part and parcel of everyone's way of life. Unique traditional games existed within these communities and were participated in by children, youths and adults (Mwaniki, 1980; Nteere, 1982; Kenyatta, 1992; Pufaa, 1999; Van der Merwe, 1999). This was a valuable cultural element which served as an important medium for the acquisition of factual information, intellectual skills, cognitive strategies, attitudes and motor skills for all. They were also the focus of attention for everyone during times designated for play and relaxation (Kenyatta, 1992). Unfortunately, as the local communities imitated Europeans' ways of life because they were presented as the "best" and most "civilized", this resulted in the decline of some of the most educative and recreational games, and a total extinction of others (Njoroge, 1969; Nteere, 1982; Pufaa, 1999). Consequently, unless deliberate efforts are made to study African traditional games as a cultural element, they stand a danger of being forgotten and lost as most of them are no longer practised.

Granted the above background, notable research studies have so far been conducted on various elements of African traditional culture such as folk music (Senoga-Zake, 1986), arts and crafts (Kipkorir, 1978; Klumpp, 1982), folktales and languages (Gechau, 1970; Mwanza, 1977), customs and social etiquette (Ndeti, 1972; Kipkorir, 1978; Mugo, 1982). These studies aid in establishing
written records of these traditional cultural elements to enable their preservation and reference through time and space. Unfortunately, no elaborate research had been conducted on traditional games among Kenyan communities prior to this one. Therefore, it was imperative that, this investigation be conducted with a view to record them before they were completely forgotten and lost. However, this research project was confined to the Mount Kenya region.

1.2: **Statement of the problem.**

The investigator was prompted into this research work by the regrettable extinction of traditional games in Kenya and the need to avail a written record of them for educational references. The task of this study was therefore to obtain through interviews, documentary analyses and questionnaires, the various types of traditional games of the people of Mount Kenya region, namely, the Kikuyu, the Embu and the Meru. The information obtained included, full details of the execution of each activity, facilities and equipment required, respective participants in terms of gender and age, as well as the significance of each activity both to the individual in particular, and to entire community in general.

1.3: **Purpose of the Study.**

All over the world, several scholars within the discipline of physical education and games have specialized in historical research in their professional endeavour. They have thus produced quality historical publications and
contributed towards the establishment of reputable academic records. Such records are essential resources for teachers, learners, researchers, writers and others. For instance, just to mention a few cases, enormous research works on the history of games in Canada and the United States have been conducted, and extensive scholarly documents have been compiled (Zeigler et al., in Clarke and Clarke, 1984). The world-wide popularly known Highland Games of Scotland detailed in chapter two are also another good example of traditional games that have been written down, developed and promoted to national and international levels (Kenntner, 1999).

Similar research works have been conducted elsewhere including for instance, among two Brazilian pre-industrial communities, namely, the Yanomamo (Figler, 1981), and the Timbira (Hye-Kerkdall, in Sage, 1974). Cheska (1987) conducted a similar study in West Africa, while Van der Merwe and Bressan (1995) accomplished a similar task among the Xhosa of South Africa. Many other examples are presented in chapter two.

In this context, there was a need for a similar study with the view to put on record the fast receding traditional games of the Kenyan ethnic communities. The findings from this research work were purposely and deliberately compiled in a way which allows their use by anthropologists, students and teachers of comparative, history and pedagogy of Physical Education (P.E.) and games. Additionally, the indepth information on traditional games presented in this
study would enhance their chances of being adopted for contemporary use both for academic purposes (in schools, colleges and universities), as well as for the mass recreational or social use in community sports. Finally, the performance and learning of those activities that had been adopted into the educational curriculum prior to this study, such as traditional gymnastics, stood a very high chance of being improved following this study.

1.4: **Significance of the study.**

The significance of this study is threefold. The study has both a cultural and an educational significance. It is cultural because as exemplified earlier, a number of different elements of the diverse cultural heritage in Kenya, namely, folktales and languages, arts and crafts, social customs, etiquette and so on have been variously researched and written on. However, a commensurate effort had all along lacked in physical education and games. Although an integral part of the African culture, this field had seemingly been ignored by researchers. This is what this study aimed at accomplishing, and hence its cultural significance. It is an enrichment of the recorded part of Kenya's diverse cultural heritage.

The second and equally important educational significance of this study entails the numerous traditional games as well as vital anthropological literature that it has availed for learning purposes. These are games to be used by the curriculum planners in Kenya. In other words, it is useful to clarify here that, the Kenya
Primary Education Syllabus (Kenya, Ministry of Education, 1982) up to the time of this study, had outlined several objectives intended to be achieved by learning of traditional games in Kenyan schools. Unfortunately, not a single activity was included in the syllabus contents. The glaring gap created by the omission of traditional games in the syllabus contents might have been prompted by the apparent lack of recorded games. This gap can now be filled up following this study and other similar studies to follow there after. The anthropological literature availed will be vital for educational purposes.

A third significance of this study arises due to its limited region of coverage vis-à-vis the entire country. Granted the level of this research work, only a small region of the country was covered. Therefore, this study was also expected to initiate or elicit similar efforts from future researchers so as to cover the rest of the country. In other words, this study was expected to herald a new research endeavour in Kenya on traditional games as an element of the national cultural heritage.

1.5: Theoretical Framework

Malinowski in the introduction to "Facing Mount Kenya, The Tribal Life of the Gikuyu" (Kenyatta, 1992) points out that, "anthropology begins at home" where this approach to its study "...has become the watchword of modern social sciences" (p.vii). With a detailed reference to several written authorities
on the past cultural elements of the peoples of the United States of America, 
Britain, Romania, Poland, France, and Germany, he observes that, all those 
authorities have directed a lot of their technologies, methods, and aims on their 
peoples’ own past civilizations. In conclusion, he states that, all those references 
are "...an expression of the social view that, we must start by knowing 
ourselves first" before learning about others (p.vii). Jomo Kenyatta, in the 
same book adds; "it is hoped that, the descriptive analysis of the system 
presented in that book) will illustrate the need for more study of this subject 
because of its practical value to educationists..." (p. 98). Given the aims and 
significance of this research work, namely, a cultural-educational appraisal, the 
study was then an anthropological effort that directly sprouted from the above 
quotation. The study was a reflection of the strong inspiration that the above 
words had to the researcher who adopted them as his conceptual framework.

This research was additionally conducted within another theoretical framework 
advanced by Marie Hart (1976). According to Hart, any study on the meaning 
and function of games or sports in a society should be approached in a complete 
and non-normative way. As a cultural phenomenon, it is imperative that, any 
study on games in a society should examine them within their total cultural 
context. With a view to gaining the most complete understanding and 
knowledge of how and why of such games in a community, as well as who 
participated, this calls for a careful look at all aspects of that community’s 
life."...Sport (or games) as a sociocultural phenomenon must be studied in
(their) contextual setting. How the sport (or game) is (or was) performed, under what circumstances, who performs it and who observes it are all of prime importance..." (p. ix). These suggestions were then adopted as a further theoretical framework which helped to determine the scope of this study.

Finally, Cheska (1987) classified all West African traditional games into seven categories which can be outlined as follows; games of physical skill, games of strategy, games of chance, games of memory, rhythm games, simulation games and verbal games. Van der Merwe and Bressan (1995) attempted to apply Cheska's classification in their study of the traditional games of the Xhosa people of South Africa. From their study, they found that, Cheska's seven categories of the traditional games of West Africa were suitable for the classification of the Xhosa traditional games. They therefore suggested that, this scheme should also be tested elsewhere in Africa. If found applicable, they proposed that, it could be adopted in all similar studies within the sub-Saharan Africa. Consequently, they contended that, this would be one way of enhancing a better understanding of the similarities and differences among the numerous African ethnic communities. Van der Merwe and Bressan further concluded that, through such a systematic, common, analytical framework, a unique cultural bondage amongst the Africans, right from the Cape to Cairo and from east to west, could easily be established. Cheska's classification scheme was therefore another major theoretical framework for this study. That is, the traditional games of Mount Kenya region presented in this research work, are
1.6: The Study Area (Background Information)

This study was based on Mount Kenya region, in central part of Kenya whose location is shown in figure 1.1. Kenya is an East African country lying astride the equator. It is a land of great diversity with wide variations occurring in topography, altitude, climate, people’s ethnic groups as well as in their distribution on their motherland, just to mention but a few (Willet, 1999).

One of Kenya’s most conspicuous topographical feature is Mount Kenya. This is the highest Mountain in Kenya towering to a height of 5199 meters above sea level. This mountain is permanently ice-capped despite its position on the equator. It is a volcanic mountain whose vast spreading slopes are covered with fertile soils. Coupled with the abundant rainfall received here, these make Mount Kenya region an agriculturally very productive area and hence densely populated (Kenya Survey, 1991; Willet, 1999).

Since the historical period of the Bantu migrations, the slopes of Mount Kenya have served as a home for three central Bantu groups namely, the Kikuyu, the Embu and the Meru. These three ethnic groups speak distinct Bantu languages related in vocabulary although not necessarily understandable between one
group and the other (Ssekamwa, 1984). The Kikuyu as shown in figure 1.1 occupy the south-west and the western slopes. The Embu are on the southern

Figure 1.1 The Mount Kenya Region (Study Area). (Source: Survey of Kenya, 1991; Willet, 1999)
slopes while the Meru are found along the eastern and the north-eastern slopes (Fedders and Salvadoni, 1979; Kenya Survey, 1991; Willet, 1999). The area occupied by the Kikuyu is the central highlands of Kenya extending from the eastern escarpment of the great Rift Valley in the west to Mount Kenya in the east and stretching southwards to Nairobi. Administratively, the Kikuyu region is divided into seven districts, namely from the west, Nyandarua, Kiambu, Thika, Maragua, Murang’a, Nyeri and Kirinyaga districts which constitute the Central Province of Kenya.

The Embu are found in Embu and Mbeere districts, while the Meru occupy the three districts of Meru South, Meru Central and Meru North. These five districts administratively make up a part of the Eastern Province of Kenya. The Embu community distinguishes itself into two sub-groups namely Embu and Mbeere as per above two districts and are settled on the upper and lower southern slopes of Mount Kenya respectively. The Mbeere region therefore neighbours Kambaland.

The Meru community also distinguishes itself into six sub-groups namely, Imenti, Chuka, Mwimbi-Muthambi, Tharaka, Tigania and Igembe. Documentary analyses on the Embu and Meru sub-groups such as those given by Mwaniki (1980) on the Embu, Feeders and Salvadoni (1979) on both Embu and Meru, as well as Ogot (1976) on the Meru are all congruent in above divisions.
This research aimed at studying the traditional games of the people of Mount Kenya region. These are activities that were engaged in by indigenous people and hence whose history dates back to the time before the arrival of the European colonialists. Ever since the colonial incursion, these activities however, have significantly been relegated, receded and almost lost (Nteere, 1982). Fortunately, because they were intricately interwoven within the cultural fabric of the traditional communities, they have successfully resisted extinction despite all forces of suppression. Hence, like other traditional practices, the traditional games could also not suffer an instant demise. As revealed by the interviewees themselves, these activities were abundantly participated in all the way up to the 1960s in most parts of Mount Kenya region. Moreover, their remnants are witnessed here and there even to date. These were the targeted activities in this research work with an ultimate view to preserving them on written records.

1.7: Research Questions

In line with the theoretical frame of reference for this study, the following questions were used as a guide to the researcher.

1. What kinds of traditional games were in existence among the ethnic communities of Mount Kenya region and how were they performed?

2. Who were the participants in these games?
3. What kinds of equipment and facilities were used in these games?
4. What was the sociocultural setting within which these games were performed?
5. What was the significance of each of these games to the participants in terms of contributing to the acquisition of verbal information, intellectual (cognitive) skills, attitudes and motor skills?
6. What was the significance of each of these games to the community?
7. How do the traditional games of Mount Kenya region relate to other traditional games of Africa?
8. What are the educational implications of traditional games today?

1.8: Objectives of the Study

The aim of this research work was to obtain all the different forms of games of Mount Kenya region and their significance in traditional setting. In line with the above theoretical framework, the objectives of this study therefore were:

a) to obtain the traditional games of the people of the Mount Kenya region and give full details of how they were performed, equipment and facilities used, as well as the sociocultural setting within which they were performed.

b) to establish the significance of these activities in enhancing the acquisition and learning of verbal information, cognitive strategies,
attitudes, and motor skills by the participants in specific and their significance to the community in general.

c) to analyse traditional games from other parts of the world for comparative purposes.

d) to assess the suitability of Cheska’s (1987) scheme in their classification.

e) to offer suggestions on traditional games that can be adopted into the contemporary curriculum of education.

1.9: Limitations of the Study

A number of handicaps were experienced during the course of this study. Some of these were successfully resolved, but for others, nothing could have been done about them as explained below.

First, owing to a language barrier, the researcher was not able to communicate directly during the interviews with some of the subjects. Specifically, some interviews held with some Meru and Embu subjects were done through translators. The translators had been prepared adequately enough to be well conversant with the purpose of this research. Additionally, the translators were good in English, Kiswahili and Meru or Embu languages. Besides, they were minimally used as most of the subjects could speak a little Kiswahili.
A second limitation of the study arose due to the relatively small number of persons knowledgeable in the area under investigation. Moreover, since the activities under investigation are not done anymore, the researcher did not have a very large population from which to select respondents to interview and questionnaires. However, those who were identified were all utilized and the information they gave thoroughly analysed as explained in chapter three.

Finally another apparent limitation pertains to the reference books used as a source of information in this study. Some of these sources were published way back in 1933 and others in the sixties and no later editions of these books were accessible to the researcher. This may portray itself as a major weakness in this type of research. Fortunately, the information availed by these old references retains its validity granted that, it was based on the authors' direct observations on the traditional lifestyles and were therefore primary sources. Hence, the use of these old references is a point of strength rather than a weakness for this study. Nevertheless, whenever later editions of earlier references were available such as the case of Kenyatta (1992), the information in both editions was thoroughly analysed and compared to ensure validity.

1.10: **Operational Definition of Significant Terms.**

The following terms used in this research work required operational definitions.
African culture/ indigenous or traditional African culture: These are the attitudes and practices known to have been in existence in a given ethnic community in Africa right from the period before the coming of Europeans. A community’s culture in the context of this study, refers to the entire way of life of members of that group (Feibleman, 1968).

circumcision: The literal meaning of this word is the cutting off of the foreskin at the end of the male sex organ or the clitoris of the female sex organ. Some authorities refer to the latter as Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) or clitoridectomy. In the traditional Mount Kenya region communities, circumcision was a very important initiation into adulthood and a symbol of maturity for everyone throughout the generations. The act of circumcision, rituals and the celebrations that went along with it were very highly regarded. These were marked with great joy and dancing. The group of boys and girls circumcised together at a particular time came to belong to the same age group.

cultural elements: These are isolated aspects of a community’s culture considered singly. Examples of cultural elements are, a community’s arts and crafts, music and dances, folktales, language, games and so on.

ethnic community / tribe / indigenous African Community: These three terms are used synonymously in this study. They refer to a group of people united by common cultural elements. Cultural elements are thus key factors that
distinguish one ethnic community from the other. Considered from this point of view, this study therefore covers three ethnic communities or tribes, namely, the Kikuyu, the Embu and the Meru. Each of these groups had their own unique cultural elements but were similar in a number of aspects. The term indigenous African community is also used to refer to a group of two or more tribes.

**formalization of traditional games:** This is a process suggested in the on-going research on the indigenous games in Kenya and all over Africa. This process shall involve recording down of these activities with a view to giving them a common format, followed by their introduction for contemporary use in schools, as well as at other social places where modern games are performed today. This is an effort aimed at promotion of traditional African Culture.

game: This is a play with formal or informal rules that players must abide by. Participation in a game may be for physical fitness, fun, relaxation, leisure, prestige, recognition, status, or a combination of these motives among others. A game may be competitively or non-competitively played, where losing or winning could be due to skill, strategy, or luck factors or a combination of two or all of these (Ituh, 1999). The games covered in this research may be categorized into verbal, physical or mental games while others combine either two or all of these three aspects.
kinetics/dynamics: the science that studies the action of a force in producing movements. These two terms are used synonymously.

modern games: These are games of non-African origin. That is, those introduced into Africa from outside the continent and whose origin therefore cannot be traced to the African traditional culture.

spinning period: This is the time taken by a player in the *mbirũri* (cone) game from the moment the cone is set into a spin to the end of the spin. An unsuccessful attempt to put it into a spin constitutes a spinning period but whose duration would be less than about four seconds.

traditional games: Contrary to the aforementioned meaning of the modern games, traditional games in this study refer to all indigenous, recreational and training exercises, which were in existence in the day to day lifes of Mount Kenya ethnic communities in pre-colonial era. Traditional or indigenous games were purposefully and deliberately encouraged for they enhanced the desired learning as explained in sections 1.1, 2.2 and elsewhere in subsequent chapters.
CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1: Introduction

In this chapter, available literature from related research works is examined and concisely presented. The chapter opens with an analysis of the relationship between peoples' culture and their forms of games. Several examples in illustration to this relationship are offered drawn from past and present communities of different parts of the world. Some literature on traditional games from different parts of Africa as well as from other parts of the world is then analysed under various sub-headings. Special attention is given to traditional games of China owing to the exemplary effort made there in preserving and promoting Chinese traditional games through both educational and social fora. Granted the close functional relationship between traditional games and dances amongst the ethnic communities, an analysis of traditional dances and their varied role in indigenous culture is then made. The chapter finally closes with a highlight of some classifications of traditional games of Africa by different authors.

2.2: Relationship Between Peoples' Culture and Their Games.

Culture as a concept refers to the predispositions that underlie behaviour or its results such as, thoughts, attitudes, beliefs, values, norms, languages, verbal or non-verbal signs of communication and so on (Luschen, in Loy et al., 1981).
According to Luschen, anthropologists go a step further and hold a broader view of culture by giving more attention to the material results of human behaviour such as their arts, tools, machines, fetishes and so on as important components or elements of that group’s culture. Therefore, although the relationship between a people’s culture and their games may not seem so obvious, it is rather easy to show how strong this relationship is by applying this definition (Luschen, in Loy et al, 1981). From this point of view, games in a community are a cultural set of acts as well as a form of verbal and non-verbal communication, where some games are even accompanied by specific tools or equipment for execution.

At the level of the traditional culture, games had a collective, pro-life, functional inclination. They enhanced the acquisition of skills required for all round maintenance of life for everyone. Thus Loy et al., (1981), Kenyatta (1992) and many other writers in anthropology, whose focus is on different communities of the world contend that, in the traditional cultures, games for children and youth enhanced the acquisition and practice of skills required for the gradual growth to adult life. For the young men of the society, they enhanced warfare and/ or work related skills necessary for communal survival. However, for both the young and the old, they were an important means of recreation.

Siedentop (1972) quotes Stumpt Hendrickson to illustrate the diverse yet intricately interwoven, functional roles played by games across the cultural
history of man. For example, Siedentop cites the case of the Ifuga community of Philippines who used wrestling to settle land disputes. The land owners or the champion wrestlers appointed by them would meet and resolve the dispute through a physical combat. The belief here was that, the ancestral spirits knew which of the two parties was offended and would make that party win the contest. Certainly, the misconception in this belief is obvious. However, the cultural role of wrestling matches in resolving disputes in this community is undeniable despite the injustice involved.

Wrestling also played a significant role in puberty rites among the Pupuka community of the Northern Cook Island, New Zealand. Traditionally, boys graduated to adult status in the tribal society only after a successful contest in a game of wrestling. This required strength, skill and courage to emerge victorious (Siedentop, 1972). The Ibo community of Nigeria also used wrestling games to determine the village hero of an age-group (Achebe, 1977). In his novel, "Things Fall Apart", Chinua Achebe narrates the wrestling contest between two village heroes. In so doing, he depicts the high esteem in which wrestling was regarded by the Ibo community prior to colonial incursion. As Okwonkwo, the novel's main character, threw down Amarinze "the cat" who was the previous champion, he achieved the honour of the village hero and his fame spread from ridge to ridge like bushfire. In that community, strength was upheld in high regard and was considered a vital quality for leadership.
Sage (1974) analyses the works of various anthropologists to portray further, the strong relationship between people’s culture and their games. Hill (1966, in Sage, 1974), on a socio-historical study on three Illinois cultures, found a close relationship between socio-cultural systems and games. Sage also quotes Hye-Kerkdal (1956, in Sage, 1974) to outline the tight relationship between the log races of the Timbira tribe in Brazil and their cultural system.

According to Figler (1981), a Brazilian tribe of Indians called the Yanomamo played a ritualized punching game which was an integral part of the cultural system that determined an adult male’s social status. In this game, the recipients of the blows raised one arm above the head presenting their pectorial muscle as a target. The best man in enduring and delivering most pain from heavy fists would win the game to become the group champion. In this example, it was most probable that, the socio-cultural system of the Yanomamo greatly valued the personal attributes of perseverance and endurance among men in general and in their leaders in particular, hence the social significance of this game.

Among the Kikuyu of Kenya, a racing exercise for boys and a walk for the girls (matuumo) contributed in determining the male leader of an age group (Kenyatta, 1992). This exercise was undertaken by the circumcision initiates shortly prior to the circumcision day. All in one group, they covered a long distance on foot as girls competed in a walk while boys raced towards the sacred fig (múgumo) tree. Each boy threw a wooden spear over the tree upon
reaching it. The winner of the walk among the girls and the race among the boys were regarded in a high esteem by the entire community. The boy outrightly received the role of his age-group leader. Thus, bodily fitness was highly valued among the Kikuyu. The *matuumo* race symbolically signified a fight against one’s spirit of childhood (Kenyatta, 1992). An excellent or successful accomplishment in this exercise therefore implied a defeat of the childhood spirits by the initiates.

Dances for the Kikuyu warriors were social fora for displays of good health and physical fitness. With large rattles (*ciigamba*) strapped just below the knees, the warriors vigorously danced the *kibaata* and *ngurú* dances on special occasions such as when preparing for war, or during initiation ceremonies. These warriors were trained and were required to be physically fit so as to encounter any danger with confidence. “... above all, (the warriors) did their physical exercises which kept them fit for defence or attack... Different age-groups competed ... in dexterity in throwing spears and fencing as well as high and long jumps” (Kenyatta, 1992, p.208).

Nixon and Jewett (1974) as well as Adams (1991), explicitly stress that, past anthropological and historical research has established that, games have been fundamental elements of all cultures throughout the history of the world. They occur as one of the oldest arts in the history of mankind or as old as man himself. In elaboration, these authors are of the consensus that, man owes his
survival throughout the evolutionary ages to his physical fitness. This fitness was deliberately enhanced through a culture that encouraged a lot of physical exercise and games for survival as exemplified by the above cases. This is a characteristic cultural element of man up to date as shown in the following accounts.

According to Luschen (in Loy et al., 1981), games are an expression of the socio-cultural system in which they occur. As an example from the contemporary life, Loy et al., quote Riesmand and Denny (1954, in Loy et al., 1981), to describe how the American football was changed through the American culture from rugby to a completely different game. The new game, unique in its vigour, its hard contact and greater emphasis on every individual's role, is culturally well acceptable by the contemporary American society. This game portrays the basic traits of the American culture, namely, aggressive determination and active participation by all in pursuit of a common goal.

A similar example to illustrate this relationship is depicted by the development of soccer and rugby games. These two games trace their descendency to some winter folk games of Britain's pre-industrial era (Dunning and Sheard, 1979). By the middle age, these were still very informally played. However, over the years, following the advancement of the British culture and that of the entire world in general, soccer in particular has been very highly developed and nurtured by all world states (Bangsbo, 1993). Millions of dollars are spent
annually by every country the world over in an effort to conquer and dominate in the global soccer. Since dominance is a key motive in today's culture, games have enjoyed unprecedented advancements as man uses them to gain dominance over others.

As mentioned earlier, a society's material results of its own behaviour, such as its arts and tools, machines, fetishes and so on are a part of their culture. In the traditional communities all over the world, before the invention of the labour easing machines, all the daily chores were accomplished using rudimentary implements (Singer, 1976). Granted the time and strain involved in their performance, a high energy expenditure was ensured. Besides, during those days, the body was adequately exercised through the social forums of games and dances abundantly available for all within the communal set-ups. Consequently, traditional tribal communities enjoyed an inevitable physical fitness for their survival (Nixon and Jewett, 1974; Adams, 1991). However, the advent of the modern technology has led to the introduction of machines for various purposes to replace human labour. Man has today been apparently freed from all his previously energy consuming activities including games or exercise, walking, washing, and so on. Granted the plentiful of food now available, coupled with the energy conservation through the adoption of labour easing machines, problems of hypokinetism and the related debilitating maladies have inevitably resulted (Casady, 1974; Adams, 1991).
As the health of many people in the contemporary, highly technologised culture becomes devastated by hypokinetic infirmities, some of them have gradually resorted to active physical activity and games as a solution (Nixon and Jewett, 1974; Gilmore, 1981). Games are actively taught in schools, colleges and universities all over the world today, as more and more people join serious jogging, sport and keep-fit clubs for intrinsic gains in order to save their lives. Apparently, physical activity or games retain the status of a panacea to man’s good health and well being in today’s highly technologised culture (Coakley, 1982). It is a means for survival, just as it was in the traditional communities, but only in a different approach.

Additionally, besides being an intrinsic means to good health and physical well being, the contemporary global society also views games as a means to material gains. Various references on sports sociology clearly point out at the role of games today as an income generating occupation (Loy et al., 1981). As full scale commercialism has successfully gripped the games institution, the mass media and political systems have also over the years sought for their own enhancement through games fora as well (Miller and Russell, 1971).

Coakley (1982) in summing up the above analyses says that, from a functional approach, games are a sociocultural institution which has been perpetuated across the human history to the present day due to the importance attached to it
by man. Nothing can ever suppress (or erase) it from existence for it is highly instrumental and intricately interwoven in the peoples' culture.

2.3: Traditional Games in Africa

The history of games in Africa dates as far back as the African race itself. As Adams (1991) puts it, man's successful evolutionary history has greatly been facilitated by his physical fitness acquired through games of various kinds. This holds true for both the African and other races of the world. This tremendous significance of games in the history of man has motivated many scholars to devote a lot of their resources in studying the various traditional cultural elements including games and dances from different communities of the world. Some of the literature on African traditional games availed by these studies is presented in this section.

The ancient Egyptian writings, scriptures, and frescoes (wall paintings made on a wet plaster), bear witness to Adam's aforementioned assertion. These frescoes depict women involvement in gymnastics, swimming, horse back riding, dances and jogging. These exercises were practised using balls made from animal skins stuffed with hay and thread (Mandell, 1984; Abdelrahaman, 1999). These frescoes also show young girls swimming below the water surface to catch unaware aquatic birds. Similar evidence indicates the existence of children's games including long and high jumps as well as the tug-of-war.
As early as 450 BC, Herodotus, the great Greek traveller visited Egypt and described the existence of a combative stick game. In this game, opponents used a metre long piece of stick which they swung with one hand as they wore light helmets to protect their heads. This game is said to have retained its significance as an important form of recreation to present day (Mandell, 1984). An account of a cards game is given by Reefe (1987), explaining their existence in Egypt right from the early times. According to Reefe, modern cards were probably developed in Egypt before diffusing to Europe. Similarly, according to available historical evidence, the ancient Greeks adopted the theory of exercise and sport from the ancient Egyptians to which they made some amendments (Abdelrahaman, 1999).

Games of various types were a characteristic of pre-colonial African culture. These activities had evolved and diffused among the African tribes over the years and were indeed a significant factor that contributed to the communities' survival and evolitional development (Mandell, 1984). Cognisance is necessary of the fact that, these communities existed within an environment that was highly vulnerable to constant calamities predisposed by both man and nature.

"On the one hand, antagonism and raids from the neighbouring communities was a common threat to survival. On the other hand, periodic famines, locust attacks, diseases and floods were rampant
natural catastrophies that unleashed wanton destruction to humans and property” (Wanderi, 1999, pp. 77)

Traditional games were ultimately aimed at instilling appropriate skills, virtues, social cohesion and communal responsibility required for the perpetuation of the society amid the above hardships and calamities (Hall, 1973). By running, swimming, engaging in mock fights and so on, individuals acquired the necessary skills for offensive and defensive purposes in the struggle against various environmental challenges. In other words, participation in these activities helped to promote individual and group adaptation to the natural environment (Mandell, 1984). In order to achieve this, these activities were not participated in by children alone, rather, the youth and adults took part as well; they were meant for the entire community. Although each community had its own regulations governing these social activities, they were a focus of attention for everyone everywhere during the times designated for leisure (Achebe, 1977; Mwaniki, 1980; Kenyatta, 1992). However, generally speaking, these activities were male-dominated which was a reflection of patriarchy in the society (Cheska, 1987).

According to the available literature, both children and adult games from many parts of Africa show a striking, unique similarity. In spite of the geographical distance, several similar games were found among two or more tribes which were at times very far away from each other as exemplified below.
Additionally, according to the following account, the activities engaged in by children were mostly adult role-oriented while those of older persons were predominantly sex specific (Cheska, 1987; Kenyatta, 1992).

Role play games for children were important fora for learning. Young girls aped adult female roles while boys imitated the adult male roles in their respective communities (Thomas, 1966; Kipkorir and Ssennyonga, 1986; Kenyatta, 1992). Various types of hopscotch games were common. In some communities, the hopscotch game was a children’s game but elsewhere such as among the Boloki community of upper Congo River, it was both a childhood and an adult game where men even waged their tools and wives as they gambled in it (Blacking, 1987).

Racing, jumping, climbing, skidding and swimming activities were very common all over Africa among children and youths who had the highest number of activities. The Karamoja youths, Uganda, sitting on stones, tobogganed steep hill slopes at terrific speed. The Shira boys of Tanzania also toboganned using fruits of the *kigaria* tree, which was huge enough to allow a seat to be conveniently curved on it, to be sat on while tobogging steep grass-covered slopes (Blacking, 1987). Kikuyu boys of Kenya also toboganed steep slopes seated on pieces of banana stems (Kenyatta, 1992).
Tops or cones of various types and designs were also played by boys in different parts of Africa. They were a common activity in some parts of Tanzania, as well as in Kenya (Lindblom, 1969; Weule, 1970). The description given by Weule reveals a complete similarity of the Tanzanian cones/tops to those of the Kamba and Kikuyu communities of Kenya (Lindblom, 1969; Leakey, 1977). A peg-top game involving spinning a small object by fingers on a hard surface was also common among both Tanzanian and Kikuyu boys in Kenya (Weule, 1970; Leakey, 1977). The Kamba also performed excellent flips and somersaults as they danced (Senoga-Zake, 1986).

Two forms of ball games were reported to have been played by the Bushmen, Hottentos, and the Nguni communities of South Africa (Blacking, 1987). One of these was played by women as they danced. The other form was played by men and it involved bouncing and catching a ball.

A Nigerian traditional game called *mkpok eto* resembled the children *gukonda* game of the Mount Kenya region described in chapter four. The Nigerian version however, was played by every one in the society, young and old, males and females alike (Ituh, 1999). It was a popular pastime in the evenings after a day’s work or even during warm, moon-lit periods. It was more enjoyable when played by age-mates of both genders. The *mkpok eto* game begun with a leader placing a pile of numerous small sticks in front of him or her as they sat or squat in a circle. These sticks would then be picked up one by one by the leader and
passed them to his right hand neighbour, who in turn did the same, and on to the next one and so on, as they sang a song. The aim was to pass these sticks faster than one's neighbour. This ensured with very fast, synchronized and rhythmic movements of the participants' body parts, such as rotation of heads, hands movements to and forth, swinging, swaying, bending and twisting of the body, as well as the movements of the sticks which all combined to produce a magnificent sight of this game.

One very widely spread game in Africa was the board game which was played by different age groups in different communities all over Africa (Blacking, 1987). In Egypt and West Africa for instance, it was a game for everyone; men, women and children. Men played against men, women amongst themselves and children alike (Parlet, 1999). The Nigeria version of this game was played on a six holed board and was a game for the entire community irrespective of age and gender. In South, Central and East Africa, it was notably a males' game though children often immitated. Among the Meru in Kenya, both the young and old men played it, while in Embu, it was a predominant game for the old men.

Given the board game's wide occurrence in Africa, it is known by many different names in different parts of the continent. In Egypt, for instance, it was known as mancala game, tshuba game in Mozambique, chisolo game in Zambia, mfuha game in Central Kalahari, wari or solo game in some West and
Southen Africa countries, *ajua* game by the Luo of Kenya, *ndia rûnwe* game by the Kikuyu of Kenya, and *ùthi* game by the Embu and Meru communities of Kenya as well as *bao* by a number of other communities (Adamson, 1967; Blacking, 1987; Reefe, 1987).

Numerous differences in the versions of this game in terms of its rules of play and board designs from one region in Africa to the other have been documented (Blacking, 1987). Just to mention one example, to win a round in the *ùthi* game described in this study work, one had to drop the last pebble in an empty hole on his side thereby collecting all pebbles in his neighbour’s hole opposite to that one. On the contrary, in order to win a round in the above mentioned Nigerian version, the last pebble had to drop in a hole which had three other pebbles in it, thereby making four irrespective of the side of the board the hole was. Figure 2.1 shows some of the versions of boards used in this game among some traditional African communities. Adamson (1967), writing on the spread of this game in Kenya contended that:

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"Indeed, it was not a game for primitive minds...many Europeans who tried to play it failed. Pebbles are thrown in turns in the holes and one had to count several moves ahead to add up the right number for the final throw and outwit one’s adversary." (pp. 151)
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A kind of darts game involving aiming some pen-shaped arrows to a target was played in both South Africa as well as among the Embu of Kenya. The Embu
FIGURE 2.1: Some versions of boards used for the board game in Africa.

(Source: Reefe, 1987).
version of this game was called *mvu* and it is explained in details in chapter four. A similar game was played by the Xhosa of South Africa which they called *um-gcuntso* (Van der Merwe and Bressan, 1995: Van der Merwe, 1999). This game was played with numerous small chips cut from a stem of a fleshy plant called *um-pompo*, or with a number of berries of the dwarf-aloe plant. Small pieces of sticks were used to play this game. A player held the stick firmly between the little finger, the third finger and the thumb. By a flick of the little finger, the piece of stick was set into an up and down rotational motion or recoil so as to pierce one of the chips or berries on the ground. The successfully pierced pieces were kept by the player who got them. These were eventually counted to determine the winner.

The Kamba of Kenya had a game which involved aiming two wooden rods held together by a short string to a rolling hoop (Lindblom, 1969). A similar game was played among the Embu of Mount Kenya which is explained in chapter four. The Luo and the Pokomo of Kenya had canoe races in Lake Victoria and on River Tana near Garsen respectively (Adamson, 1967; Fedders and Salvadori, 1979). The Boloki of the Upper Congo River had canoe races as well (Blacking, 1987).

Another game of wide occurrence all over Africa was wrestling. This game is shown by a number of authors to have been well institutionalized and quite
esteemed all over the continent. According to available records, it was abundantly played among the Nubians of Sudan and Egypt (Mazrui, 1987), the Meru of Kenya (explained in chapter four), the Ibo of Nigeria, (Achebe, 1977), the Boloki of Upper Congo River (Blacking, 1987), as well as in parts of Zaire, Zambia, Angola, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Malawi and South Africa (Sigrid, 1987). As highlighted in section 2.2 above, the significance of wrestling games in various parts of the continent was intricately interwoven within the cultural values of the particular communities that performed them.

A stick game similar to the Egyptian one mentioned above was also widespread over the African continent among different communities. Some of these communities were far away from each other yet they had this game commonly. Mature Xhosa boys of South Africa in their teens before circumcision had a game called um-ngeni (or boys' battle) in which sword-like or club-shaped sticks were used by the contestants. Using these sticks, they engaged in some socially approved war simulation fighting games which at times became violent and resulted in serious injuries or even deaths (Van der Merwe, 1999). These boys operated in three groups of associations, namely, junior, middle and senior levels where one's prowess in stick fighting helped him gain promotion from a junior group to a senior one. In these stick games, they fought each other in pairs, or on chosen sides. A similar game in all respects to this one called kigumi was also played by the Meru boys of the Mount Kenya region as detailed in chapter four. In both of these two communities (Xhosa and Meru), this war
simulation game would quite often turn out to be a real war. Tempers flared, injuries occurred, the injured ones or their allies avenged, blood was shed or even deaths occurred. These were unfortunate experiences where what was started as a friendly game turned up to be a real fight. As boys picked alliances for avengeance, everything ended up in urgly scenes.

Stick fights and other forms of simulated war activities were socially accepted forums for preparations to warriorhood as explained in chapter four. The ability to withstand pain as well as good fighting skills were aimed at being acquired through participation in these activities. Similarly, proficiency in stick fighting was also indispensable among the Zulu boys and men for fist or hands fighting was unknown among them (Van der Merwe, 1999). Every Zulu boy carried some sticks with him wherever he went. Occasionally, in pairs, they engaged in mock fights using one stick for shielding or defensive purpose and another one for attacking. The Maasai of Kenya had stick games that they played in similar ways and for the same objective (Saberwal, 1970).

The Xhosa of South Africa polished their skills for the use of a spear by competing as they aimed at a very fast rolling ball (Van der Merwe and Bressan, 1995). A similar game involving spearing of a fast rolling hoop known as nthigâ and nthigû was common among the Embu and Chuka boys of the Mount Kenya region respectively whose details are given in chapter four. The Kamba and the Keiyo-Marakwet of Kenya had this game as well which the latter referred to as
chematiret (Lindblom, 1969; Kipkorir and Ssennyonga, 1986). Among all the above mentioned tribes, this game was used to perfect accuracy in spearing.

An account of a unique activity involving use of slings in throwing spears by warriors in Southern Tanzania has been made (Weule, 1970). This was rather a complicated skill to execute. It required a lot of practice for a spear was not directly held by hand but by a string. When well executed however, the weapon was released at a tremendously great initial velocity. This was because the string helped to lengthen the leverage of the lower arm. This impressive scientific concept applied in this game by the warriors greatly impressed the German anthropologist, Dr. Karl Weule, for their rather impressively unique and meritorious invention.

A traditional game called *oyo* has existed in Nigeria for hundreds of years and has today been developed to the status of a modern, national game (Ituh, 1999). This game was traditionally played most appropriately during dry periods and had therefore no time limit as people would be quite free. It was played by the energetic males of twelve years and above who apparently could afford the abundant expenditure of energy required for it. This game resembles the modern day tenniquoit game in some respects. However, the players chant some words as they throw the objects called *oyo* for others to trap them using ropes in the air. Very high throws are made to avoid easy trapping. Whenever a player's *oyo* is trapped by an opponent team, the former becomes a captive of the latter.
Such a captive can however win his freedom by catching an oyo thrown by his original team mates. Failure to do so, one remains a captive to the end of the game. The best skilled team captures most of the opponent team's members. This game has been developed further today by making a few changes as follows:

a) introduction of a judge or a referee to control the game which was not the case in its traditional version.

b) A second official has also been introduced to keep records of the throws, catches and captives made by each side because these can be used to decide the winning team.

Finally in summary, it can be deduced and noted here from the above discussion that, the games cited served a multi-purpose role in each community. They were a means of polishing the warfare-related skills amongst the warriors. Through them, the up-coming young, mature boys acquired and perfected these skills for their future use as warriors. These activities were also important fora for acquisition and perfection of skills required for the day to day occupational pursuits. For instance, perfect skills in the use of spears, slings, arrows and clubs was necessary in hunting. Game meat or flesh from wild animals was a vital protein supplement in the diet of most African communities. Proficient use of these implements as achieved through these games was thus mandatory for the successful acquisition of this kind of food. Finally, these activities were vital recreational means and leisure pursuits for all.
2.4: **Traditional Games From Rest of the World**

A description of the traditional games from various parts of the world compiled by a sports anthropologist, Professor Georg Kenntner of Institute of Sports and Sports Science, University of Karlsruhe, Germany, under the title, "Sports and Culture," (Kenntner, 1999) highlights the following games among others. This is a descriptive summary of some of the research conducted on traditional games by both himself as well as other authors in different parts of the world.

**Traditional Highland Games of Scotland**

Examples of some of the best developed traditional games in the world today is furnished by the traditional Highland Games of Scotland whose history dates way back to 2000 BC (MacDonald, 1932, in Kenntner, 1999). These games developed and became well formalized by the nineteenth century at which time they were found to have diffused with the immigrants to Canada (Hutchinson, 1929, in Kenntner, 1999). The traditional Highland Games have proliferated to an enormous magnitude from mid-nineteenth century to present day. These include heavy events such as putting the stone, throwing a weight, tossing a caber, as well as numerous musical activities such as dancing and piping among others. The details of some of these activities are highlighted below.

a) **Putting the Stone**

Large boulders straight from the river were traditionally used. The stones varied from around five and a half kilograms to as much as thirteen kilograms from one...
place to the other. The putting performance would be obtained by measuring the distance from the throwing point to the landing mark made by the stone on the ground. Figure 2.2 below shows a participant throwing the stone.

**FIGURE 2.2:** Putting the stone. *(Source: Kenntner, 1999).*
b) Throwing a Weight Over a Bar

A heavy weight of about twenty five kilograms is thrown over a bar as shown in figure 2.3 below. A ring or a chain was attached to this object for the grip. The bar used resembles that of high jump raised between two posts. Each entrant gets three attempts in case of an unsuccessful first and second throws. The contestants take their stance under the bar, swing the weight over their heads and over the bar. It is not very easy to clear the bar in this game at the height of three metres. Yet, like in most other heavy events, this activity seems very simple when performed by an expert thrower. However, given a chance, most people would have difficulties throwing the weight over their heads let alone the three metres high bar. Besides, a poorly made throw may lead to very serious injuries to oneself or to spectators. One champion in the 1972-1974 Scottish Games, Charlie Allan compared this activity to tossing a seven year old child by a grown up man over a double decker bus (Kenntner, 1999).

c) Tossing the Caber

Procter (1984) in the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, describes this as "a Scottish game in which a person throws a pole, (referred to as a caber) into the air and tries to make it land in a particular place". He also says that a caber is "a long wooden pole used in Scotland in games which test skill and strength". According to Kenntner (1999), the weight of the caber varies greatly with an average of about sixty-eight kilograms. It has a length of about three metres with a diameter of about twenty-five (25) centimetres on the
FIGURE 2.3: Throwing the weight over a bar. (Source: Kenntner, 1999.)
wider end to about half of that on the other end.

The officials set the caber with the thinner end to the ground. The competitor then bends down to take its weight on his shoulders, clasping his hands around the lower end as shown in figure 24. The object is to lift the caber off the ground, with its weight still leaning on his shoulders, and then tries to slip his hands underneath it while it is still in its upright position. Then, he runs forwards as fast as he can and then comes to an abrupt halt. He hauls it by the lower end which he is holding, as high into the air as possible. The ultimate aim is to make the caber land on the heavy end and fall over to lie with the thinner end pointing directly in a line away from the thrower. Any deviation from the straight line of throw is penalized with the best straight thrower winning the contest. Sometimes, none of the competitors can toss the caber appropriately. In such a case, pieces are sawn off until it can be thrown. Like the aforementioned stone putting game, this is also a potentially injurious event either to oneself or to spectators especially due to strong winds or when being handled by poor contestants.

The Highland Games are picking up steadily, especially since 1946 with the inauguration of the Scottish Games Association. The highlands games concept has also spread to other parts of the world in all five continents. Wherever
A caber thrower in a ready position. (Source: Kenntner, 1999)
established, the Highland Games overseas develop an adaptation to local activities. For instance, the Canadian Highland Games include a stone carrying competition shown in figure 2.5 below. In this game, a competitor lifts two stones weighing about ninety kilograms each and walks as far as he can. Despite these variations from place to place, a remarkable international interest in these games during the last five decades of the twentieth century was recorded (Kenntner, 1999).

Elsewhere, such as in Turkey, wrestling competitions took place in which two contestants smeared their bodies with oil thus making the grip almost impossible. The Germans in Munich contested in twenty-five kilograms stones throws as well as in fingers pulling contests. In the latter activity, two contestants stood on either side of a table and used one finger to pull each other. The French had a traditional game contest involving lifting of an object weighing two hundred and eighty (280) kilograms shown in figure 2.6. Traditional games among the Mexicans of South America included racing and tree climbing competitions. The latter was done in a unique way using ropes hooked to the tree trunks and held by the climber as shown in figure 2.7. This enabled the climber to ascend or descend the entire height of the tree by stepping on its vertical trunk. This was a tricky activity which required a lot of practice to excel. The Aborigines also had tree climbing competitions (Kenntner, 1999).
FIGURE 2.5: A stones carrying contest in Canadian Highland Games. (Source: Kenntner, 1999).
FIGURE 2.6: Weights lifting competition in France. (Source: Kruizner, 1999).
FIGURE 2.7: Trees climbing in Mexico. *(Source: Kenntner, 1999).*
A traditional game in Hawaii, America involved six men throwing a series of spears to one person in turns who would get hold of all of them in mid-air. This was rather risky to do, especially while on the receiving end. In Japan, a parrying activity where two contestants used some long, pole-sized sticks for offensive and defensive purposes called kenjutsu is also on record (Kenntner, 1999).

In a similar effort to this study, Dunlap (1969) aimed at investigating the indigenous games and dances of the Samoans who are inhabitants of the isolated south western Pacific Ocean islands known as Polynesia. From that study, it was noted that, games were so central in the lives of these inhabitants such that, any one could cancel any engagement at once when a proposal for a games forum was made (Dunlap, 1969). According to that study, large number of traditional games of the Samoans comprised aquatic activities such as swimming, diving, canoeing, sailing, surf-riding, and fishing. Other terrestrial games ranged from simple activities to highly organized ones such as hide and seek, tug-of-war, races, tobogganing, parrying with spears, boxing, wrestling, kicking matches, club fighting, darts throwing, pigeon hunting and dancing. Victorious achievements in games among the Samoans was highly regarded while a defeat was considered to be very shameful. Losers therefore worked very hard to create a better impression at their soonest possible opportunity.
The descriptive analysis of the Samoan traditional games by Dunlap (1969) also included a presentation of the social significance of these games to the individual participants and the entire community as follows:

a) They enhanced warfare skills for the warriors. This contributed effective internal social-political security amongst the Samoans through a strong defence system from external rivalry.

b) The games and dances were an important means of learning for both children and adults. Through various mental games, factual information was acquired and cognitive operations improved accordingly. Important information was also verbally passed over through the Samoan songs and dances while their numerous games were a resourceful means to acquisition of affective and psychomotor domains of knowledge.

c) The Samoan games also had an economic inclination. The various skills acquired such as fishing and pigeon hunting via spearing and netting activities were both recreational as well as a means of obtaining additional food supplements.

d) Finally, the Samoan games and dances had a religious dimension as they were viewed as a sacred interactive means between man and gods. Thus, erotic dances and vigorous games including simulated warfare activities such as clubs fighting were used as forums for religious communication with their gods.
2.5: Formalization of Traditional Games: The Chinese Case

Unlike many other nations, China has a unique and admirable system which promotes both traditional and modern games (Knuttgen et al., 1990). According to Knuttgen et al., traditional games have existed in China for a long time; long before the birth of Christ. However, unlike in many other countries, these traditional games have been deliberately preserved up to the present day. Like African traditional games, those from China were also associated with social-cultural activities such as military training, rituals, sacrifices, medical treatment, or artistic creation. They have therefore played a significant role in the enhancement of individual and communal survival over the generations.

During the Western Zhou Dynasty (1066-771 BC), music and diving were added to the list as a result of the desire for a more healthy living among the people. The Chinese revered their traditional games so much as bona fide means to good health that, Confucius adopted them as part of the study courses in his private school.

According to Knuttgen et al., (1990), some of China’s traditional games activities that have been developed and formalized include athletics, archery, wushu (martial arts) and throwing of darts into a pot or kettle placed at a distance. Others are high jump, long jump, throwing and hauling events, boat racing, ball games, tug of war, chess, weight lifting, kites flying, rowing, ice-skating, swings, swimming, and horse drawn chariot races. Today, there are
also some elaborate rings games as displayed during the performances by the Tianjin Acrobatic Troupe of China that was at Kenyatta University during the Culture week of year 2000.

A deep commitment is today shown in China towards promotion of both traditional and modern games. Consequently, China’s ethnic groups which are over fifty (50) in number are all allowed and facilitated in developing their own favourable traditional games with a view to accommodating regional differences. Knuttgen et al. illustrate this saying:

"Traditional sports are very popular in the vast rural areas and the regions inhabited by the distinct ethnic groups. Traditional sports even have been developed further after being systematized, reformed, and improved. During holidays and festivals, traditional sports demonstrations are held in many places around the (Chinese) republic. By developing modern sports and maintaining (her) traditional sports, China remains one of the world’s most diverse and colourful sports community" (Knutten et al., 1990, pp 38-39).

2.6: **Traditional Dances and Their Varied Roles in Africa**

In any study of traditional games, one cannot discuss them adequately without a mention of traditional dances as these two were intricately and inseparably
intertwined within the tribal lifestyles. In terms of their social significance and occurrence, the distinction between them is even more difficult to discern.

Traditional African communities had a wide variety of dances. Like the traditional games, dances also played an indispensable multi-purpose role within the communities (Achebe, 1977; Kipkorir and Ssennyonga, 1986; Senoga-Zake, 1986; Kenyatta, 1992). For instance, among the Keiyo-Marakwet of Kenya, as well as in many other indigenous African communities, there were many dances and songs to go with for different social occasions and age groups. This wide variety ensured a free verbal and physical expression for everyone.

In a society devoid of any written records of its own traditions as was the case for the indigenous African communities, songs provided a means of recording their traditions and passing them down through the generations. For instance, among the Keiyo-Marakwets, their songs were heavily laden with important historical information (Kipkorir and Ssennyonga, 1986). As is the case elsewhere, all information on clans and events were musically passed in their songs. This was a social-educational purpose or dimension of the dances. The numerous songs sung during wedding and initiation ceremonies contained valuable pieces of advice to counsel the newly wedded couples or initiates respectively on the challenges of their new social roles (Kenyatta, 1992).
Traditional dancing fora also served as social occasions for bringing people together and hence for the enhancement of group cohesion. Through a careful choice of words, important information was skillfully passed in praise of brave warriors, and important elders or in reprimand to some people for misdeeds. This was aimed at instilling harmony within the tribe by enhancing conformity through shaping of people’s behaviour. Writing on dancing activities among the Umbundu community of Angola, Blacking (1987) explains that, dance was totally social, educational and ceremonial serving a vital role in the lives of the Umbundu community. “...nothing (else) can take its place. It is doubtful whether the solidarity of any group of Ovimbundu could be firmly established or long maintained without the dance which satisfied a very deep need within the community” (p.7).

Through traditional dances, individuals and groups expressed their feelings. People danced for leisure to express happiness. Among the Kikuyu, old men and women danced *múcùng’wa* and *gitiiro* respectively for recreational and entertainment purposes. They also danced to rejoice following a good harvest, upon a birth of a child, as well as during initiation and wedding celebrations (Ndeti, 1972; Kenyatta, 1992). Child birth celebration songs among many tribes involved communication on the sex of the baby. Dance was also used to express people’s feelings during moments of grief and sorrow such as when a calamity befell a family.
In South Africa, the Venda chiefs sent Mabepha musical expeditions of *tshikanganga* and *tshigombela* dances to each other to express sympathy when a calamity struck, to salute a newly installed ruler, to ask for tribute or to pay homage (Blacking, 1987). When warriors returned home after a successful raid on a neighboring community, the Embu women and children received them back home in great joy and celebrated. A dance called *kwagia růviiu* was danced in honour of these warriors who were required to rejoicingly display their loot (Mwaniki, 1977). In the same dance, young men who failed to participate in the raid for no good reason were heavily reprimanded by the dancers in public.

Songs and dances also served as a source of motivation. The various agricultural communities had group or communally organized tasks such as clearing a bush, sowing, digging, harvesting or even house building (Kipkorir and Ssennnyonga, 1986; Kenyatta, 1992). A lot of singing with some short intermittent funful dances accompanied the work which was a strong inspiration for all involved. This enabled the workers to focus their mind on the rhythm and words of the song rather than their bodies' feeling of exhaustion. The carefully selected words used psyched up the workers. Similarly, most displays of skill and performance in traditional communities were done amid music and dance. The wrestling contests for instance, among the Boloki of Upper Congo River as well as those of Meru of Kenya explained later, and the Ibo of Nigeria were accompanied by music and dance for motivation to the contestants (Achebe, 1977; Blacking, 1987).
Traditional dances were also a means of achieving physical fitness, good health and general body wellness. Through vigorous rhythmic shaking and twisting of various parts of the body; the head, legs, shoulders, hands and the hips which characterised dances in various communities, such as the Kamba and Luhya of Kenya, the dancers’ body fitness was greatly enhanced. The Kenyan and Tanzanian Maasai performed a lot of vertical jumps on the spot as they danced while "...the Kamba graced their dances with periodic acrobatic feats of flips and somersaults" which led to proper exercise and greatly improved participants’ health and strength (Senoga-Zake, 1986). The kibaata dance by the Embu and Kikuyu warriors greatly enhanced their physical fitness as well (Saberwal, 1970; Kenyatta, 1992). This enhanced their body fitness to enable them cover long distances on foot to and from the raids as well as to successfully tackle the physical challenges of the combat.

Communal displays of beauty by young girls aspiring marriage as well as displays of courage, strength, maturity or simply the displays of dancing skills found their expressions at the public dancing arena. Many young men and women picked future partners through a display of exemplary dancing skills for courtship purpose. Married men and women participated too for sheer display of dancing skills. The Kikuyu, Embu and Chuka warriors in Mount Kenya region used kibaata and ngiro dances to display their fighting skills as they in
pairs, contested in parryng (*kwemana*) activities detailed in chapter four. The *mūmbūro* and *kigumi* dances for the uncircumcised Kikuyu and Meru boys (*ihiī* and *nding'ūri* respectively) were used to make their displays of maturity and readiness for circumcision. Those who failed to participate due to the fear of possible socially sanctioned fights and beatings associated with these two forms of dances could not qualify for circumcision. In other words, this signified cowardise and unreadiliness for initiation to the tribal warrior group through circumcision.

Each tribe had a dance related to prayer. A constant communication with each tribe’s creator was indispensable granted the vulnerability to constant calamities. They danced when praying for rain, for thanks giving, after a satisfactory harvest and so on. The Kamba of Kenya performed the *kelome* dance when the first maize ears gave signs of ripening to show satisfaction to their creator (*Mūlungu*). According to Ndeti (1972), *kelome* was also danced to drive away bad spirits when it was prescribed by a medicineman (*mondo moe*) as a therapy to a disease. In such a situation, the patient participated accompanied by friends and relatives. This dance involved vigorous movement of the body parts including rhythmic up and down spinning of shoulders.

Finally, it is important to note that all dances were multi purpose. As regards the above mentioned functional significance, any dancing occasion served more than one social function. Katzenellenbogen, (1999) emphasises that, up to
present day, wherever traditional dances are performed in any part of Africa, they similarly are multi-purpose. They are a sound manifestation of the rich, deep-rooted cultural heritage and are of practical benefits to the society. Consequently, they have been introduced in various countries' educational programmes under the title of folk dance, ethnic dance, traditional dance, or cultural dance. Several benefits accrue from studying traditional dances. Some of these are, first, learners acquire all domains of knowledge through participation in them. Second, learners get an exposure to their own cultural values which help them to understand and appreciate their cultural backgrounds better. It also enables them to understand others' culture as well.

2.7: Classification of African Traditional Games

Attempts to classify traditional games of Africa into different categories have so far been done as explained below:

2.7.1: Cheska's (1987) Classification

This is the most popular classification which was advanced in Alice Cheska's 1987 study of West African traditional games. Cheska came up with some seven different categories of West African traditional games as follows:

1) Games of physical skills. The outcome of games of this category is determined by the physical and motor skills of the players such as, their
endurance, strength, agility and so on. Four sub-categories of games were identified here:

a) Those dependent on physical skills only for their outcome.
b) Those dependent on physical skills combined with some strategy for their outcome.
c) Those dependent on physical skills combined with rhythmic movements for their outcome.
d) Those dependent on physical skills combined with luck for their outcome.

2) **Games of strategy.** These are the games whose outcome depends on rational choices and decision-making skills of the players. Two sub-categories were identified here:

a) Those dependent on strategy only for their outcome.
b) Those dependent on strategy combined with some luck for their outcome.

3) **Games of chance.** These are games in which guesswork or use of artifacts like dice determine their outcome. Two sub-categories were identified here:

a) Those dependent on guesswork only for their outcome.
b) Those whose outcome is dependent on luck through assigning some value on artifacts.

4) **Games of memory.** These are the games whose outcome depends on the
players' ability to recall or remember some facts as found in verbal games or in some rhythmic games as well as in some games of physical skills.

5) **Rhythm games.** These are the games whose outcome depends on the players' musical and rhythmic ability in combination with their motor, verbal and memory skills.

6) **Simulation games.** In these games, players attempt to copy something or someone. Three sub-categories were identified here:

   a) **Mimicry games** where players copy the actions, sounds and appearance of people, objects or animals within their environment.

   b) **Imitation games** in which people's behaviour is copied with an effort to learn and master it.

   c) **Dramatic play** where players act out situations and try out different roles.

7) **Verbal games.** In these games, players combine memory with their use of words for the outcome. Verbal games are considered particularly important in developing oral skills. This was of indispensable use to traditional societies where writing was non-existent. Finally, it is important to mention that, the above categories are not mutually exclusive for a game may be found to fall into one or two categories (Cheska, 1987).

Van der Merwe and Bressan (1995), in a similar study of the South African Xhosa traditional games used the above Cheska's classification to categorise
their findings. They found that, Cheska’s classification was appropriate for Xhosa games in which they fitted well. They observed however that many of the Xhosa games predominantly fell under the category of the games of physical skills.

It should however be clearly stated that, Cheska’s classification detailed above was an adoption of what had been developed earlier by Robberts and Sutton-Smith (1969). In their descriptive classification, these scholars had attempted to establish a scheme aimed at categorizing traditional games from numerous tribes of the world. Unfortunately, though their effort was highly commendable, its large scale of coverage was an apparent limitation. This is then what gave Alice Cheska’s application of their scheme to her 1987 West African study a lot of merit for it was confined within a smaller, manageable region and hence more informative from an African point of view.

2.7.2: Van der Merwe and Salter’s Classification

Van der Merwe (1999) quoting an earlier study on play patterns among bushmen children, groups traditional games into five categories as follows:

1) Spontaneous play games,
2) Wildlife mimicry games,
3) Domestic role play games,
4) Rhythmic activities, and,
5) Formal activities
CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1: Introduction

In an effort to shed some light on the research methodology adopted in this study, first, some support information is presented at the onset of this chapter. The methodological nitty-gritty is explained in details thereafter.

3.2: Strategy in Historical Research as a Background to Methodology of this Study

The importance of historical research as a critical search of truth dates back to the time of the ancient Greek scholars (Van Dalen and Meyer, 1966). As an example, Van Dalen and Meyer cite Thucydide’s famous historical accounts produced way back in the fifth century before Christ. All along, such writings have been aimed at presenting accurate accounts of the past with a view to understanding the present and aid in the prediction of the future (Van Dalen and Meyer, 1966; Clarke and Clarke, 1984).

In historical research, (such as the current one), facts are collected, examined, selected, verified and classified according to some specific standards through critical analyses. The material or information collected may originate from either a primary or a secondary source (Good, 1963; Van Dalen and Meyer, 1966; Modly, 1970; Travers, 1978; Clarke and Clarke, 1984).
According to the above writers, a source of historical information (as used in this study) is said to be primary if it was in direct contact with the event. A primary source also includes an examination of the actual objects used in the past such as equipment for traditional games when available which aid the researcher by giving a better understanding of the area under investigation. In emphasis to the importance of primary sources, Travers (1978) asserts that, the closer the source of information was to the event, the greater its value. This is because, primary sources give the original (first-hand) information in which only one mind comes between the event and the user (Clarke and Clarke, 1984). Examples of primary sources given by above writers include minutes taken in a meeting, or oral traditions narrated by people who went through them or who eye-witnessed traditional events as they happened. A book written on past events by a person who went through or eye-witnessed them happen is also a primary source. As explained in a later section, most of the data in the current research emanated from primary sources of this kind.

Secondary sources according to the above writers, give second-hand information. That is, they give the information of an event after it has gone through more than one mind (person) before getting to the user. This is the information given by persons who were not present as the event took place and thus were not in direct contact with the reported event, but have obtained the information from primary sources. Examples of the secondary sources are, newspaper articles written from interviews with the on-the-spot observers or a
book, thesis or journals written from interviews with the people who went through past traditional activities or witnessed them take place. These were also used in this study.

Secondary sources (as used in this research) should not be dismissed as not important. Rather, their significance to this research as supported by Clarke and Clarke (1984) was as follows:

1) They gave acquaintance to the researcher with the work already done in the study area.

2) They provided the initial background information related to the area under investigation.

3) They highlighted a number of key primary sources to be examined and thus somehow gave direction to the investigator.

4) They were useful sources of information where the investigator could not obtain the original sources because of their inavailability.

Clarke and Clarke however do caution that, secondary sources of information are only as good as the persons who produced them. Their value is directly proportional to the competency of their author(s), since most of them are nothing else but the author(s)’ interpretation of the primary source. Fortunately, in the current study, most of the information from secondary sources falls under chapters one and two. The information from secondary sources that is included in chapter four was quite minimal compared to the total data presented from
primary sources. This is explained further under sections 3.3.1 and 3.3.2 below and is a major point of strength for this study.

The authenticity, accuracy, or validity of either primary or secondary historical sources is not guaranteed. Thus, historical materials or information like the one used in this research work had to be subjected to rigorous evaluation through two types of criticism: external and internal criticism whose use in this research work is explained in section 3.4 below.

3.3: Data Collection Instruments

In this descriptive research, a number of data collection tools were utilized. These tools complemented each other with a view to making available as much information as possible. In addition to their complementary role, the multiple tools usage in a research work like this one was vital because the tools aided in verifying each other during the data analysis stage. These instruments were selected and prepared for adoption within the guidance of the objectives of this study.

Upon the conception of the research topic and the subsequent outlining of the research questions and objectives, there was need to identify possible sources of required information. In a related research work titled "Embu Historical Texts", Mwaniki (1977) had demonstrated the potency of interviews as an
instrument for obtaining information in historical studies like this one. Similarly, the researcher also adopted interviews as a major instrument for this study. Additionally, since some literature was found to contain bits of the required information, documentary analyses easily presented itself as another tool for use. Finally, for the purpose of soliciting more information from various persons who could not be accessed directly for interviews, a questionnaire was constructed. These three tools were meant to supplement each other in availing similar information. The construction of the questionnaire as well as the interview questions was precisely based on both the research questions and objectives outlined in chapter one to ensure relevance. These questions covered a wide scope in content as recommended by Hart (1976) and as explained in the theoretical framework presented in chapter one.

3.3.1: Data Collection Through Interviews

a) Target Population

In an effort to obtain valid information, the subjects accessed through interviews were at least sixty-four (64) years old in the period 1996 to 1999 when piloting and interviews were conducted (except for some six interviewees who were a bit younger but were accepted for their resourcefulness). These were persons who either participated in the traditional games or saw them as they were done by others during the period between 1940 and 1955. At around that time, despite the general upheavals due to the struggle for independence, traditional
lifestyles were fairly intact as confirmed by these subjects themselves. This was the targeted population for this study who could therefore be most relied upon for valid information as long as they were coherent and comprehensive. They were thus a primary source of more than a half of the total data collected and presented in this study.

The investigator purposively identified the targeted population through friends and colleagues. These people were first made to understand the objectives of this study and hence the kind of interviewees that the investigator was looking for. They thus directed him to potential interviewees whom they knew.

b) Sampling

A nonprobability sampling procedure referred to as sequential sampling (Krathwohl, 1993) was used.

"Sequential sampling allows us to start with a small sample and then continue sampling until some criterion of adequancy is met. Typically, in sequential sampling, an initial sample is taken, and the data are analyzed to see if the needed statistical precision has been obtained or whether a larger sample is needed. If the latter, we obtain additional cases until the desired precision is reached. Sequential sampling ... may ... be used with field samples where the situation is stable enough to allow us return to the field and gather more samples like the first. The study itself must not have caused an increased awareness of the topic,
which might itself lead to changes and thereby bias the results” (Krathwohl, 1993, p.139).

In a nutshell, sequential sampling method was used in this study and involved “... gathering of additional data in successive waves” until some "criterion of adequacy" was met (Krathwohl, 1993, p.140). The criterion of adequacy in this study was the point at which any additional data from subsequent collections in any of the three communities of Mount Kenya region availed no new information. In other words, using this approach, a point was reached when all subsequent interviewees from each of the three tribal communities repeatedly gave the same information. At this point, a criterion of adequacy was confirmed to have been achieved for that community and the exercise would be terminated disregarding the population size. In this case, the termination of data collection exercise was determined by the achievement of this criterion of adequacy irrespective of both the sample and population sizes. According to Krathwohl, sequential sampling method is advantageous for it can save resources but also cautions that, its use “... assumes that, the subjects do not change during the sampling process” (p. 140).

c) **The Pilot Study**

Prior to the commencement of data collection through interviews, the investigator prepared the interview questions based on the research questions
and in close consultation with his supervisors. He also relied heavily on the
guidance and suggestions advanced by the abundantly available literature on
descriptive research methods in designing these questions. The questions so
constructed, were then tested through a pilot study. At the time of piloting and
commencement of the data collection, the area under study was divided into
the following districts: Nyandarua, Kiambu, Murang’a, Nyeri, Kirinyaga, Embu,
and Meru districts. The piloting and data collection were based on these
originally seven districts before their later sub divisions into the current 12
districts shown in appendix A. For piloting purpose, one subject provided
information in each of the following districts: Kiambu, Embu, Kirinyaga and
Meru districts. The piloting session was particularly aimed at testing the
interview questions as well as acquainting the investigator with the intricacies
involved in data collection through interviews. These two aims were perfectly
achieved. Notable ammendments on the interview questions as well as in the
investigator’s interviewing approach were effected following the pilot study.

d) The Interviews

For data collection through interviews, the study area was apportioned on the
basis of its ethnic communities, namely, the Kikuyu (in Kiambu, Nyandarua,
Nyeri, Murang’a and Kirinyaga districts), the Meru (in Meru district) and the
Embu (in Embu district). Through sequential sampling, a total number of thirty
nine (39) interviewees was obtained whose spread throughout the region was as
shown in appendix A. These were either contacted in person by the investigator or through a friend and were given appointments after the requirements of the study were verbally explained to them. Where two or more subjects were obtained from the same neighbourhood, they were all requested to assemble at a central place if possible for the interview. Such group interview sessions as shown in appendix D had two major advantages. The first advantage was that, it was time saving. Secondly, by interviewing a group of persons from the same neighbourhood, who therefore knew each other well, this enhanced the analyses of the information they offered which was done on the spot. In other words, before the commencement of the interview, the researcher gave them time to consult and prepare their presentation. During the interview sessions, the investigator would request them to clarify some information from time to time in order to establish the truth. Thus, they did substantial consultations amongst themselves both prior to and during the interview.

The interview questions were derived from the objectives of this study and were in accordance to theoretical framework provided in chapter one. The interview sessions were made to be as informal as possible. Lengthy sessions were also avoided by use of short breaks in between. This was quite helpful especially where group-interviews were conducted. While interviewing some Meru and Embu subjects, translators were used. These translators were made to understand fully all vital aspects of this research before hand in terms of its objectives. The translator used for Meru interviewees was a graduate Physical
Education teacher while the one used for Embu interviewees was a retired primary school teacher. Interviewees who could communicate in Kiswahili required no translators. During all the interviews, most of the follow-up questions asked by the researcher were based on the responses given by the subjects. Additionally, the investigator used interview sessions to get clarifications on any doubtful information obtained from earlier subjects.

The procedure used in the interviews was adopted from Clarke and Clarke (1984). These sessions were conducted as follows:

1) The investigator first introduced himself as a researcher from Kenyatta University on a study to find out the traditional games that were practised by the tribe of the interviewee(s).

2) The interviewees were then requested to mention all games which were in existence in their ethnic community for:

   i) girls, ii) boys, iii) young women, iv) young men, v) older women, and vi) older men.

3) Going through the list of activities obtained in item number 2 above, the subjects were then requested to give the details of each of them. The investigator guided them as they elaborated on each activity, taking one after the other. The description given for each activity included:

   i) how it was performed,
   ii) when it was performed,
   iii) the number of participants,
iv) the costumes used,
v) the facilities and equipment used,
vi) the significance of that activity to the individual participants,
vii) the significance of that activity to the entire community in general.

The above approach was preferrable for it safeguarded against omissions of any activity or other important information. It also enhanced the recording, analyses and compilation of the collected information. The data obtained through interviews were valuable to the researcher granted that, it emanated from primary sources since only "...one mind comes between the event and the user of the information" (Clarke and Clarke, 1984, pp.79). Additionally, the importance of collecting all the above details is that, "sport (games) as a socio-cultural phenomenon must be studied in (their) contextual setting. How the sport (or a game) is (or was) performed, under what circumstances, who performs it, and who observes it are all of prime importance ..." (Hart, 1976, p.18). In other words, according to Hart, games in a society must be studied in a total cultural context. That is, with a view to gaining the most complete understanding of any one game in a community, all the philosophical details of its how and why must be availed. This was perfectly achieved by the use of the above interview questions. They enabled the researcher to elicit as much information as necessary from the interviewees.
An important characteristic that featured predominantly during the interviews was the demonstration of games for observation by the investigator. These demonstrations were an inevitable outcome of the interview sessions in relation to item number 3 (i) of the above interview questions. In other words, since the aim of the interviews was to obtain information about those games and how they were performed, it was then indispensable that, those interviewees who could, had to demonstrate the games they gave. The investigator was also given a chance to try them out under the interviewees’ guidance whenever possible.

The importance of those demonstrations arises from the purpose and significance of this research work as spelt out in section 1.3 and 1.4 respectively. Vannier and Fait (1975), give a justification for use of demonstrations during the data collection sessions. According to these writers, most of our learning comes through our eyes and ears. For meaningful learning of physical activities, demonstrations of them is indispensable. Should an interviewee be unable to demonstrate, he/she could explain for others to do so. This was precisely what happened in this research work during the interviews.

Additionally, a game discernment criterion was followed to help the investigator determine the acceptable or non-acceptable games. This was necessary in data collection both during the interviews as well as in the documentary analyses. For this purpose, the definition of a game given in section 1.10 was used as the discernment criterion for a game to be acceptable. The criterion was partly based
on Cheska's (1987) scheme highlighted in section 1.5 as the theoretical framework. Specifically, the researcher targeted physical and mental games. These are games that require skill and strategy in performance. However, verbal games which also involved use of mental and physical operations would be acceptable. Any game given by a respondent, interviewer or found in a book which did not meet these features would be ignored.

The interview sessions were tape-recorded. Available costumes and pieces of equipment were also collected. Afterwards, during data analyses, the demonstrations were repeated by the investigator using some children or adults depending on the activity in question. This was meant to help the researcher get a better concept of each game (or the collected data) to enable its analysis and compilation. Some of these activities were then video-recorded for use during the writing of the findings. All these were efforts aimed at helping the investigator come up with a valid documentary record.

3.3.2: Data Collection Through Documentary Analyses

Documentary analyses was another key instrument in this study. Relevant documents at the libraries were studied to obtain the necessary information. The information obtained inevitably was either, from a primary or a secondary source depending on the number of minds or persons it had gone through by way of narration, writing or both before the investigator accessed it. The
various kinds of library sources of data used included, books, journals, public documents, theses, and newspapers.

The significance of documentary analyses as an instrument employed in this research was triple-pronged as supported by Sax (1968) as well as Clark and Clark (1984) as follows:

a) Through documentary analyses, the researcher was able to assess the relationship between his study and other related ones done by some researchers in the past.

b) The information obtained through library research, coupled with the complementary one obtained using the other two instruments, helped the investigator to identify weaknesses and strengths of his study and made amendments accordingly.

c) From the documentary analyses, the researcher obtained a substantial body of data presented in the next chapter, and all of which was very well supported by information from the interviews.

However, suffice it to mention again here that, the game's discernment criterion outlined in section 3.3.1 (d) above was also followed in documentary analyses. Documentary analyses in this study was conducted at the following four major libraries and institutions:

a) Kenyatta University's Moi Library (Nairobi, Kenya),
b) Nairobi University's Jomo Kenyatta Memorial Library (Nairobi, Kenya),

c) University of Minnesota's Wilson Library (Minneapolis, Minnesota, U.S.A.),

d) University of Karlsruhe's (Germany) two libraries as follows:

   i) University's main library (Universitätsbibliothek Karlsruhe),

   ii) University's Institute of Sport and Sport Sciences library

      (Wissenschftliche Bibliotheken, Institut Fuer Sport und Sportwissenschaft),

e) The Nairobi University's Institute of African Studies library.

The bulk of the literature accessed by the researcher from the above libraries originated from either of the following two sources. Some was recorded by the European anthropologists who came to Kenya during the early colonial period. The rest was written by indigenous anthropologists and writers some of whom had seen these activities take place or even participated. Accordingly, the information availed by most of these sources, was based on what the writers directly observed taking place among the traditional ethnic communities of Mount Kenya Region. Hence, these were primary sources of information from which considerable amount of the data presented in the study originated. However, some documents accessed provided secondary information. Fortunately, most of the data from the secondary sources only appears in chapters one and two.
3.3.3: Data collection Through Questionnaires

Some questionnaires were administered to persons knowledgable in the traditional games of Mount Kenya region. The aim here was to solicit authoritative information from relevant sources. These were individuals with outstanding knowledge in the area under study. Most of these were relatively younger than the interviewed persons to have witnessed the actual activities take place. Their knowledge then originated from either a related research work in the past or from other spheres of their lives. Other subjects targetted through questionnaires were those who could have witnessed these activities by virtue of their age but due to personal commitments could not be reached for an interview, thus necessitating the use of a questionnaire. Thus, the questionnaire respondents were purposively selected.

A sample of the letters sent to the questionnaire respondents and of the questionnaires used is shown in appendices B and C respectively. The questions were based on the objectives of this study. This questionnaire was constructed and validated before it was used for data collection in consultation with supervisors. Only 20 persons could be reached who qualified for questionnaire administration. A half of this number never returned their questionnaires, while the information given by the majority of the rest was too scanty to be of much use to the researcher. They wrote too much on traditional dances instead of games. The use of questionnaires therefore ended up not being a significant
source of information in this study. Fortunately, this was not a serious limitation to the research work granted that, all the returned questionnaires which were correctly filled contained the same information that had been obtained from interviews and documentary analyses. The information contained in these questionnaires was therefore utilized in verifying the data obtained from interviews and documentary analyses.

3.4: Information Analyses and Writing of the Findings

After the information was collected through the above mentioned techniques, it was then very carefully examined, selected, verified, compared and classified in accordance with "specific standards". These standards employed were both based on research questions and objectives as well as the guidelines given by Good (1963) and Clarke and Clarke (1984) which serve as an exposition of the required critical examination of descriptive data. These were:

1) A single source may provide with the correct information but other competent and independent sources were required to prove the reality of this information and its objectivity.

2) A similar central fact or information obtained from several independent sources or subjects would be accepted on the bases of its congruency.

3) If witnesses or interviewees contradict each other on a certain point, one of them may be right but both of them might be wrong. In such a case,
additional independent sources are necessary to resolve that contradiction.

Through these guidelines, some information was rejected while most of what had been gathered qualified for adoption. This was made possible by the use of internal and external criticism in the light of the above guidelines. By use of internal criticism, the researcher tried to establish the meaning and accuracy of the statements. In other words, this involved establishment of the meaning of words used in a book, or to establish whether the contents given in a book or an interview are true, humorous, ironic, symbolic, prejudiced or biased. On the other hand, the use of external criticism enabled the researcher to authenticate the sources of information orally given by interviewees, questionnaire respondents or documented. In so doing, the researcher was able to establish if for instance a document was written by the actual person indicated or by a ghost writer, whether the person who is the source of information went through the events or not and so on. These involved thorough analyses of information both in separate bits as well as in comparisons.

Through the above analyses, some information would initially be rejected on the basis of lack of agreement with the rest. However after collection of more information, later sources quite independent of the initial ones would come to its support. So, the rejected information would be reaccepted. The reason for these variations of information was that, most of the games varied from one
place to the other in details though in principle they were the same. When such variations were so pronounced and frequent in occurrence, this necessitated the presentation of such games in two separate versions as they were given. If not so pronounced, the most commonly given version was adopted.

Information from the interviews, documentary analyses and questionnaires was carefully examined through internal and external criticism in order to resolve any contradictions. With a view to avoid omissions and duplications of information, the analysed data was then organized and compiled strictly within the framework of the research questions and the objectives of this study. Where need be, the investigator practically organized the theoretical information given by the subjects into real or actual games which he conducted using children, university students, or even some adults and video-taped them. It was then easier to write them up after establishing their practicability.

Further guidance in the compilation of the findings was availed by video cassettes on traditional games of other parts of the world offered to the investigator at the University of Karlsruhe, Germany. Through constant reference to these video-taped games, the investigator adopted their organizational procedure or format.

Finally, it is vital to clarify that, as much as possible in this research, abundant background information about the study area as well as its people is given. This
is considered an important part of the research findings befitting presentation since its collection, like the rest of the data in this study, was done under the guidance and provision of the theoretical framework and objectives. The background information was obtained from the same sources as the games though the latter was the main focus of this research. The purpose for this background information as explained by Hart (1976) was to shed light to the inevitable questions of the "why" and "how" of the traditional games.
CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.1: Introduction

This chapter opens with a presentation of some background information on the study area and its people. An introductory overview of the traditional games of this region is then given after which, children’s games of low skill organization are presented. These were games that required little or no practice to excel. With a view to enhance the presentation as well as for a better comprehension of these games, they are categorized into two, namely, non-musical and musical games of low skill organization. The chapter also focuses on the more elaborate games of high skill organization and closes with an examination of some war simulation games. Each game is itemized in terms of its participants, facilities and equipment, description of its rules and procedure, its significance both to the participants in particular and to the society in general, as well as the researcher’s comments on it. This is aimed at making the presentation more comprehensive. Finally, the presentation of the findings made below was strictly guided by the research questions and objectives stated in chapter one.

4.2: The Mount Kenya Region and its People.

The people of Mount Kenya region, were traditionally subsistence agricultural communities though they reared some livestock (Cagnolo, 1933; Hall, 1973; Leaky, 1977; Fadiman, 1981; Kenyatta, 1992). However, the former
comprised their predominant economic activity. Given the lifestyle and scant economic activity of the time, these societies were vulnerable to poverty and constant calamities of varying magnitudes and nature. Similar to the rest of the indigenous African communities, this heightened the need for social cohesion and communal responsibility within each tribe. Thus, the significance of various games including the numerous forms of dances was strongly related to this social-economic background. These games and dances had evolved over a long period of time and were principally aimed at instilling and preserving two most important social values within the tribe, namely, group unity and communal responsibility throughout the generations for continued survival (Hall, 1973).

A striking cultural practice among Mount Kenya traditional communities was circumcision and clitoridectomy for boys and girls respectively. This was a mark or a symbol of initiation from childhood to adulthood. During the entire childhood, every child passed through a gradual system of informal education which was meant to prepare him or her socially, psychologically and physically for this highly venerated stage in life, namely circumcision. During every circumcision season, just prior to the circumcision day, all the initiates among the Kikuyu community participated in a rigorous physical competition (matuuomo). This involved a racing and a walking competition among the boys and girls respectively where winners were acknowledged in a very high regard. Throughout Mount Kenya region, upon circumcision, girls qualified for marriage to start their own family units. Boys joined tribal warriors where they
underwent thorough training whose climax among the Embu was the actual participation in a raid to legitimize one's warriorhood (Saberwal, 1970).

Among the Kikuyu, the initiates spent their first three months after healing the circumcision wounds participating in waine dance. (It took about seven to eleven days to heal). During these three months, the initiates did no work as this was considered a convalescence period. They visited each other from ridge to ridge and participated abundantly in waine dances. The pre-circumcision matuumo competition winners (that is, the best overall initiate from both genders) were highly praised in waine dances. This dance served five purposes as follows;

a) It gave the convalescents some moderate exercise which coupled with the abundant walking they did at that time, helped them to recover from the effects of their seven to eleven days of total bed-rest as they healed the wounds.

b) The initiates came from different ridges far away situated from each other. They were all put together for circumcision during which an occasion, some of them met for the first time. Through waine dances, they got to know one another better and strengthened their bonds of interpersonal relationships so necessary among age-group members.

c) Waine dance songs which they sang gave them an opportunity to rehearse essential information on tribal laws and customs which they had learnt.
earlier. This was particularly important granted their new socially achieved status.

d) The final waine dance ceremony was attended by the whole village. It gave them an opportunity to share their joy with their parents, friends and relatives and celebrate for their newly achieved social status. They received the full recognition as adult members of the community on this occasion.

e) Through waine dancing forum as well as its final celebrations, acts of heroineism and heroism were noted and encouraged with outstanding honour.

The Embu boys after circumcision, went back to their fathers’ houses to rest and heal. Soon after healing, their fathers organized for them a three months long feasting period (ikari) in the forest. They all participated in this feast accompanied by their fathers while women kept them well supplied with food. The aim here was to eat, relax and regain strength as this coincided with the initiates’ convalescence period. Intensive guidance was given to the sons by their fathers during these three consecutive months. There was quite some dancing for relaxation that took place as well. The main objective of the ikari activities were generally similar to those of the Kikuyu waine dances mentioned above. Both circumcision and ikari in the Embu community were organized during the dry seasons.
The Meru male initiates joined the gaaru ya nthaka which was the living house for the warriors. Similar learning and counselling activities took place here as mentioned for the Embu and Kikuyu boys above. Before circumcision, Meru boys lived in a juniors' shelter called gaaru ya nding'uri which was important for the purpose of preparation to initiation. Finally, all over Mount Kenya region, it was during this stage of a young male's life as a warrior (mwanake in Kikuyu and Embu, nthaka in Meru) that these young men were expected to indulge in courtship for marriage. In some cases, parents would choose a wife for their son and also help in identifying good young men and encouraged their daughters to befriend them with a view to getting married to them.

4.3: Traditional Games in Mount Kenya Region: An Introductory

Overview

There were many different forms of games and dances within Mount Kenya region for all age groups and both genders. These activities perfectly bore all the characteristics of other African traditional games and dances from various other parts of Kenya and Africa as described in sections 2.3 and 2.6 above respectively. As mentioned in chapter two and also here below, these activities served numerous social roles and were participated in by everyone within the community.
Among Mount Kenya tribes, playfulness was greatly valued for children. The childhood period was generally characterized by an impressive amount of freedom. Children were allowed and expected to be active in their plays most of the day. Although they had no playing arena, they summoned one another at home for games. They spontaneously indulged in activities of their own choice without adult interference provided they were safe and non-injurious to them (Kenyatta, 1992). Non-participation in play was perceived as a sign of laziness and was highly abhorred. In general, the role of games and play in their lives was very well acknowledged. Through playful imitations, children gradually learnt communal ways of life right from an early stage. With some guidance from adults, they gained perfect improvement in these activities with time. The ultimate aim in allowing children’s games was related to the values associated with these games. In other words, games were perceived as a means to children’s and youths’ education, a means to their development and maintenance of strong bodies. These qualities were considered indispensable for childrens’ future role expectations; to be strong mothers in the case of females and strong warriors for the males.

Throughout Mount Kenya region, mature, uncircumcised boys on the one hand, had more physical activities than anyone else in the tribe especially as they approached circumcision. At this age among the Meru, they moved into communal living shelters (gaaru ya nding’uri) and lived on their own in a group. Hence they had more time for play. In any case, all over Mount Kenya
region, boys of this age spent a lot of time outdoor in groups which gave them more access to a variety of games. Games were encouraged among mature boys as they enhanced in them the socially esteemed work related and/or warfare-related skills. These were skills seen as necessary qualities for operations in future lives as male adult members of the society. All over Mount Kenya region, mature male aspirants for circumcision in every village organized themselves into bands under a leader. They participated numerously in unique war-like simulated activities referred to as mūmbūro (Kikuyu), ngiro (Embu) and kīgumi (Meru). These activities were so fiercely conducted that on many occasions, they ended up in terrible fights or among the Meru would result in deaths. Yet as discussed towards the end of this chapter, these activities despite their apparent cruelty, received total social approval.

As girls matured and approached circumcision (clitoridectomy) age on the other hand, they got more domestically confined by their mothers "to learn the ways of women". This was socially found necessary as they were blossoming into adolescence. Unfortunately, this cut down sharply on their participation in games as opposed to their male counterparts. It should also be noted that, unlike during the earlier years of their age, several forces pathetically combined together in discouraging girls of this age from physical activity. A notable factor among others was the tribal social role and expectations for women. From this age onwards, a girl was conditioned to learn to behave like "a well-mannered woman" in the eyes of the tribe. One way of being "a respectable, well-
mannered woman" was to totally abstain from all forms of traditional games except dances, in which they had previously participated freely in the company of boys of their age. Failure to show this abstinence among the Kikuyu community was harshly penalized by getting a terribly abhorred nickname of a tomboy (Wanja kihii).

Unfortunately, the social popularity of traditional games was adversely affected by the advent of Europeans. Africans, through several means of indoctrination were made to believe that, the games they had cherished throughout past generations were unGodly and sinful and were to be subservient to those brought along from the Western world. This unfortunate fallacy led to the demise of the colourful African traditional games most of which are presented in this research work.

4.4: Games of Low Skill Organization

Generally speaking, some children’s activities were rather informal with a high degree of spontaneity and flexibility. The details of such games varied from time to time and from one group to the other according to the imagination and ingenuity of the players (Leakey, 1977). Some of these activities on the one hand, were casually executed making a logical description of them rather impossible. Others on the other hand, were fairly elaborate as presented below. Each game among the latter category is presented under five items, namely, its
participants, facility and equipment, rules and procedure, as well as its significance to the participant(s) and to the society in general. Finally, some comments are given by the researcher on the status of some of the games in Kenya today. However, for some of them, their facility, equipment and description are presented together. As mentioned earlier, games of low skill organization are distinguished in this presentation into two categories namely, musical and non-musical games of low skill organisation.

4.5: Non-musical Games of Low Skill Organization

4.5.1: Role Play Games

Participants:

Young children.

Facility and equipment:

Different types of toys were used depending on the social role being imitated.

Description:

This was a popular activity among children. It only required two or a slightly higher number of playmates and had as many versions as were number of times it was played. One popular version involved some children mimicking cows and others sheep, while others took up the role of children in a home. One of them "became" the "father" and another one the "mother". The "father" took care of his "livestock" while the "mother" cared after her "children". On other occasions, boys would collect beetles and grasshoppers and took care of
them as their "cows" and exchanged them just as their fathers did in real life. Girls carried toy babies on their backs as mothers traditionally did.

Significance:

1) By imitating various adultfolk roles, this gradually enhanced acquisition and practice of skills required in adult life such as taking care of younger children, setting up traps, taking care of livestock, fighting as warriors did and so on. The impact of role play as a learning forum is explained by Kenyatta (1992) saying that, little boys in imitation of the warriors used toy spears and shields, bows and arrows, slings and stones and acquired perfect proficiency in hitting the mark.

2) Through role play, children were socialized and acquired basic communication skills.

3) This was also an important means of recreation for children.

Comments:

In modern day life, role play is facilitated by adults through provision of various types of toys to children. However, even in the absence of commercially acquired toys, children would always come up with their own. Therefore, this game is in existence in various forms and designs to the present day. Role play activities are quite beneficial to young children as they help them aspire for various roles, occupations or professions right from an early age.
4.5.2: Racing Games

Participants:
Young boys and girls together and older boys separately on their own.

Facility and equipment:
No particular facilities nor equipment were used. Rather, races were quite spontaneously participated in at various places such as along road passages or along slopy grounds where participants either competed downhill or uphill.

Description:
Although races of various distances were common among children, these constitute the activities described earlier as hard to explain due to their enormous flexibility and variations from time to time. However, granted their benefits to the participants, as well as their wide occurrence, they would not go unmentioned. Every subject interviewed mentioned about the racing activities but none could give a definite description of them. However, all interviewed subjects contended that, races among children were a daily phenomenon.

Significance:
1) Races contributed to the cardiovascular and musculoskeletal development of the participants.
2) Participants also developed speed due to their racing frequency.
3) Racing activities among children enhanced their socialization and recreation.
Comments:

Races of different kinds are quite common among children to date.

4.5.3: **Hide and Seek Game**

**Participants:**

Young children.

**Facility and equipment:**

Neither was any equipment needed nor was a special facility required other than the home compounds using houses and other homestead facilities as the hiding places. Garden and bushy areas were appropriately used for this game too. Banana grooves, thickets and trees were ideal, natural facilities for hiding when playing this game outdoor.

**Description:**

Children would divide themselves into two groups, each with a membership of about two to six participants. They would agree on which of the two groups was to start searching while the rest went into hiding. The hide-outs would be far away from where the searching opponents were. One of those in hiding would shout, "*kuu*", which was a signal to commence with the search. During the search, one would stealthily change the hide-out to avoid being found. Whenever a searching opponent discovered a hide-out, he would shout, "*ma*". The player whose hide-out was discovered would then join the opponents to pursue the rest. When all were found, then the two groups changed sides.
Significance:

1) The running up and down involved in this game helped in developing children's physical fitness.

2) This was an important activity for socialization and enjoyment.

3) The ability to choose a convenient hide-out as well as the ability to conduct a keen search required a careful and a serious thought. Personal manoeuvres in making stealth movements to avoid being discovered was also vital in this game. As mentioned elsewhere in this study, children's activities enhanced gradual acquisition of adult-role related skills. As these boys were in future to become the tribal warriors, this game then offered preliminary lessons in such skills to be made use of in one's future in manoeuvring themselves within tricky situations while looking for an enemy or hiding from one. Occasional searches for animals, wild or domesticated was also enhanced through this game.

Comments:

This game remains very popular among children up to date. The last significance given above may not be applicable in modern days but the first two retain their value.

4.5.4: Spinning the Berry (Peg Top) Game

Participants:

Young children.
Facility, equipment and description:

A hard ground surface or an earth floor of a traditional house was a good facility. A dry hide could also be used. Some little berries, the size of a maize seed or slightly larger, and a small pointed stick, slightly longer than a matchstick were used as the equipment. The berry was pierced through at its middle using the sharp end of the stick, from one side to come out through the other as shown in figure 4.1. The pointed end of the stick underneath the berry was the stand while the top, broader end served as the grip. Each player made his or her own peg-top for these were quite easy to make. Two spinning approaches were common. One of them which was easier to execute involved holding the grip between the thumb and the forefinger with both the palm and the sharp end of the stick pointing down.

**Alternative Approach**

The second or alternative approach was more complicated to execute than the above one. It involved holding the stick at the pointed end (still pointing down) between the thumb and the forefinger, with the palm facing up. This was more difficult to execute granted the pointed end is not in contact with the hard spinning surface. Which ever approach was preferred, all participants spun their peg tops simultaneously on the hard surface. The one whose peg top spun for the longest period of time won that round. The overall winner was the player who won most rounds.
Significance:

1) It was always a pleasant observation for a mother to discover her young child's ability to spin the peg top. It was a mark of successful growth and development for younger children would not spin one. No wonder, sometimes mothers made them for their young children to test their ability.

FIGURE 4.1: Equipment used for spinning in peg top game.
2) It enhanced a child's manipulative ability of the fingers or the fingers' dexterity.

3) It was also a means of socialization and recreation for the children. Occasionally, a single child performed it alone to improve his or her performance or simply for pleasure even in non-competitive situations.

4) This simple game contributed immensely to a child's mastery of his or her own spinning ability, hence development of a positive self-concept.

Comments:

Some commercial peg tops are available today for this game which is a little played here and there.

4.5.5: Gûkonda (Puzzle) Game

Participants:

Young boys and girls in a group of about two to four.

Facility and equipment:

A flat ground with plenty of loose soil, a maize seed, or a bean seed or even an equivalent sized pebble or berry.

Description:

One child heaps a mould of soil to a height of about fifteen centimetres and thirty centimetres in length. Then, a berry, a pebble, or the maize/bean seed is taken in the left hand. In a disguised movement, an impression is made that the object is transferred to the right hand.
A handful of soil is then picked from one end of the mould and it is put down on the ground as a little mould by itself. This is continuously repeated until the originally big mould is divided into a series of small handful ones. Meanwhile, as this is done, the little pebble or seed is secretly buried in one of these miniature moulds in such a way that no one detects this act. Then, the playmates had to make a guess in identifying the mould in which the little item was hidden.

Whoever makes a correct guess, he or she wins a score and gets the chance to hide the seed for the rest. If no one makes a correct guess, the one who had hidden the berry gets a point and they repeat the game while he buries the seed for the second, or even to a third time if no one makes the right guess. Each child kept a count of the number of his or her scores by adding a stick to a pile by his or her side. A score represented the number of times he or she had the chance to hide the object and no one got it, and hence doing it a consecutive time.

Significance:
1) The counting of the number of sticks in one's pile in determining the winner enhanced their counting ability.
2) This game was an important means of socialization and recreation for children. However, no social significance was attached to it.

Comments:
Less pronounced guess work games abound among children to the present day. However, the original *gïkönda* game as such has declined over the years.
4.5.6: **Swinging Games**

**Participants:**
Older boys and girls.

**Facility, equipment and description:**
This was an outdoor activity. Ropes would be tied onto the branches of two adjacent trees for use as a swing. Alternatively, when out in the forest grazing and/or collecting firewood, boys and girls respectively would use the numerous occurring climbing liana and firm, flexible twigs to swing. The liana found hanging between two trees was used for swinging. Where liana and twigs were found hanging vertically, they would get a firm grip on them well above their heads, and swing holding them by the hands and bending their legs to avoid touching the ground during the swing. On most occasions, they paired so that they swung in turns as one pushed his or her partner to facilitate a wide, forceful and a more enjoyable swing. Like many other games under this category, this activity was rather casually engaged in and was totally flexible according to the available swinging opportunities. This is why the above three items (facility, equipment and description) are analysed here under a common paragraph. Nevertheless, swinging activities required physical skill and strategy to excel. In other words, to generate enough force when alone without a partner to give a push, this required some technique or strategy for self-propulsion. Besides, even when a partner was involved, an excellently executed swing would require strong trunk and hands as well as good courage for a stiff, firm grip to remain well in position as the swing moves high back and forth under one's weight. On a sloping ground, a swing could haul the performer to a height.
of over thirty metres or even more above the ground over the steep side. This would not be possible for a weakling to endure.

Significance:

1) Through swinging activity, participants recreated and socialized.

2) Participants mastered the phobia of motion while airborne.

3) Over the time, an impressive amount of courage as well as strategy to haul oneself successfully were attained. This was an important step towards development of a positive self-concept.

4) Swinging forwards and backwards to great heights helped participants to master acrophobia (fear of height).

Comments:

Swings are a common means of relaxation for children to present day. These are provided both at schools as well as at various recreational resorts especially in towns. However, children are known to improvise their own swings of different versions and designs.

4.5.7: Blowing Game

Participants:

Young children.

Equipment:

A hollow, small piece of stick and a light small, round seed or a fruit of about one and a half to two centimetres in diameter were used. The stick would be slit four times on one end and the portions between the slits are bent sideways.
to form a kind of a funnel. The size of the fruit or seed used would be proportional to the size of the funnel so as to fit on it.

**Description:**

Each participant obtained her or his own equipment for the game. The seed/fruit would be placed on the funnelled end. Then, holding the stick vertically with the funnel end to the top, the player’s head would be tilted backwards to face up as the other end of the stick is placed in the mouth. By blowing through the hollow stick, the seed/fruit would be raised up in the air above the funnel. The height to which the fruit or seed was raised above the funnel obviously depended on the individual player’s proficiency. Good player’s would raise it as high as twenty centimetres above the funnel, yet managed to have it controlled slowly back onto the funnel. Competition was based on both the height to which the fruit/seed could be blown as well as their aesthetic ability to hold it still at varying positions above the funnel.

**Significance**

1) A child’s ability to make an appropriate blowing funnel for his game was itself a hallmark in his/her growth and development. To the parents and older members of the community, this was a pleasant feedback and a demonstration of proper development in a child’s psychomotor ability.

2) Children competed in making the best funnels. In so doing, they developed manual dexterity and used this activity as a forum for socialization. Thus, the blowing game contributed to participants’
growth in all the three domains of knowledge, namely, cognitive, affective and psychomotor.

3) This game offered a valuable means of exercising the lungs and the respiratory muscles.

4.6: Musical Games of Low Organization

4.6.1: Introductory Comments

The presentation made below highlights a good proportion of children games which unlike those presented above, were musically performed amid singing and make-believe dancing. These were rather simple activities, but nevertheless vital means of learning, relaxation and socialization for the participants. From the following presentation, three striking observations about these activities are explicit. First, their wording and conceptualizations heavily made use of major elements or components of children’s immediate environment. These included forests, wild animals, rivers, rain and even people. Quite often, they personified the non-human elements of the environment in their games. This personification is not unique to these games alone. Rather, as depicted variously in oral literature, and confirmed by the interviewees, this was a common phenomenon in all traditionally important areas which were used by the society for inculcation of vital knowledge in children. Abundant personification of non-human components of children’s immediate environment occurred in the tribal narratives (telling of stories) as well as in their songs. The second striking feature in the children musical games is that, the various concepts used in them, were based on the realm of their daily, real-life experiences such as fetching
water, basket-weaving, collecting firewood, wedding or funeral ceremonies and so on.

The musical element in the following children’s games gave them a distinctive feature from the non-musical games presented above. This owes to the motivational effect of the music used in raising the tempo of action and steadily maintaining it in these games. Through the use of music, the performers’ minds were diverted from possible concentration on the physical feelings of exhaustion to the ecstasy and euphoria of the game and its enticing beauty of performance.

4.6.2: Mūrūngara (Rain Time) Game

Participants:
Very young children.

Facility:
Outside their mothers’ houses.

Description:
This was a common activity all over Mount Kenya region though known by different names from one place to the other. Children danced and sang joyfully, jumping up and down in the rain. They sang in praise of the rain and its contribution to the growth of the food crops. The actual wordings differed from one place to the other but generally it included exaltations of the rain such as;
SOLOIST: Come oh rain, come oh rain so that we can eat-------”. (Here, a name of a particular food or fruits such as bananas would be mentioned as follows):

SOLOIST: Come oh rain, come oh rain so that we can eat bananas,

GROUP: Come oh rain, come oh rain so that we can eat bananas!

This statement would be repeated over and over as the soloist changes the food types in each statement. When he or she exhausts all that could come to mind, someone else then took over as the soloist.

Significance:

1) Through this activity, children learnt the relationship between food crops and the rain.

2) This was a rather exiting seasonal activity to perform and hence was an important means to relaxation and socialization. However, no particular importance was attached to this activity by the society as such.

4.6.3: Consumable Animals Game

Participants:

A group of four to seven young boys and girls.

Facility and equipment:

No equipment was required except an empty space wide enough for the participants to stand in a circle.
Description:

All participants formed a circle while standing facing its centre. One of them voluntarily started the game as the leader to conduct it. The leader loudly called out names of animals both wild and domesticated. At the mention of an animal consumable in the tribe, everyone was supposed to respond by jumping up on the spot. When non-consumable animal was called out, everyone was supposed to remain still, standing on the spot. This game was conducted as follows;

LEADER: Cows jump!... (All were to respond by making a jump on the spot).
LEADER: Goats jump!... (All were to respond by making a jump on the spot).
LEADER: Dogs jump!... (All were to remain still on the spot).
LEADER: Antelopes jump!.. (All were to respond by making a jump)
LEADER: Monkeys jump!.. (All were to remain still on the spot).

It was great fun as the participants jeered those who erred especially by jumping when they were not supposed to. Everyone’s errors were mentally noted by all. Those with the least or no errors at all were acknowledged as champions.

Significance:

1) This was a vital means of learning the names of animals as well as distinguishing the consumable ones from the non-consumable ones. Parents and older persons enjoyed spectating the children in this game to see the errors they made.

2) The jumping involved was beneficial to their physical fitness including the development of the feet and heart muscles. Children’s reaction-time was
also enhanced granted the fast rate at which one was supposed to receive the message (the name of the animal mentioned) and to respond at once and correctly by a jump or by remaining still.

3) Finally, this game also was a beneficial means of recreation and relaxation for the participants.

Comments:

It is gratifying to note that, today this game is a common activity among children in schools and in out of schools both in the urban and rural settings where it is performed in Kikuyu, Kiswahili or English languages.

4.3.4: Marobo (Hand Movement Test) Game

Participants:

Young boys and girls in a group of about four to ten in number.

Facility and equipment:

Maize-cobs or other similarly small and light objects that were readily available and easy to grasp. For the facility, an open grass-covered ground, large enough to accommodate the above group while seated in a circle was required.

Description:

Maize-cobs or whatever objects to be used, were gathered in a large number by the players. These were then divided equally among themselves. They sat on the ground in a circle, very close to each other, all facing the centre. Each of them placed his or her maize cobs infront and agreed on direction of movement (either, to the right or to the left). In a singing or chanting rhythm, each child
very fast picked one piece of a maize cob or whatever they were using by the right hand, and as fast as possible placed it infront of his or her right-hand side neighbour when the movement was to the right and vice versa. Each of them tried to be as fast as possible in moving the little objects from the space infront of him or her to the front of his or her neighbour with a view to out doing the latter. This went on uninterrupted until one child among them got tired and all objects piled up in a heap infront of her or him. This would be the first loser. They would then redistribute the playing objects and start once again moving the objects to the opposite direction. They continued that way until a number of them withdrew. The champions were noted and acknowledged. The game eventually was terminated when they were all tired and so changed over to something else.

Significance:

1) Through this activity, children’s reaction time was improved

2) Although no social significance was attached to this game as such, parents however did not mind their children’s participation in it for it was very safe and kept them out of mischief.

Comments:

This game is still popular in schools today. Once children are exposed to it, they can then play it during their free time. This would enhance its perpetuation.

4.6.5: Njira No Îno (Direction Seeking) Game

Participants:
Young children in a group of two to five.
Facility and equipment:

No equipment was required. Homestead compounds and nearby paths provided adequate facility.

Description:

All participants formed a queue one behind the other. The one at the back would place his or her hands on the shoulders of the one in front. They all would close their eyes except the one in front whose hands were also free and who acted as the group leader. They all pretended to be blind and were relying on their leader to show them the way along the path. So, they all in a chorus chanted the following question repeatedly as they moved from one point to the other.

GROUP: (in unison) *Njira no ino-ino?* (Is this the way?)

LEADER: *Íi, ino-ino-ino!* (Yes, this is the way!)

This question was structured in a poetical flow of words which made the chanting rather musical and enjoyable to the participants as they repeated it over and over. Eventually, the game came to a climax end of one round when the leader would trick them leading the entire group into a ditch or a bush. They would all stumble or even fall and excitedly break up the chain. The game would then be repeated again under a second leader.
Significance:
This game was an important socialising and recreation forum for children. It nevertheless was of no major social significance to the society. However, it helps participants to appreciate the plight of the blind.

Comments:
This game still appears in primary schools today though not very common.

4.6.6: Njūrūrī (Whirligig Beetle) Game

Participants:
Young children, boys and girls, in a group of about four to ten.

Facility and equipment:
No equipment was required at all. A spacious ground however was needed for the participants’ movements. The bigger the number involved, the larger the space required.

Description:
The whirligig beetles (njūrūrī) are very common in the Mount Kenya region. They are abundantly found in clean, slow flowing streams which abound there, making very swift, whirling movements on the water surface. These are a great fun for children to the present day as they try to catch them, which is very difficult. To start off this singing game, all formed a circle facing its centre, both hands stretched sideways and joined up. The soloist or the leader detached his or her right hand from the neighbour. Facing forwards, one foot infront, he or she pulls the entire group into a single file being at the lead. They all formed an unbroken chain as they trotted forwards as shown in figure 4.2. In this stance,
FIGURE 4.2: Players' stance and formation in njürüri game.
they dragged their feet on the ground as they trotted and sang the following song:

SOLOIST: *Njürūri-i*,
GROUP: *Njürūri*,

SOLOIST: *Ciuma mútitū*.
GROUP: *Njürūri*,

SOLOIST: *Kwenja marima*,
GROUP: *Njürūri*,

SOLOIST: *Magûthika nyina*.
GROUP: *Njürūri*,

SOLOIST: *Njürūri-i*,
GROUP: *Njürūri*.

SOLOIST: (She or he repeats above words over and over but also creatively inserts words of his/her own choice and kept the group trotting and trotting until they were tired).

The soloist's ability to creatively use some interesting words sustained action and performance for a long period of time.

**Significance:**

1) It contributed to their physical fitness.

2) It was an important means of recreation and socialisation.

No special significance was attached to this game by the society.
Comments:
In some rural schools, this activity is carried out to present day.

4.6.7: Wangware (Partridge Bird) Game

Participants: As for the Njurūri game above.

Facility and equipment: As for the Njurūri game above.

Description: Patridge birds are commonly found in the Mount Kenya region though known by different names due to the dialectical differences. This singing game was started in the same way as the Njurūri game described above. The formation was also similar but the song was conducted as follows:

SOLOIST: Wangware, Wangware kururia ciana tūkanyue mai thiririka-ini,
(Mother partridges, lead all your children to the stream to drink some water).

GROUP: (repeats these same words).

These words would be repeated over and over until they got tired and changed to something else.

Significance:
As for Njurūri game above.

Comments:
As for Njurūri game above. These two games as well as the third one explained below would sometimes be performed together in the order presented here.
4.6.8: **Nyambaga Kondo Gakwa (Basket Weaving) Game**

**Participants:**

As in the above two activities.

**Facility and equipment:**

As in the above two activities.

**Description:**

The popularly known *kiondo* (*ciondo* for plural) is a basket woven by hand, and they are sold in curio shops in most towns of Kenya. These are traditional baskets used by women in Mount Kenya region. Women would spend most of their free time weaving these baskets. (*Kondo* is a small basket). It was also common for women to weave them as they walked along the roads. This children’s activity was then an imitation of baskets weaving pattern. The activity would mostly be preceded by the above two activities described under sections 4.6.6 and 4.6.7 although this was not a requirement as such. Therefore, the same formation as for the above two would be maintained. In case they were to start straight away with this one, then they started off as described in the *njürūri* game. As they trotted in a single file forwards, the soloist or the leader conducted the following song:

**Translation**

SOLOIST: *Nyambaga kondo gakwa-i*,

I weave my small basket,

GROUP: *Nyambaga kondo gakwa-i*,

I weave my small basket,

SOLOIST: *Nyambaga kondo gakwa-i*,

I weave my small basket,

GROUP: *Nyambaga kondo gakwa-i*,

I weave my small basket,
These words are repeated over and over as they trotted round and round in the same movement as was in the other two above. Eventually, the formation would change into a circle. They rotated around the peripheries of that circle maintaining the two ended chain as well as the chanting of the above words. Then, the soloist changes the wordings as follows:

**Translation**

**SOLOIST:** *Wone ngiamba-i,*
This is how I weave it;

**GROUP:** *Wone ngiamba-i,*
This is how I weave it,

**SOLOIST:** *Wone ngiamba-i,*
This is how I weave it,

**GROUP:** *Wone ngiamba-i,*
This is how I weave it,

As they changed to these words, the soloist led them into the inner part of the circle in a spirally inwardly, narrowing pattern as shown in figure 4.3 (a). This led to the formation of a cluster of all children at the centre of the circle as shown in figure 4.3 (b).

The soloist then changes the words from weaving to undoing the woven basket and the rest repeat the same words as follows:

**Translation**

**SOLOIST:** *Wone ngiambura-i,*
This is how I undo it,

**GROUP:** *Wone ngiambura-i,*
This is how I undo it,

**SOLOIST:** *Wone ngiambura-i,*
This is how I undo it,

**GROUP:** *Wone ngiambura-i,*
This is how I undo it,

Meanwhile, they demonstrated how to undo their woven basket by trotting backwards, almost retracting their earlier steps with the soloist pulling the rear.
FIGURE 4.3 (a): Players move into a narrowing spiral formation

FIGURE 4.3 (b): Players move into a clustered spiral formation.

FIGURE 4.3 (c): Players move spirally backwards out.
From the cluster shown in figure 4.3 (b), they move backwards to a consistently widening spiral formation as shown in figure 4.3 (c). These two formations of basket weaving and the subsequent one of undoing the woven basket would be repeated over and over until the players got tired.

**Significance:**

Similar to those of *njūrūri* above.

**Comments:**

Similar to those of *njūrūri* above. However, this last activity was more enjoyable for the participants than the first two.

### 4.7: Games of High Skill Organization

**4.7.1: Hiti Mūcī-iini (Hyenas at the Homestead) Game**

**Participants:**

Young boys and girls.

**Facility and equipment:**

No equipment was needed. An extensive open ground was required that could accommodate all the players comfortably.

**Description:**

Children divided themselves into two equal groups. Each group selected its leader whom they referred to as "mother" while all the other members were her "children". A circle of about three metres in diameter was drawn on the ground and was considered as the "home". The two groups stationed themselves as shown in figure 4.4. The "mother" to one of the groups moved...
into the "home". Her children formed a straight queue, side by side, all facing the "home" at a distance of about twenty meters from the "home".

The opponents' group formed their queue in between. The latter was to take the role of the "hyenas" who were to time and catch the "children" on their way "home" to their "mother". The game commenced with the following conversation.

MOTHER: (Standing in the circle or "home") My children!

CHILDREN: (On the queue) Yes, Mother.

```
X X X X X X X X "children"
```

```
X X .X .X .X X X X "hyenas"
```

*FIGURE 4.4: The players' positions at the start of hiti múcii-ini game.*
MOTHER: Come home.

CHILDREN: No, we are afraid of the hyenas on the way near our home.

MOTHER: No, just come over they will not harm you. I will chase them away.

Then, the actual game starts. As "children" run towards home, the hyenas run after them. The "mother" runs out to save them. Consequently, all the children engage in a dodging game. The following rules are observed;

- a child who is touched by a "hyena" drops out of the game.
- a child who is touched by the "mother" is saved and should walk home untouched by the "hyenas".
- meanwhile, the rest of the "children" struggle to get "home" by dodging the "hyenas" in a run.
- the "hyenas" chase them up in order to eliminate as many of them as possible by touching or tapping them.

These dodging and chasing activities continue until all the "children" are either eliminated by the "hyenas" or gone "home" to the safe company of their "mother". The latter group that makes it "home" are the winners. After this, the two groups then changed sides.

**Alternative Description**

There was yet another version to the above game which was referred to as *hunia* (I have tapped you but touch-me-not). This was quite simply organized than the above version. It started rather spontaneously with a child tapping another one and taking off very fast saying "hunia", that is, "I have touched you but you can not do so to me". The one touched runs after the other one
struggling to reciprocate with a tap as well. This involves a lot of running and dodging. Any time the chaser succeeds in making a tap on his/her partner, they would change sides and this continued until they got tired. When three or more children participated, they divided into two groups. The first group runs after members of the second group with the same objective as in above *hiti múcii-ini* game. Once tapped, one withdrew from the game temporarily. When all were tapped, they changed sides.

Significance:

1) This was an important means of relaxation and socialization for children.
2) This game also enhanced cardiovascular and musculoskeletal development.
3) It also enhanced the development of speed, agility, reaction time, and feinting ability.

Comments:

Slight variations of this game occurred from place to the other but they were all similar in principle. Numerous versions of chasing and dodging games among children are quite common even today. These are particulary participated in by young children of pre-primary and lower primary school level in Kenya. They engage in this game both informally when on their own and during lesson time with their teachers. This is rather a gratifying and commendable observation. This is a commonplace activity allowing a wide usage.
4.7.2: Skidding Games

Participants:

Young boys engaged in skidding activities on their own separately from the older ones. The latter's skidding games were more pronounced in terms of quality as well as the frequency of their performances.

Facility and equipment:

No equipment was needed for skidding which was a widespread activity. For the facility, a wet, bare, slippery, earth surface free of stones, sticks or other injurious objects were used. Young boys performed these around the homesteads and along the nearby paths while the older ones performed them away from homes. It was a common activity during the rainy seasons when the grounds were wet since this was the only facility required.

Description:

In order to make a skid, one had first to make an approach in a fast run. The faster one was, the better the skid if the ground was wet enough. So, from a fast run on bare feet, upon reaching the skidding ground, one would make as if to come to an abrupt stop. In an upright position, trunk and hands set at an appropriate position for the maximum balance, the front of the body facing sideways, a straight skid was made on the path along the line of one's movement. A good skid would on average be up to four metres long although notable variations in the lengths of the skids were common. A skid could be executed with the whole sole of the front foot squarely placed on the ground. Alternatively, both feet could be flexed at the ankle, toes pointing upwards, so as to skid on the heels of the feet alone. This was more difficult to execute, and
it was more risky for it was not easy to control one's balance on the heels only. Hence serious falls were quite common.

Another version of skidding that was performed by the big, strong boys involved the use of their knees. By any standards, this was not an easy task to accomplish let alone the risks of injuries involved. Like in above methods of skidding, this one also was approached from a fast run towards the skidding surface. Upon reaching the skidding surface, the boy would suddenly drop onto his knees trying as much as possible to maintain the momentum gathered in the approach. This would give him a skid on his knees over a distance proportional to the approach momentum. It was quite common for performers to be injured by sharp objects on the skidding surfaces such as protruding pieces of sticks which pierced deep into their flesh. Obviously, it goes without saying that, while such accidents resulted in ugly wounds on the soles or heels of their feet in the previously described skidding approaches, the wounds were uglier and a lot more horrible when these objects pierced through a knee in the latter case. Yet, despite the knowledge of such eventualities, nothing whatsoever would keep the boys away from enjoying these performances during the rainy seasons when they were abound. Apparently, the more risky an activity seemed to be, the more appealing it became. Parents were against this game due to the high rates of injuries, though this never stopped boys from participating.

Significance and Comments:

These are jointly analysed under tobogganing games below for they are quite similar.
4.7.3: **Tobogganing Games**

**Participants:**

Big boys

**Facility and equipment:**

In this activity, fresh banana stems were used to slide along steep slopes.

**Description:**

Perched on these stems which were placed one end pointing downslope, in a sitting position, boys slid at a terrific momentum from the top to the bottom of the slope. A participant held firmly on the stem with both hands and kept both feet raised up in the air in front of him. Alternatively, he placed both feet on the same stem in front of him. The latter was more difficult to execute. Like the skidding activities above, tobogganing was also commonly discouraged by parents for it was highly injurious. However, those who mastered the skill perfectly balanced themselves on their equipment and made precarious down slope descends. Given the slipperiness of the banana stems, coupled with their narrow girth, this was not easy to master. The unskilled performers therefore used multiple-branched twigs to sit on, with the broader, stiff end pointed down hill for their descends.

**Significance:**

1) The above two activities were popular means of socialization and relaxation among the boys.

2) Skidding and tobogganing helped to develop balance and flexibility. The latter was achieved as one struggled from side to side, swiveling at different positions to remain upright during the skid or while using the narrow,
slippery banana stems in tobogganing. Quite often, efforts to remain upright were unfruitful resulting in serious falls and injuries.

Comments:
In the modern lifestyle, and especially in the more westernized cultures, various forms of activities which bear a strong resemblance to these two such as sledging on ice are common. Unfortunately, here in Kenya, these are some of the activities that have been left to die away. Besides, they are erroneously looked down upon as childish, naive and worthless. However, they can easily be enhanced and developed in line with the suggestions advanced in chapter six of this study.

4.7.4: Bendiri (Catapults) Game

Participants:
Older boys.

Facility and equipment:
A catapult was made from a small Y-shaped piece of stick to which a piece of a rubber strap was attached at its upper two ends as shown in figure 4.5. At the middle of the rubber strap, a small piece of skin was fastened to improve the grip of the stone or the missile which is set squarely on it. Given its size, it therefore was only used to target at small animals such as rabbits and birds. Children also used it to develop and test their accuracy using stationary objects.

Description:
A right-handed player held the catapult by its handle using the left hand. It is held in an upright position as in the capital letter "Y" at a position just in front
of the player's eyes. An appropriately sized piece of stone is firmly placed to the front of the piece of skin on the rubber strap and is held firmly between the thumb and the forefinger. Meanwhile, as the left hand tightly holds the wooden part in position, the missile is pulled backwards towards the eyes by the right hand (in a right-handed player) and is released when the rubber cord is tightly stretched.

Figure 4.5: A catapult used in bendiri game
Significance and comments: These are discussed below under the slings.

4.7.5: Kigutha (Sling) Game

Participants:
Older boys.

Facility and equipment:
Slings were made using a small, circular mart or piece of skin, approximately ten centimetres in diameter. Two long pieces of string would be firmly tied to each of the two opposite sides of this mart to form a piece of equipment shown in figure 4.6 below.

Description:
A right handed player holds the sling by its grip using the right hand. The end of the other string is held between the thumb and the forefinger. A stone is placed on the mart/skin suspended by the two strings. The player then forcefully rotates the stone within the sling several times in the air to gain momentum. The free end held between the thumb and the forefinger is released by relaxing the thumb. This sends the stone forcefully towards the target.

Significance:

1. Slings and catapults enhanced eye-hand coordination.

2. Through these activities, boys acquired important skills in making their own slings and catapults. This was important knowledge on which future skills in making more complicated tools for every day use was based.

3. These were important means of relaxation and socialization for boys.
a free end which is released

Figure 4.6: A sling used in kigtitha game

a piece of skin on which the stone is placed

the holding end with a provision for the forefinger to improve the grip

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Comments:

With the aim of diversification of the physical skills, slings and catapults can be formalized and adopted into the school curriculum. They are easy to make and to use. Each child can afford his or her own sling or catapult. Slings playing is still common among some school children today.

4.7.6: Mbara (Ring or Hoop Swinging) Game

Participants:

Both big and young girls although boys would try at times.

Facility and equipment:

It was mostly played within the precincts of the homesteads provided there was adequate space for swinging the hoop. The equipment was a wooden ring, (mbara), made from a long flexible twig, bent and tied end to end to form a circular, firm ring of about one metre in diameter as shown in the diagrams below.

Description:

The performer encircles herself with the ring by placing its one side of the circumference on her lower back while the rest of the ring protrudes horizontally forward to the front and sideways as shown in figure 4.7(a). She holds the ring at her sides with both hands on its outer sides. Then, at once she pushes it to one side on her body using both hands as she also concurrently starts to rotate her hips, swinging them with the rotation of the ring. This helps to sustain a horizontally circular motion of the ring on her body. In this way, the
ring is sustained in motion at her lower back for as long a time as she wishes if she is a good performer. Figure 4.7 (a) and (b) show the starting position and the swinging action of the ring respectively.

By the twists of her hips and trunk, coupled with a gradual squatting movement, the ring would then rotationally be pushed upwards to her shoulders and then backwards to the hips giving the onlookers a graceful object of admiration. To add more beauty to her performance, she would then move to the front and backwards as she rotates the ring on her swinging hips with her hands raised horizontally to the ground, and flexed at the elbows at right angles. Using one ring in turns, girls would compete on the longest sustenance of the ring in motion.

Alternatively, each would have her own ring and they would commence the swing all at once. Competition here would be based on the most graceful swing of the hips, the longest sustenance of the ring in motion, as well as the ability to shift the ring from one section of the trunk to the other.

**Alternative Ways of Performance**

Some specially made smaller hoops or rings would be swung on the feet while seated. It would be placed at the ankle region of one foot, and the swinging movements commenced. While still in motion, the other foot would be slipped in and takes over with the swinging. This would continue until the performer’s feet got exhausted. This would also be carried out on the hands both in seated
FIGURE 4.7 (a): The starting position in a mbara (ring) game.

FIGURE 4.7 (b): The swinging action in the mbara (ring) game.
and standing positions. This game had no scoring procedure. Rather, the best performers were judged aesthetically through careful observations.

**Significance:**

1) This game was a source of entertainment for all; parents, participants and others.

2) It aided the participants in developing the sense of kinesthetic and muscular coordination as well as strength.

3) It enhanced the development of a positive self concept among the good performers.

**Comments:**

This game is still very common is lower primary school P.E. lessons where it appears under introductory and compensatory activities.

### 4.7.7: Gymnastics

**Participants:**

Small boys and girls in the same groups as well as big boys. The latter performed separately.

**Facility and equipment:**

No equipment was required. They used flat-grass covered grounds either around the homesteads for the young boys and girls and away from homes for the big boys.

**Description:**

Gymnastic activities performed around Mount Kenya region by children included headstand, handstand, hand-walking, forward rolls, and back arching.
These were done in the same way they are taught in schools today excluding the technical aspects of approach and finish. Some boys were so good in hand-walking that they covered a distance of about twenty metres nonstop. A few boys who were very good would impressively move to and forth on their hands and stand on one hand.

Significance:
1) Participants developed agility, flexibility, and muscular strength from this activities.
2) It was a means of socialization and relaxation.

Comments:
These activities are well contained in today’s educational curriculum. This enhances their perpetuation through time.

4.7.8: High Jump, Long Jump, and Pole Vault

Participants:
Young and big boys and girls separately according to age.

Facility, equipment and description:
Although these activities were very common, their level of organization was rather low with a very high flexibility, yet they were significant enough to qualify for a description under this category. However, suffice it to analyse their facilities, equipment and description as follows:

High Jump:
Ropes attached to trees, poles or even held up by two participants were used for high jumps. In the latter case, they held the rope and jumped in turns. High
objects would also be identified such as a bush, a fence and so on to be jumped over.

**Long Jump:**

A horizontal distance would be marked on the ground for a long jump. Alternatively, objects such as rivers, trenches and so on were common attractions for long jump competitions among big boys and girls.

**Pole Vault:**

For the very high objects whose height was prohibitive for clearance in a high jump, poles were used to compete in clearing them. However, this particular activity was a special preserve for big boys.

**Significance:**

1) The ability to jump over and clear an obstacle, whether by a high jump or a long jump was essential in every day's life for everyone. Situations such as crossing over a river, or similar obstacles were a common occurrence. Besides, for the boys, as they grew to be warriors in future, proficiency in jumps of all kinds was then indispensable and a tremendous advantage to their future operations.

2) Jumps enhanced the development of strong feet muscles for better performances in speed-work.

3) These activities were a popular pastime.

4) The sustained air-borne experience was a great source of pleasure.

5) Pole vaults enhanced the development of strong hand muscles.

6) Pole vaults enabled participants to overcome acrophobia (fear of height).
Comments:

These activities resembled the present day athletic jumps. Hence, they are widespread today all over the country in both formal and informal situations.

4.7.9: Climbing Games

Participants:

Young boys and girls as well as the big boys. The latter did these separately on their own away from homes. Young boys and girls performed their climbs either individually or in groups close or within the homesteads.

Facility, equipment and description:

As in a few previous accounts, suffice it to consider these three items together granted the diverse flexibility of performance of this activity. Climbing activities were as common and varied as were children and boys. In other words, every where that a child or boys were, they were quick in identifying something to climb. At the earlier stage of life, children would climb together some low objects found around their homes. This could be done either individually or in groups. Among the older boys, more complex objects were targeted for climbing purposes. Very tall or high objects such as giant trees, hills, high rock outcrops, as well as cliffs, irrespective of how unsafe they were, these were all targeted for climbing by the big village boys. They achieved quite some success but, it goes without saying that, along with these achievements, a few casualties here and there were common. The more dangerous a feature was, apparently the more attractive it seemed. And indeed, they would make precarious attempts. Most of the time, the objective was to accomplish the task. On their
first few attempts, the question of who accomplished the task was more important than how fast. It would only be later on, after they mastered all the intricacies involved in the accomplishments, that competitions based on efficiency or the performance rate were embarked upon.

Significance and comments:

1) Granted the risks and tough experiences associated with the warriors' operations, climbing experiences and excellence were then a necessity for boys' future lives upon graduation to warriorhood. However, due to the unsafe conditions involved in climbing activities, these were always discouraged by the parents. Older girls avoided climbing activities. This owed to the fact that, this activity was of no significance to female members of the community. Hence, the society looked down upon the big girls found climbing objects. They were jeered and given the socially derogatory nickname of a tomboy (*Wanja kihii*) as explained in section 4.3 above.

2) This was a considerably enjoyable pastime for the boys.

3) It helped participants to overcome acrophobia (the phobia for heights).

Comments:

Climbing activities are a common pastime amongst children up to this day.

**4.7.10: Swimming and Diving**

Participants:

Big boys and sometimes girls.
Facility, equipment and description:

Granted the infrequency and flexibility of these games, suffice to describe these two items together. Although no technical strokes were known, children played and swam in the rivers and in big masses of stagnant water. They kept themselves afloat for short distances by use of crude feet kicks and arm action for propulsion. They splashed water on one another and greatly enjoyed themselves in water as they developed perfect water confidence. Most of the times, girls when participating used a different part of the river away from the boys so as not to expose their nudity. Through such activities, deep water treading, diving and free style swimming skills were proficiently acquired. Some sort of life-saving skills were also practised and acquired.

Among the Embu, mature uncircumcised boys had a unique swimming competition in which a glowing twig would be ferried across a big river without being extinguished by water. This required the use of a single hand and the feet only to propel oneself across a river. The twig was held up in the air by the other hand, protectively enough out of the water. Obviously, with the view to succeed in this activity, one had to be a smooth swimmer as water slashing would certainly extinguish the fire on the twig. The performance became particularly difficult to accomplish when competitions based on speed work were combined with ability to keep the twigs glowing.

Another water activity that was commonly performed by the boys involved all participants submerging their heads into the water while standing in the middle
of the river. Using a verbal or a hand sign, they would all submerge their heads at once, and compete in finding out who could have his or her head under water for the longest period of time. One of them would be chosen to assess their performance.

Significance:

1) Although no social significance was attached to this game, it was nonetheless a vital means for participants’ relaxation.

2) Water safety skills were acquired.

3) Water confidence was also developed although this was rarely necessary in adults’ life except occasionally by the warriors or others in crossing rivers during wet seasons.

Comments:

Various water activities are reflected in the Kenyan educational curriculum. Unfortunately, most schools have no access to swimming pools. However, swimming activities in rivers and large pools are still a common feature in Kenya.

4.7.11: Ùthi (Board ) Game

Participants:

Old men, warriors, boys and sometimes little children depending on the area under consideration for its participants varied from place to place. However, each of these groups played amongst themselves only. That is, children played among themselves, boys the same, as well as old men and warriors. On a few
occasions among some Meru subtribes, old men played among the warriors but this was in exceptional circumstances.

Facility and equipment:
A board with two symmetrical rows of six, eight or ten holes per row as shown in figure 4.8. Alternatively, due to the high regional variations found in this game, sometimes the holes would be dug in the ground. The number of holes per row also was a major regional variation in this game. Nevertheless, the rules are applicable to any board despite its number of holes except the number of berries used.

Whether a wooden board or the holes were dug in the ground, the positioning had to be very well done. This would be in an open space with seats, logs, stones, or simply a good grass-covered-ground for the players to sit on.

Berries, pebbles or hard nuts were used in this game. Their number was proportional to the number of holes in each row. That is, if for instance there were six holes on each side as shown in the diagram, each player started off with eighteen pieces. The players' positions during play are as shown in the figure.

Description:
The playing board is placed longitudinally in front of two players seated facing each other along its sides. The row of holes on each player’s side is considered his territory. The first three holes on each player’s right hand side are filled up, with six stones per hole. This leaves the other three holes empty.
FIGURE 4.8: The two rows of holes on an *ithi* game board and players’ positions during the game.
To play the game, each player picks up all the stones or the nuts in any one of the holes on his territory. Then, starting with the hole next to the one he has just emptied, he drops one stone on each of the other holes proceeding to his partner's side. If the last one falls in an empty hole in his opponent's territory, his chance to play ends there and his partner takes over doing the same from his own side. Whenever any player's last nut drops in a hole with other stones in it, he picks up all those stones in it, and continues dropping them one by one, until the last one drops in an empty hole. In order to obtain a score, the last stone must fall in an empty hole which must be on one's own side. In such a case, this player would collect all the stones in the hole directly opposite on the other player's side or territory and keeps these away as his own scores. If moreover, there were one or more empty holes on his own side immediately next to the empty hole into which he put his last piece, he then proceeds to capture any in his opponent's holes opposite to his empty ones. His mate then takes over with the playing and he commences by picking up all stones from any one hole and proceeds as explained above. At the end of the game, either due to the time factor, or all stones being scored, the winner is determined by counting the stones each of them had scored and kept with him. The more stones one had, the better he was a player.

The strategy in this version lied in, first, a player's ability to carry out mental calculations to know from which hole to pick the stones which will land him in an empty hole on his side. Second, this empty hole must be opposite a hole on his opponent's side with the most stones so that he can win them. A third point
of strategy in this version involved starting off by picking from the hole with the highest number of stones on one's side to ensure they are not scored by the opponent. Acts of dishonesty such as cheating in this game were heavily penalized.

**Significance:**

1) Old men in the society had very few recreational activities, and this game was one of them. It would keep them busy, engrossed in it for hours on end. At times, they would compete and win goats from each other especially among the Embu.

2) This was a very good game for improving participants' cognitive operations.

3) It was also important for relaxation and socialization.

**Comments:**

The warriors as well as young children participated in this game and they too benefitted from it. When played by champions, it attracted many spectators especially when competitors came from different ridges. Spectators were allowed to advise their fans on the best moves to make. It required a lot of practice to excell in making perfect decisions on the best moves to take, and particularly under the pressure of distracting opponents. This game is still played in Embu and Meru regions to date. Unfortunately, it is fast dying away in most of the regions. This game is still very popular at some market places and even in tourist hotels in Kenya. There is a National Association of Board Game in Kenya.
4.7.12: Ndama (Tossing or the Stones) Game

Participants:
A group of two to five girls were the most frequent participants although boys would also try from time to time.

Facility and equipment:
The equipment comprised five small stones each of about two centimetres in diameter. Light, hard coated nuts could also be used. A flat ground covered by a short, soft grass was required. This would have to be large enough to accommodate all players seated in a small circle facing each other.

Description:
The order of play, that is, who was to play first, second, and so on was determined at the start of the game by shouting, "first", "second", and so on.

STEP ONE
In this first stage, all the five stones are tossed into the air by the first player to a height of about one metre feet from the ground. However, the height of this toss varied from one player to the other. No any two stones were supposed to be in contact with each other upon landing. Hence, to ensure this, the tosser intercepts the stones on their descent with her hand; palm of the same hand that made the toss facing downwards. As the falling stones knock on the back of the hand, they spread all over in different landing positions. This was how every player started the game. If any two stones were in contact upon landing, this particular player forfeits her chance to the next player and waits until her chance comes up again. The next player would then start off in this same way. If her
stones spread well on the ground without any two of them being in contact, she then proceeds to step two. However, failure to have a proper spread of the stones makes her forfeit her chance to the next player. There is no way one would ever proceed to the next step if all stones were not properly spread out.

STEP TWO:

2(a): Following a successful toss in the first step, the player then picks on any one stone (preferably one of any two stones that are most closely lying together) to use it for tossing as follows:

2(b): With four stones now spread on the ground, the fifth one which was picked up in 2(a) is tossed up into the air. Using the same hand, one then very fast picks up any of the four stones from the ground, and catches the tossed one in the air before reaching the ground. With two stones now in one hand, one of them is tossed again and the other one placed on the ground very fast to be in time to catch the descending one before it gets to the ground.

2(c): The stone in hand is tossed again to pick a second stone from the ground and be in time to catch the descending one before reaching the ground. Thus, one now will have two stones in hand. One is tossed again and the other one is placed on the ground fast enough to catch the tossed one in the air. This is placed as close to the first one as possible even if to be in contact with each other.
The player does the same with the third and the fourth stones which are placed as close together as possible.

Alternatively, the first two stones may be placed separately on the ground, but each of the third and fourth stones in steps 2(d) and 2(e) are placed next to each of these. Whichever approach, the four stones are now in doubles on the ground. The fifth one is in the hand.

**STEP THREE**

3(a): By tossing the fifth stone into the air, the player then either, scoops one set of two stones from the ground together at ago, or very fast picks them consecutively one by one and be in time to catch the tossed one in the air by the same hand before reaching the ground. This gives her three stones in her hand. She then tosses up any one of the three stones, and places the other two nicely together on the ground, in time to receive the tossed one before it reaches the ground.

3(b): The one stone in hand is tossed up once again and the next two stones scooped or picked one by one from the ground quickly in time to catch the tossed one before it reaches the ground. Once more, three stones are now held in the hand.

3(c): Any one of the three stones in the hand is tossed up in the air and then very fast, any one of the remaining two in hand is placed on the ground, either
together with the first two to make a pile of three or it may be placed on its own away from the first two. Again, this has to be done fast enough to catch the descending one before it reaches the ground. At hand, the player now has two stones.

3(d): One of these two is again tossed and the other one placed quickly onto the ground. If the stone in 3(c) above was placed together with the first two stones, then this one is placed separately. If however, the stone in 3(c) was placed separately, this one is therefore placed together with the pile of the first two stones. This is again done fast enough to catch the descending one before reaching the ground. By this time, the distribution of the five stones is as follows; a pile of three stones placed together on the ground, one stone on its own on the ground, and a fifth stone in hand. The closer the three stones are together, whether in contact or not, the better.

STEP FOUR

4(a): Upon successful execution of the above, the fifth stone is tossed once more and the player may either start by scooping or picking up all the piled three stones in one hand fast enough to catch the tossed one in the air by the same hand before it reaches the ground. Alternatively, she may start by picking up the one placed on its own. This means that, upon catching the tossed one, she will have four stones in her hand in case of the former approach or two in case of the latter. One of them is again tossed up, and very fast places the other
three in the former case, or one in the latter case, on the ground in time to catch the tossed one before reaching the ground.

4(b): Tossing the fifth stone again, she then picks up what she had not picked up in 4(a) above and receives the tossed one in the air before it reaches the ground. She then shall have either four or two stones in her hand as the case may be. She tosses once again and places what she holds together with what she had placed down in 4(a) and catches the tossed one before it reaches the ground. In other words, all the four stones are in a single pile on the ground with the fifth one in her hand. The closer the four stones are to each other on the ground the better.

STEP FIVE

5(a): The player now is at an advanced stage of the game. She makes another toss of the fifth stone and collects, picks or scoops up all four stones from the ground into her hand, fast enough to catch the tossed one in the air before it gets to the ground using the same hand. This would require the toss to be fairly high. If this is successfully done, she then would be holding all the five stones in her hand, just as she was when she started off the game. She therefore scores one point and proceeds to start another round from step one instantly. At the end of this game, the winner is determined by considering the number of scores achieved by everyone. Each score signified a successful completion of a round.

Possible Errors

Step One: Any two or more stones being in contact upon settling after the
initial toss of all five.

**Step Two:** Failure to successfully pick up any one stone from the ground or to catch the tossed one in the air, or both as well as by dropping one or more stones in the process.

**Step Three:** Failure to have the two stones in hand by the time the tossed one is received, or failure to catch the tossed one, or dropping any one or more stones in the process.

**Step Four:** Failure to have either, all three stones or the one stone in hand by the time of receiving the tossed one. Another error here would be failure to catch the tossed stone, or dropping any one or more stones in the process.

**Step Five:** Failure to have all the four stones in hand by the time the tossed one is caught, or failure to catch the tossed one, or dropping one or more stones in the process.

Upon committing an error, the player forfeits her chance to the next player and comes back to play only when her next chance comes up again. When she comes back again, she commences from where she erred.

**Significance:**

1) This game enhanced eye-hand coordination, reaction-time and finger dexterity.

2) Through perfect accomplishments, winners developed positive self concept.

3) This was a popular pastime activity for girls but did not constitute any skills that the community looked upon as essential for communal welfare.
Comments:

This was a very popular game among the girls. It was widespread and has transcended time to be found being played by many girls in quite a number of places today. However, though it may be the same game in principle, its details may vary from one region to the other. Unfortunately, it is not reflected in the educational curriculum.

4.7.13: Kûratha Ndooti (Short Range Darts Marksmanship) Game

Participants:

Big boys approaching circumcision in a group of about three to eight.

Facility and equipment:

Any open ground large enough for about eight participants to occupy seated in a semi-circle. Each of these boys had his own pen-sized dart called *muvu* made from sticks. From a banana stem, about fifty little chips would be obtained each of them measuring about ten by four centimetres which were referred to as *ndooti*. Another smaller piece called *njere* was also obtained from the banana stem for use in this game which resembled a *ndooti* but was smaller in size and was therefore considered special type of *ndooti*.

Description:

Participants sat in a semi-circle each with his own *muvu*. A large heap of about fifty *ndooti* was placed in front of this semi-circle at a distance of about one metre from every boy. These boys had a unique way of tossing the *muvu*. It would be held between the middle and forefingers, with the pointed end directed to the player. By a flick of the thumb, the *muvu* would then be sent flying
forwards in an up and down rotational movement towards the position of the ndooti and njere. The aim was to strike on either the njere or on one ndooti with the sharp end of the mvvu piercing it or at least make a recognizable mark on it, or better still, to have the mvvu stark onto its target. They attempted in turns starting from one end of the semi-circle. Whoever succeeded in striking a ndooti picked it up and kept it to himself as his possession. The one who strikes on the njere becomes the winner of the first round of the game irrespective of the number of ndooti he possesses. Immediately a njere is struck, that round of the game comes to an end but due to continue to the second and the main session.

SECOND SESSION

Here, the player seated to the right hand side of the first round’s winner (njere holder), places all the ndooti he won in front of the group heaping it together with the unclaimed lot. Once again, starting from one end of the semi-circle, each player in turn targets onto the heaped ndooti as before. Whichever ndooti one strikes during the second session, he picks it up and keeps it separately from the possession obtained earlier during the first session. When all the ndooti are finished, the second player to the right of the njere holder returns his lot obtained during the first session. Once more, starting from one side of the semi-circle, attempts are made to possess these ndooti by targeting on them in turns. When all the lot is finished, the third player to the right of the njere holder also returns his first round’s collection. Once more, all the players from one side to the other attempt to possess these ndooti. When his lot has all been picked up, the same procedure is followed until everyone has returned his
collections from the first round. Finally, the *njere* holder himself returns his first round's collection including the *njere* itself. The same procedure as above is repeated until every *ndooti* and the *njere* as well are all picked up. This then marks the end of the game. The over all winner was the player with the highest number of *ndooti*. However, this was not an easy end to get to due to the long period of time it took to get that far.

**Significance:**

1) This game was an important means of recreation and socialization among the boys.

2) It aided development of dexterity of the fingers. However, no particular socially important skills were achieved through this game.

**Comments:**

This would be an easy game for possible development. It is no longer played and hence, it is very little known. Efforts ought to be made to sustain it.

4.7.14: *Migwî na Úta (Bows and Arrows) Game*

**Participants:**

Big boys.

**Facility and equipment:** A bow and a few arrows were required as well as an extensively large open space enough to allow aiming and shooting of the arrows. Woodlands and forests were also used for targeting birds and medium sized animals.
Description:

Wide variations occurred in the boys' forms of practice and competitions in use of bows and arrows. However, in principle they all focussed on the accuracy and distances of their shots. In some places, the target was stationary but else where, it had to be a moving object. In Embu, boys had a special bow and arrows game called *kĩũngũũ* or *kũmorana*. This involved shooting up in the air, thus competing on the highest shots. Upon the best among them being identified, he was supposed to shoot his arrow while the rest targeted on it in space. As it was explained by the interviewees, a proficient sharp-shooter could dismantle the targeted arrow into two parts high in the air. Under normal circumstances, accuracy was more valued in this game than distance. Nevertheless, bows capable of making long distance shots were known to be more potent when handled by accurate persons for hunting, defensive and offensive purposes. Therefore, the two elements of accuracy and distance became complementary.

On other occasions, chunks of banana stems were placed at appropriate distances to serve as shooting targets.

Significance:

1) This game enhanced eye-hand coordination (accuracy).

2) Proficient sharp shooters were noted and well regarded. This gave them confidence and created positive self esteem in them.

3) This game was also a popular means of recreation and socialization among the boys.
4) The art of making a bow and arrows for personal use was greatly valued both at the peers level as well as by the society at large.

5) The above owed to the fact that, proficient use of a bow and arrows was immensely valued in the tribal day to day life. This was a valuable skill which was used in hunting, self defence, as well as in warfare.

Comments:
Today the use of this art has declined. However, bows and arrows are commonly used for security purpose up to date. This game requires an urgent effort to be made in having it revived and be perpetuated into the future for it is facing an imminent death. The best way of achieving this is by having it adopted into the educational curriculum. Learners can make their own bows and arrows for use during practice at schools as well as for competition purposes with a lot of ease. Besides, this skill can be developed easily to the highest levels.

4.7.15: Mbirûri (Cone) Game

Participants:
Big boys.

Facility and equipment:
A soft, grass and stone-free ground is required for the facility. The dimensions of this ground would depend on the number of participants. Thus, places between one house and another in the traditional homesteads as well as the broad pathways were commonly used. The pieces of equipment used included a small wooden cone referred to as mbirûri and a whip (gicúni) shown in figures 4.9 (a) and (b). The cone measures about six centimetres in diameter at the top with a height of about eight centimetres. The whip was made from a piece of
FIGURE 4.9 (a): Starting off in a *mbirũri* game,

FIGURE 4.9 (b): Playing or spinning a *mbirũri*. 
stick, about forty centimetres long and two centimetres wide. To make the whip, pieces of a sisal fibres are tied to the thinner end of the stick to form a whip.

**Description:**

A group of boys would assemble at a conveniently spacious ground each of them with his own cone and a whip. If some did not have these equipment, they could share. To put the cone into motion, the fibres or string is encircled on it three to four times at its top most part. It is then placed sideways with the player holding the handle (stick) of the whip by the right hand if he is a right handed player and vice versa as shown in figure 4.9 (a). Then, in a swift, quick jerking movement of the hand, he forcefully draws the whip forwards and upwards hence, setting the cone into a spinning motion. However, to successfully accomplish this, a lot of practice was required. The spin of the cone is maintained by constantly whipping its side with the whip forcefully. The winner was determined by his ability to move the cone spinning from one point to the other as well as maintaining the spin for the longest period of time.

As boys started off the game, they would agree on some rules depending on the facility in question. For instance, if they were to play along a straight path, they would compete on moving the cones from point A to point B along the path.

Within a homestead, they would move the cones around the houses which were traditionally circular. The most common form of competition however, was on keeping the cones spinning for the longest period of time. Occasionally, two
boys, each with his own whip, in well coordinated exemplary manoeuvres, would jointly play one cone, whipping it in turns.

Significance:

1) This is rather a very exhaustive game. Therefore, it enhanced the players’ cardiovascular fitness.

2) Eye-hand coordination, reaction-time and arm strength were also well developed. Arm strength developed in this game was quite vital to the boys’ future performances in other games meant for senior members of the tribe in which they were to participate in future.

3) To these boys, this game was a great forum for their socialization.

Comments:

As in all other numerous boys’ games which were not injurious to them, parents did not object to their sons’ involvement in this game as it kept them away from mischief. This game is rarely played today and therefore efforts must be made to save it through the education system before it is forgotten and lost forever.

4.7.16: Gúthuga (Clubs Throwing) Game

Participants:

Big boys and warriors.

Equipment and facility:

A wooden club and a spacious open area for throwing were required. A strong, firm piece of stick would also be thrown for a club.
Description:

Several forms of clubs were commonly in use for both offensive and defensive purposes in Mount Kenya Region. The throwing of these clubs was an important art among the warriors where success depended greatly on the strength of the thrower. This was therefore, an art that was used as a way of strength assessment. The Kikuyu used this activity during the pre-circumcision *mutumo* competitions. As mentioned in chapter two, all the male initiates had to participate in this activity by throwing either a club (*njūgūma*) or a stout piece of stick (*ndorothi*) over the fig (*mūgumo*) tree. This was not a fight but its significance was strongly related to the initiates’ transition from boyhood to adulthood as well as their later roles in the community as tribal warriors. The entire village attended this ceremony and it was such a joy for all to see the male initiates throw their implements over the tree successfully.

In Embu, this activity was greatly practised during the *ngiro* performances when the uncircumcised boys used pieces of short, stout sticks for throwing in an activity referred to as *gūthuga*. The sticks were held by the thinner end and forcefully thrown so as to assume an up and downward rotational movement in the air. The Embu and Imenti (Meru) warriors used some heavily reinforced clubs referred to as *njokoma ya mvevo* and *ngacangaca* respectively. These were used as war implements and they required immense strength to be thrown effectively. A *ngacangaca* was a specially prepared implement by the Imenti (Meru) using a fresh piece of an animal skin, a rounded piece of stone measuring approximately twenty centimetres in diameter, a stout Y-shaped
piece of stick of about seventy centimetres in length which were all used to produce a strong club shown in figure 4.10 below. The implement shown in the figure was held and thrown in a similar way to the lighter stick explained earlier. The only notable difference between these two was in their physical sizes as well as in their weights where a ngacangaca was a lot more heavier and hence, required more strength to execute. Granted its weight, it was hence effective. As it made the up and downward motion, the thrower’s aim was to hit the target by the head of this equipment. Thorough practice was necessary for excellent throws.

A story was narrated by one of the interviewees of how one strong Imenti warrior had such an enormously heavy ngacangaca which he proficiently used. As this warrior, in the company of others, approached the enemies in a wooded area, he forcefully hauled his implement towards them. The missile encountered a tree on its path before getting to the enemies and shattered the tree down to pieces. This sent the enemies scrambling for safety as they took off and disappeared instantly out of sight in untold fear.

Significance:

1) This game greatly enhanced arm strength. Strong arms were quite vital for successful living in a male’s life.

2) Eye-hand coordination (accuracy) was a key focus in this activity which was also well enhanced. The combination of these two elements namely, arm strength and accuracy had a direct contribution to one’s excellence as a
FIGURE 4.10: A ngacangaca used by the Imenti of Meru.
tribal warrior as well as in hunting activities and general defensive and offensive purposes.

3) The warriors and other senior members of the society socialized and recreated through this activity.

Comments:
Throwing activities of various kinds are abundantly availed in the Kenyan education system. It is a pity however to note that, no provision is made at all for at least a single activity of the traditional implements to be included. Unless this is done, the above mentioned skills will very soon be extinct.

4.7.17: Nthigû/ Nthûgû (Hoop and Spear) Game

Participants:
2) Big uncircumcised boys in a group of between two and twelve in number.

Facility and equipment:
A soft ground measuring about twelve by twenty-five metres was required as the facility. Figure 4.11(a) shows the various pieces of equipment used in the nthigû game while figure 4.11(b) shows the teams’ positions. The hoop was made from a flexible straight twig bent and tied end to end to form a hoop of about fifty centimetres in diameter. Only one hoop was required irrespective of the number of boys involved. Each player was supposed to have his own long, slender, pointed javelin-like firm stick of the length and weight of an average sized javelin which was used as the spear. In other instances, some wooden rods would be used instead of the spears. These rods measured about six centimetres
in diameter and twenty centimetres long with a weight of about two hundred and fifty grams. These pieces of equipment are shown in figure 4.11 (a).

**Description:**

This was a team game played by two opposing groups. One of these two was the spearing team while the other one was the throwing team. Team membership was determined at the start of the game. Both teams got an equal number of players after which each team then chose its leader. These leaders were important in conducting the game. To start off the game, either of these leaders picked up and grasped a small object in his hand and the other team’s leader was supposed to identify the hand grasping the object. If he guessed right, his team started as the spear throwers while the other one threw the hoop and vice versa. This required a witty leader.

In playing this game, the two teams stood in a long, continuous straight line, each player leaving a space of about two metres between him and the next player. The players of one team were at one end of this line and those of the opponent team on the other end. The two captains or team leaders stood outside the ends of the line as shown in figure 4.11 (b). The leader of the throwing side took the hoop, and standing about twelve metres in front of the line of his team, he would throw or bowl the hoop down along a line in front of his opponents as shown in figure 4.11 (b). As the hoop rolled passing infront of each member of the opposing team, the latter was required to target his spear at it with the object or aim of transfixing it on the spot or "killing" it dead as the expression was used, hence stopping it from further movement.
FIGURE 4.11 (a): Pieces of equipment used in *nthigü* game.
FIGURE 4.11 (b): Teams' positions in nthigü game.
If the hoop rolled untransfixed, the second team got a chance to spear it while being thrown by previous spearers' captain. That is, they changed sides. Any one who successfully transfixed the hoop marked his throwing position. Then the captain who had bowled the now ``killed'' hoop would chose his team's most accurate member to ``raise'' the hoop. In order to do this, the chosen spearer would stand on the same position as the opponent who transfixed the hoop for he had marked that position as mentioned above. The object was to throw his spear into the hoop circle from that position. This was not quite easy and especially if it was transfixed at a distance for it could be invisibly lying flat on the ground. Failure to land the spear into the hoop circled led this player to be taken prisoner (kūhika) by the opposing side and the leader had to send another of his group to try again. If he was unsuccessful as well, he was taken prisoner and so on. If none was successful, they were all taken prisoners and the game ended as they lost.

The prisoners were placed at the extreme end of their captors' line and furthest from their team. They remained there until they were ''rescued'' upon the event of one of their mates being able to ``raise'' the nthigū or the hoop. In such a case, his team got the chance to bowl or throw the hoop which was done by the captain. This leader was supposed to aim at rescueing his player(s) who were held prisoner(s). To achieve this, the captain was supposed to throw the hoop as forcefully as he could so as to make it impossible for the opponents to spear it at all, thereby going past them all to the end of the line where his captured men were lined up. These captives had the right to run forwards towards the
hoop and spear it. Upon a prisoner’s successful spearing of the hoop, he was supposed to run and try to escape. Meanwhile, his captors then had to run after him as his own team members ran to save him. He was freed if any of his team members touched him first and failed to be free when an opponent touched him first. He therefore ran as fast as possible using all tactics to facilitate the former. Whether he got free or not, the game would then continue from there. It would go on until either, one team was entirely captured as prisoners, or they discontinued due to time factor. The two teams carefully noted the number of times they had a successful accomplishment as well as the best players among them.

**Alternative Version**

At other times, instead of using a spear, players would throw the two wooden rods shown in figure 4.11(a). Each player had his own rods. In this version, the bowling or targeting on the hoop by the two teams is performed on rotational basis. When the rods are thrown to the hoop, if they contact it by the string which holds them together, the string encircles itself onto the hoop thus stopping it dead. In such a case, the rods throwing team wins a point. The two teams change roles after every throw. No attempts to revive the hoop are made in this version. Eventually, the team with most points wins the game.

**Significance:**

1) This game was an effective means towards body fitness for the participants.

Through the running, dodging and throws involved, in the first version,
these boys acquired health related fitness which was so vital to them at their age as the upcoming warriors.

2) This activity also enabled boys to acquire and practise the then indispensable spear throwing skills which was so vital for self defence, warfare and hunting purposes.

3) This activity also enhanced socialization which strengthened the group's inter-personal bonds.

4) It gave the group leaders a chance to improve their mental operations at the beginning of the game as well as leadership qualities during the game.

5) It was further, an opportunity for both participants' and spectators' recreation.

6) Those most commonly selected to "raise" the hoop became more and more confident following successful accomplishments. This helped to build their self concept. As Leakey (1977) points out, those boys who showed proficiency in this game were highly regarded by their mates and their praises were the theme of the impromptu songs sang by children and youths.

Comments:

Despite the strong possible contributions to children and youth emanating from participation in this game, it is a pity that, it has not so far been adopted into the educational curriculum. Hence, since it is no longer played, it faces the danger of getting forgotten and lost.
4.7.18: Mûbara (Rolling Hoop) Game

Participants:
Both young and old boys participated but in different groups.

Facility and equipment:
Boys made simple hoops from flexible twigs which were bent and tied up with a string end to end. This hoop resembled that one used in the nthigù (hoop and spear) game described above.

Description:
The hoop would either be rolled in a race along the foot paths simply by pushing it by one hand. This was more or less a racing activity requiring relatively very little skill. Consequently, it was a preserve for the young boys who would race and compete on speedwork as they pushed their hoops infront of them just as the present day’s children roll tyres and wheels. This was a simpler version of mûbara game in contrast to the following version which was a more complicated skill to accomplish.

Alternative Version
This was a more complicated skill than the above one. Using the same hoop as above, older boys tied a string cord anywhere on its circumference. A short piece of stick was attached to the other end of the cord to be used as the handle as shown in the figure 4.12 (a). A lot of practice was required for a player to be able to roll this hoop by the string or cord using the piece of stick as the handle and maintain the propulsion. This was quite a scientifically ingenious skill in which kinetics were impressively utilized in its execution. To start it off, the
hoop is held upright by the left hand for the right handed players while the handle is held by the right hand as shown in figure 4.12 (a). The hoop is then given the initial momentum by a slight push to the front using the left hand. The rest of the propulsion is then accomplished using the handle and the cord only as illustrated in figures 4.12 (b) and (c). The principle employed resembles the pulley used to rotate the wheels of the foot-propelled sewing machines.

After the initial push, the hoop is allowed to roll until its point of cord attachment goes past the perpendicular line made by the intersection of its diameter with its path of motion as shown in figure 4.12 (d). This point of intersection is illustrated as point X in figure 4.12 (d).

In every rotation, when the attachment reaches point Y as shown in the figure, the handle is pulled upwards and forwards in a single jerk. This pulls the cord along a slanting line of force shown in the figure. Given the forward momentum of the hoop, although the pull is exerted in a straight line along the cord, it helps to propell the hoop in its circular motion along its path. Pulling the cord too early before its attachment to the hoop reaches point X would merely result in a physical drag of the hoop forwards thus breaking the propulsion. Pulling it at X would also not be effective for it would result in an upward lift of the hoop along its centre making it fall on one side. Therefore, the right timing must be made to pull the cord at point Y. To ensure an upright position of the hoop during the propulsion by the use of the handle, the cord is alternately pulled from both left and right sides of the hoop.
FIGURE 4.12 (a): A cord and a piece of stick attached to the hoop used in mūbara game held up by a player in a ready position.

FIGURE 4.12 (b) and (c): Propulsion of the mūbara game using a cord.
In the same way as described above, some proficient players progressed to a more advanced skill by propelling the hoop in the air at a stand still. In this case, the cord was used for both suspension and propulsive purposes. This required a lot of practice to execute. Mūbara (hoop) rolling competitions were either in a race, or participants competed in propelling them for the longest period of time in the air without a break. (A detailed analysis of dynamics of corded mūbara game is presented in chapter five).
Significance:

1) Parents encouraged their sons to have a hoop for rolling when sent on an errand for this kept them on a race throughout hence being very fast.

2) The use of a cord and a handle to propel the hoop required dexterity of the hands which was well developed through this game.

3) Through the running involved in this game, participants’ cardiovascular and musculoskeletal development were enhanced.

4) Participants therefore, as a result of 3 above, developed speed given the racing involved. This was quite important granted the high regard that the society had for speed work amongst the males.

5) The corded-hoop (*mūbāra*) game furnished participants with the unique propulsion skill whose execution was a tremendous means of recreation for the boys.

6) Finally, this activity enhanced socialization among the participants.

Comments:

It is a pity that a game of a possible immense value to learners like this one has failed to be propagated by the education system. Granted the ease of making the corded hoop by every child, as well as its possible benefits accrued through participation, there is no justification for its omission from the P.E. syllabus and as a sporting activity. This activity, is still popular among children today but ought to be included in the schools curriculum.
4.7.19: Nkindano/ Nündano (Wrestling) Game

Participants:
Young and big boys.

Facility and equipment:
On a formal occasion it took place at the communal playing ground. However, on informal occasions, it took place anywhere; at home, in the fields when grazing, and so on. At all times, it required a soft ground and hence, dry swamps, sandy river bends, or soft grass covered grounds were commonly used.

Description:
Two players participated in this game simultaneously where the object was to topple-off one's opponent. Upon commencement of the game, the two would approach each other and get a grip. Each of them would try different strategies of throwing the opponent off-balance to the ground. On most occasions, this would not be a very easy task for either to accomplish. The rules were fairly varied from place to the other but they were all based on a similar principle.

Significance:
1) Wrestling enhanced the development of skill and health related fitness components namely, the cardiovascular fitness, strength, stamina, endurance and flexibility.

2) Wrestling competitions whether formally or informally organized helped in determining the strongest young man as strength was highly valued.

3) Wrestling contests were important entertainment for both the participants and spectators.
4) Through wrestling contests, the participants became courageous; a virtue that was greatly valued by the society.

5) Through these competitions, neighbouring villages were brought together which enhanced a wider geographical integration for better survival.

6) Good wrestling skills among the Tigania and Tharaka sub-tribes of Meru signified maturity, hence qualification for circumcision, initiation, and graduation to a tribal warrior. Formal wrestling was very popular among these communities and winners were highly venerated by all and would receive awards in form goats from elders.

Comments:

Formal wrestling was common among the Tharaka and Tigania sub-tribes of the Meru community. In Tigania, it took place amid singing and dancing of the ngūri dance. There were inter-village competitions which took place after harvests. The informal wrestling competitions by young and big boys were a common phenomenon throughout Mount Kenya region, but were of a lesser significance than formal ones. Informal wrestling competitions by big Meru boys (inling ‘ uri) when involving participants from different villages would quite often be so fierce to end up in terrible fights which would have to force tribal warriors' intervention. (Warriors were the circumcised men, either unmarried or married). Unfortunately, despite this game’s popularity, it has been let to disappear for it is no longer played. Efforts to save it should then be made to have it formalized for adoption into the educational curriculum. Some objectives for teaching wrestling in secondary schools are highlighted in the Secondary School Physical Education syllabus (Kenya, Ministry of Education,
1982) although no efforts are ever made to achieve them. Occasionally wrestling competitions are organized at the villages in Western Kenya around Christmas time. A National Wrestling Association is also registered in the country.

4.7.20: *Kwemana (Parrying) Game*

**Participants:**

Big uncircumcised boys and warriors separately.

**Facility and equipment:**

Boys used improvised implements since their game was an imitation of a warriors’ game. The warriors however used the following real war implements; a spear, a sword or a club as well as a shield which are shown in figure 4.13. Sometimes, instead of a shield, a strong, wooden, inwardly curved plank with a handle in the middle for the grip could be used. Boys sometimes hauled maize cobs to each other where recipients protected themselves using large, toy shields. The facility used by boys was any outdoor open space. For the warriors however, either the community dancing arena or among the Meru, the warriors’ living houses (*gaari ya nthaka*) were used.

**Description:**

Two persons stood face to face holding a shield by the left hand in self defence for the right handed players and vice versa. By their other hand, they would hold a spear, a club or a sword. The latter was for attacking. A participating warrior had the freedom to choose the best implement for his own use. One could therefore be found using a sword while his opponent used something else
Figure 4.13: Pieces of equipment used in *kwemana* game.
depending on what one was most comfortable with. This flexibility was important granted that, one would never know what his adversary would be armed with in a real war situation. There was no particular approach that was supposed to be used in this game. Upon the commencement of the game by any two persons, they went on until they got tired. The best person amongst the group was easily noticed and was highly regarded by all.

Significance:

1) Through this game, the participants acquired and practised the skills related to the use of offensive implements such as spears, swords or clubs at close range.

2) This skill also allowed the acquisition and practice of self-defensive skills required in using a shield or similar protective devices.

3) This game enabled categorization of warriors according to their warfare skills proficiency. This was quite vital for warriors took their positions during wars according to their abilities.

4) Proficiency acquired through this skill by warriors gave them confidence, positive self-concept and courage when faced with an enemy.

5) Through it, muscular strength, as well as cardiovascular fitness were developed.

Comments:

This was an activity in which every man was supposed to excell. Participating in this game therefore was an important means to skill development. This motivated the warriors to participate in it as often as possible. By participating in this game, boys who were the up coming warriors gradually acquired the art
and prepared for their future days as warriors. Young children also imitated though their level of skill was barely significant. Old men would also playfully engage in it but in less serious performances. As such, in one way or the other, this was an activity for the males. Fathers especially among the Embu, during the *ikari* feast, greatly encouraged their sons' excellence in this game and serious practices were carried out under their supervision. Renowned warriors all over Mount Kenya region would drill the rest in this game so as to help them improve their skill level. Women around the circumcision age after developing some affection with their male age-mates would attempt this art though this was not socially approved. Most public displays of the warriors' proficiency in this game were accompanied by music and dance from women spectators to motivate the contestants.

Unfortunately, like most other traditional games, this one is faced with extinction as it is no longer performed. Once more, the educational curriculum can very effectively be used to perpetuate this game and save it from imminent death.

### 4.8: War Simulation Games

#### 4.8.1: Introduction:

The activities presented below transcend all the above games in terms of their vigour as well as their socially approved tendency to be injurious. These activities as described below portray a bizarre motive to cause havoc and mayhem under the disguise of youthful dancing and training. Indeed, these were
simulated warfare activities and were a manifestation of the society’s effort to train and drill their warriors to perfection through them. The society viewed these activities as fora for exposure of its future warriors (mature, male circumcision candidates), as well as its current warriors to physical and psychological torture that inflicted into them some feelings similar to those of war. Little wonder then that, beyond the apparent terror depicted in these activities, their execution received immense support from the entire society.

Most outstanding of these activities for their apparent cruelty were the *mibiro*, *ngiro* and *kigumi* performances. These names were used by the three communities of Mount Kenya region, namely, the Kikuyu, Embu and Meru respectively for what was otherwise the same activity. Despite differences in regional names, the motive, conduct and their significance were the same all over. However, some little regional differences amongst these three activities may be discernible, but these may be insignificant. Therefore, suffice it to analyse all these three under one sub-topic as given below. It should also be pointed out here that, these three activities shall not be presented in the conventional approach adopted in other activities presented above. That is, their analyses in terms of their facilities, equipments and description are not made. Hence, only a general description of each is provided. Fortunately, while the effort made in the description of other activities in this study is aimed at their ultimate adoption into the curriculum, may be this is not applicable for these three activities other than teaching them in theory given their unique nature. Therefore, their generalized presentation should suffice.
4.8.2: Mùmbûro, Ngîro and Kîgumi Physical Performances

(a) Mùmbûro Physical Activities

*Mùmbûro* was a combination of a dance, racing, walking, wrestling and parrying activities performed by Kikuyu male circumcision candidates (*ihiï*). Its numerous activities were characteristically spontaneous, unsynchronized and vigorous. The boys’ display of vigour and aggression during its performance gave an impression a fight than a game or a dance. They armed themselves with sword-like implements curved from a light wood, which were offensively held in one hand, shields in the other, and rattles (*ciïgamba*) tied on their feet. When fully dressed-up, the participating boys appeared fierce enough to be on a war mission than on a friendly, social activity. They wore remnants of animal skins left out after the better parts were curved out for bedding and clothing purposes. These remnants or waste pieces, called *mambo* in Kikuyu, were patched up together for use during the *mùmbûro* activities.

These activities were a special preserve for mature Kikuyu boys or circumcision male aspirants about one month before circumcision time. Boys summoned each other to the village arena for *mùmbûro* by sounding a horn (*coro*). As they assembled, they engaged in exuberant, frenzied dances and frenetic parrying and wrestling activities. Amid dancing and singing, boys tried to topple each other down using a whip-like object (*mînyati*). Afterwards, they would march around the village entering into womens’ huts begging for food which they would carry to the arena. Meanwhile, their female age-mates attended for companionship. Younger boys, envious of the youthfulness and strength
demonstrated through these performances, would offer to help their older brothers carry equipment and props to the arena in order to get a chance to spectate.

Occasionally, some homes suffered from the wrath of these marauding youths. Any woman known for her selfishness or other anti-social habits in the villages often had their houses invaded by the múmbúro village band. They stormed into such a woman’s house and performed their war-like activities in there hence causing real havoc to her belongings. They either consumed all the food found there or destroyed it by putting soot into it. The little place was dismantled by removing the three stones traditionally used to place the pot on while cooking. Satisfied with themselves for the lesson taught to their victim, the energetic group of boys eventually retreated to the arena for all night-long performances.

Múmbúro activities were so vigorous such that when participants entered into a hut, it trembled under their thunderous war-like hovering movements under the disguise of a dance. The spectacle so created through these activities had a strong semblance of warfare rather than a social entertainment. Nevertheless, parents were thrilled to witness their grown up sons join múmbúro performances for this was an indication of the achievement of full development from childhood to young adulthood.
Another characteristic feature of müm büro activities was the long distances travelled on foot to the neighbouring ridges by the participants where they were to compete with their age-mates. Sometimes, their plans and movements to their hosts’ dancing arena would all be in cognito just as was done during the raids to a neighbouring community by warriors. Upon getting to the venue, they would dress up unnoticed, and secretly divide themselves into three groups. These three groups would all at once, and from different directions, fiercely join the host boys’ assemblage with a big bang catching their victims unawares. This would be in imitation of the strategy employed by warriors when attacking an enemy. Since the hosts were caught unaware, they would inevitably be terribly shaken up. They would be unmercifully harassed and physically fought off to the point of running away. If there was any food at the arena, for they always carried food with them for the day and night-long ceremonies, the invaders would take it all from them. All the girls at the arena would be ‘‘captured’’ and taken home to the invaders’ village arena to dance with them there but were not harassed. After a few days, the victimized boys would seek a revenge on the offenders. Before such an attack, they would adequately prepare themselves so as to ensure a victorious invasion. They had to carry enough combat equipment and ensured they were many enough in order to outnumber the opponents.

However, if the hosts were well prepared as they ought to have been always, they would thwart the ‘‘invaders’’ efforts and reduce them to total submission. Contented that the two groups were equally good in war tactics, all the girls in
attendance would affectionately award their male counterparts with thunderous, heartening cheers and songs of praise.

(b) **Ngiro Physical Activities**

These were similar activities as múmbüro described above but performed by the Embu male circumcision aspirants (*ihii ivici*). The Chuka sub-tribe of Meru who are close neighbours of the Embu performed these activities as well. The communal village arena were the venue for these activities in which swords, clubs (*njokoma*), and sticks were used offensively. Real shields as well as the wooden planks with a grip at the middle described under *kwemana* (parrying) games above, were used for defensive purpose.

The *nĝiro* performances were rampant prior to the circumcision period. Boys summoned each other to the dancing arena by sounding a horn (*coro*) or other similar equipment. All the male and female aspirants for circumcision during the following season would respond by attending. These would be started off as dances but eventually they always turned out to be severe fights amongst boys from different ridges leading to serious injuries. *Ngiro* activities nevertheless, when peacefully conducted, were a mixture of frenzied music and dance. Some parrying skills would also be displayed now and then. To the society, this activity which was regarded in a very high esteem was an indispensable means of nurturing necessary fighting skills and virtues in the male youths, required after their rise to warriors status upon circumcision. Those who avoided participation for the fear of possible injuries were considered to be cowards and
were looked down upon as the age-group outcasts. Besides, they stood the risk of being left out during circumcision to wait until a latter season when they became more courageous.

(c) **Kĩgumi Physical Activities**

This was the name used by most of the Meru sub-tribes for their version of above boys' performances. Mature Meru male aspirants for circumcision (*ndingʻuri*) from every ridge lived in a large communal shelter referred to as *gaarũ ya ndingʻuri*. While in these houses prior to the circumcision period, they conducted intensive practice on the use of shields and spears, as well as clubs and swords. They would hold occasional assemblies with their counterparts from other ridges at the village arena for *Kĩgumi* physical tests. These involved competitions on the parrying skills. *Kĩgumi* also involved dancing while those from one ridge lined up with whips on the ready in their hands, for the boys from the other ridge to pass in front of them in nude several times while being thoroughly whipped by the former. They would then change roles. Those receiving the whipping were supposed to endure the chastisement meekly in order to qualify for circumcision. Their female age-mates would be in attendance to give complements to boys from their own ridges for the exemplary displays of courage tested in the chastising act. Old men other than warriors would sometimes avoid these occasions for the fear of being caught up in the fights that frequently ensured. The village warriors however kept close vigil in supervision of these activities to control them and intervene in the events of such fights. Participation was a mark of excellence, and was taken to be an
indication of readiness for circumcision. This was because, after circumcision one joined and added to the group of the tribal warriors.

**Significance:**

1) These vigorously performed activities were an important means towards development of participants’ physical fitness. Through them, the youths acquired impressive stamina, musculoskeletal strength as well as cardiovascular fitness.

2) Courage, perseverance of pain and emotional stability were socially important virtues which were greatly encouraged among the tribal youths and adults. Through these activities these virtues were acquired and nurtured.

3) These were important fora for socialization and strengthening of the bond between the members of an age-group who got to know each other better. This was particularly important granted that, some of them hailed from far away ridges and were only brought together by these pre-circumcision ceremonies.

4) Through these activities, participants recreated and even entertained other members of the community especially in *kigumi* performances where all were free to attend.

5) Potential group leaders were noted through participation in those activities. Such individuals developed positive self-concept which they would nurture to adult-hood.

6) These activities were also notable fora for demonstration and assessment of boys’ maturity and readiness for circumcision. To the parents, participation
by their sons was an indication for growth and development into young adulthood.

7) The boys practised and assessed each other on their mastery of the warfare skills which they were to put into full use upon joining the tribal warrior group.

8) From a psychosocial point of view, these expressive activities were indeed a safety means established by the society over the decades as catharses for dissipation of youthful libido. Just as in modern games, these youthful displays had similar cathartic effects on the participants where the society justified the apparent hostility and fights as inevitable youthful emotional exuberance.

4.9: Kibaata, Kivaata, and Thauthi Games

Participants:
These were warriors' activities. Hence, participation was open to all circumcised, unmarried and married men. The above three names refer to the same activity in different regions. Kibaata (kia anake) is the name used by the Kikuyu while kivaata (kia anake) and thauthi (ya nthaka) are the names for this activity among the Embu and Meru communities respectively. Young, married men were encouraged to participate since they were more senior and more experienced. In any case, they would also participate in warfare for they retained their membership to warriorhood despite being married.
Facility and equipment:

These performances were done on an open arena. The warriors clad themselves with rattles (ciigamba), swords, spears and a horn. The last piece of equipment was used in thauthi.

Description:

These were a combination of dance and parrying (kwemana) game activities. Spears, swords and clubs were wielded vigorously in the air as the participants danced. They practised and demonstrated their fighting skills as they danced. Old men also occasionally joined in and used their spears and swords to display their skills. Women would also participate in these dances purposely to cheer up the performers for motivation.

Quite often, the younger warriors decorated themselves with either red ochre or white lime all over their bodies. In the course of the dancing, two of them would be called out musically by their names to get to the centre of the arena and demonstrate their fighting, or warfare skills. The dancing spectators would move to the peripheries of the arena to give adequate space to the two demonstrators. To cheer them up, men would make war cries and yell loudly as they danced with the women around the arena. Among the Kikuyu, sometimes, younger warriors would dance in nude. This was a show of their courage and masculinity though it was a bit rare.

Among the Meru, their thauthi ya nthaka was slightly different from the rest. Here, warriors danced in a circle while women remained at its center.
Nevertheless, these performances all over the region greatly resembled the male circumcision aspirants’ activities described above in terms of their vigour. But, unlike the latter, these were completely peacefully conducted despite the war cries and serious parrying activities that went on.

Among the Kikuyu, kibaata activities were so popular and highly esteemed that, young, newly circumcised warriors had to contribute a goat each to the older members to obtain membership. Among the Embu who as well referred to this as kibaata or kivaata in different parts, it was conducted immediately after the young men came from the three months’ fattening feast in the forest (ikari) described above. Here, these young men participated in almost total nakedness except for a small piece of skin to cover the groin and the buttocks. The objective was to display the muscles and fatness developed during the ikari session. Everyone, women, youths and children spectated. Prior to commencement of these festivities, a five-miles or more walk was conducted for all these participants to go and collect white lime for painting their bodies. It should also be noted here that, the painting of bodies was common among the warriors all over Mount Kenya region every time prior to a raid, including the walk to collect white lime among the Embu raiders.

Significance:
Circumcision marked one’s initiation to warriorhood and hence awarded him with the much envied membership to join the tribal warriors in kibaata, kivaata or thauthi performances. In deed, this was the beginning of a climax in a man’s achievements and full fledged male role in the society. All the games described
so far for boys, right from childhood to circumcision, were ultimately aimed at enhancing performance as a tribal warrior. It was then through the *kibaata*, *kivaata* or *thauthi* performances that every male in the society got a chance to express to the community his personally achieved social status as well as his fighting skills that went with that.

1) Through these performances, the warriors got an opportunity to practise and perfect the offensive and defensive skills using appropriate war implements.

2) As warriors, these young men were of age to marry. These activities gave them an opportunity to display their strong, well-built handsome bodies to the young girls and their parents in attendance with a view to getting future spouses. Parents were fast in noticing the best, most talented young man and eventually encouraged their daughters to befriend them. This owes to the fact that, in ethnic communities, it was common for parents to help their sons and daughters get their marriage spouses.

3) Through their interactions via these performances, interpersonal relationships among the warriors were greatly strengthened. The necessity for unity amongst the warriors is obvious as a group of persons entrusted with the safety of the entire community.

4) Through their performances on these occasions, they were able to improve on their dancing skills.

5) These were vital fora for entertainment for both the warriors as well as all those other members of the community in attendance.
6) The vigorous activities engaged in were important in the development of cardiovascular fitness.

7) Strength, flexibility and endurance were further improved through these performances.

8) Courage and emotional stability were inculcated and nurtured.

9) As in modern games, these were important catharses for dissipation of the excessive energy for the youthful warriors.
CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

5.1: Introduction

In this chapter, an attempt is made to analyse the presentation made in chapter four. Under the first sub-topic, traditional games of the Mount Kenya region are classified according to Cheskas (1987) scheme of seven categories. The researcher also presents his own classification of the same games into two broad categories. An exposition is then made of traditional and modern games in terms of their differences and similarities. Finally, a case model of the scientific analysis of the corded-hoop (mūbara) game is then given.

5.2: Classifications of Traditional Games of Mount Kenya Region

Attempts to classify traditional games of Africa into different categories have so far been done by different authors. This is indicated in the theoretical framework of this study. Classification or categorization of traditional games as carried out below or done in similar research works is vital for two main reasons. First, it facilitates easy reference, comprehension and utilization of the above games by anyone interested in using that information. Second, categorization of information enhances comparative analyses of that information. For instance, by categorizing traditional games of Mount Kenya region, this facilitates comparisons of these games with other traditional games of different parts of the country, continent or the world that have been similarly classified.
5.2.1: Classification of Traditional Games of Mount Kenya Region

According to Cheska’s Scheme

The Cheska’s scheme developed in 1987 has so far been applied on similar studies in West and South Africa and it has the above two benefits of enhancing clarity of the games as well as ease in their comparative analyses. There are other classifications available which could as well have been used for the same purpose in this study. However, the choice of Cheska’s scheme in this study owes to its unequalled advantages of being more thorough, elaborate and straightforward, yet most concise of all. From a pedagogical point of view, it is then more sound.

The categories used below are fully explained in chapter two section 2.7.1 above. The games presented in chapters four of this research fit within them as follows:

1(a) Games of physical skill only:

i: spinning the berry (peg-top) game

ii: high jumps

iii: long jumps

iv: matuumo games

v: racing activities

vi: hand stands

vii: headtand

viii: mbirim (cones) game

ix: swimming and diving
I: uta na mígwí (bow and arrows) games when the target is stationary.

xi: mubara (rolling hoop) games (hand pushing version).

xii: forward rolls

1(b) Games of physical skill combined with strategy.

i: swimming while holding a glowing twig across the river

ii: skidding games

iii: pole vault

iv: nkindano/ nûndano (wrestling) games

v: climbing games

vi: uta na mígwí (bow and arrows) games when the target is mobile

vii: kûratha ndooti (short range darts markmanship) game

viii: kûgûtha (sling) game

xi: hiti múcîî-inî (hyenas near the homestead) game

xii: ndama (tossing or stones) game

xiii: kwemana (parrying) game

xiv: kîbaata, kîvaata and thaûthi games

xv: gûthuga (clubs throwing) games

xvi: mubara (rolling hoop) game (corded handle version)

xvii: swinging games

xviii: tobogganing games

1(c) Games of physical skill combined with rhythmic movements.

i: mbara (ring/ hoop swinging) game

ii: mubara (rolling hoop) game (both versions)

iii: marobo (hand movement testing) game
iv: swinging games

1(d) Games of physical skill combined with luck.

None

2(a) Games of strategy only.

i: ùthi (board) game

2(b) Games of strategy combined with luck.

i: hide and seek game

3(a) Games of chance and dependent on guess work only.

i: gûkonda (puzzle) game

3(b) Games of chance and use of artifacts.

None

4(a) Games of memory.

i: animals game

5. Rhythm games.

i: swinging games


i: ngîro performances

ii: mûmbûro performances

iii: kîgumi performances

iv: kîbaata, mûmbûro and thaûthi games

7. Verbal games.

These games as described by Cheska (1987) did not fit within the theoretical framework of this study.
It is important to add here that, some of the games of Mount Kenya region are found to fall within more than two categories in the above classification. This is not unique however considering the aforementioned statement in section 2.7.1 that, these categories are not mutually exclusive for a game can be in more than one of them.

5.2.2: Further Classification of Traditional Games

The above activities may as well be categorized according to schemes advanced by other authors such as the one by Van der Merwe and Salter (1990, in Van der Merwe, 1999), explained in section 2.7.2. Additionally, granted the strong necessity to nurture strong warriors for defensive and offensive purposes, traditional games highlighted above are found to have a strong inclination towards warfare skills development. Through these activities, members of the community gradually immitated and learned the various skills which were deemed by the society as vital right from an early stage of their lives. Hence, the researcher in his earlier works (Wanderi, 1999), further broadly categorizes the above games as follows:

1) Warfare skills related games and
2) Non- warfare skills related games

According to this classification, all the above traditional games fall into either of these two categories. The numerous games for the young children, the abundant games performed by the big mature boys, the games engaged in by circumcision initiates as well as those played by other persons in the society, all of them fall into these two broad categories. For instance, the boys' games of
slings, hoop and spear game as well as the warriors' parrying game belong to the first category. Other games such as the girls' swings are within the second category together with the skidding and tobogganing games which were so popular among the big boys. Some other games however such as those involving racing and dodging movements can be placed in either of these two categories.

Finally, the above classificational effort is in line with:

(a) the conceptual framework as well as the objective number (v) of this study,
(b) previous studies on traditional games of various parts of Africa explained in chapter two.

5.3: Differences and Similarities Between Traditional and Modern Games

With a view to accomplish the task of this section, there is a need to start by comparing the meaning of traditional games and modern games. However, in doing this, it is also necessary to call to mind the meaning of the term games per se. A game as operationally defined in chapter one, is a structured play with rules which may be formal or informal, and the motivation for participation may be one or a combination of several factors given under definition of terms in chapter one.

From a Kenyan perspective, modern games are those whose introduction to Kenya was a result of alien influence. These may include those formally
introduced during colonial period as well as after independence from outside the country. These are for instance, volleyball, soccer, chess, karate, judo and so on. Traditional games on the other hand refer to Africans' indigenous playful activities, handed over and received from one generation to the other. These were in existence in the day to day life of the Kenyan ethnic communities before the colonial era.

Considering the principles involved in the performance and the execution of various modern and traditional games activities, there is no difference at all between them. Their contributions to the participants' domains of learning namely, cognitive, effective and psychomotor, are totally similar. However, it is not uncommon to find a traditional or a modern game with a stronger cognitive, effective, or psychomotor contribution than another. Thus, this quality is equally and similarly shared by both modern and traditional games.

Another point of comparison between traditional and modern games is that, as variously explained in chapters one and two, both traditional and modern games have all been developed by different human communities of the world in accordance with the cultural set-ups of those communities. Wherever a game originated from, whether modern or traditional, it is a reflection of that society's effort to sustain its own survival. To this end then, a strong relationship is seen to exist between games of various communities and the cultural values of those communities that practise them. The more useful the activity to that community, the stronger the relationship, and the faster will be that activity's diffusion from
one region to the other. In illustration, soccer as a modern game and wrestling in traditional culture are presented as examples of these interrelationships in chapter two, section 2.2.

From a psychosocial point of view, modern games are important as a safe means of dissipation of excessive energy. Through participation in them, individuals get a way of relaxation and passing their leisure time. To a large extent, the confrontational nature of modern games is socially accepted as a safe catharsis for release of tension and stress acquired from the individuals' lives (Coakley, 1982). As highlighted in the preceding chapters, this was a similar purpose for the traditional games within the indigenous culture despite the notable differences in stressful living experiences between then and today. For instance, the aforementioned vigorous games activities performed by the mature boys prior to circumcision as well as those performed by warriors throughout entire Mount Kenya region were all geared towards a carthatic purpose. The vigorous traditional games activities described above were in deed a safety means established by society over the decades as carthases for dissipation of youthful libido. As in modern games, the various youthful and vigorous displays had similar carthartic effects to the participants. The African traditional community, accepted and justified the apparent hostility and fights in some traditional games as inevitable youthful emotional exuberance.

There are a number of notable differences between traditional and modern games in terms of their structure, rules, facilities and equipment (Cheska, 1987).
The rules in most traditional games are simple and are unrecorded to the present day. Even those with more elaborate rules like the *mancala* or board game, its rules are not yet standardized. Additionally, the rules in the traditional games are flexible and their scoring system is simple. Their rules and playing procedures are learned only through participation. In contrast, the rules in modern games are rather complex and well standardized. They are characterized by very rigid rules where their scoring and officiating systems are rather complex.

The facilities required for the traditional games on the one hand are fairly unpermanent, easy to improvise, and highly unstandardized. This also applies to their equipment which are simple and for most activities, self-made. The equipment and facilities used in modern games are, on the other hand, complex, expensive to acquire, very highly standardized, and for a good number of them, they are difficult to improvise.

The number of players in most games of the indigenous origin is not definite. It varied from time to time, game to the other, or from a region to the other. Yet, participants performed without any hindrances. A game like *nthigui* for instance, was played by any number of players available from two to twelve and over. This is impossible with the modern games whose number of players is rigidly fixed.
Traditional games of Africa are barely known outside the continent for they are rather localized. Even though some literature on them might have found their way to libraries in Europe, America and elsewhere, they largely remain unknown. Indeed, some of them are largely unknown in some regions within their own countries. For instance, most of the games presented in this study are still unknown to many Kenyans. Worst of it all, as time goes by, since they are not done any more, they are pathetically very fast becoming more and more unknown even in localities of their own origins. Modern games on the other hand, have diffused to different corners of the world. From their places of origin, they have spread to other parts of the world, and hence they are internationally well known.

Most traditional games were informally done. The rolling of the hoop (mūbara), the spinning of the cones, the five stones games and many others as presented above on the one hand, were informally participated in. On the other hand, a few of them such as the āthi (board) game, wrestling matches among some Meru sub-tribes as well as the parrying games were all fairly institutionalized giving them an element of formality. However, all modern games are formally done. The advantages in the informal participation that characterized the traditional games are that, participants were their own masters. Through their participation, they learned the consequences of decision making, acquired flexibility of mind and character, as well as the ability to create and change things which are key requirements for the formation of divergent minds.
Today, some efforts are still at their infancy to have traditional games formalized in Africa. This is rather a grandiose effort and highly commendable though indeed belated. It is regrettable that, games of traditional origin have all along remained marginalized and have therefore faded out of existence with time, thus giving way to the proliferation of modern games. This owes to the fact that, the latter have been formally introduced and incorporated fully in the educational programmes in Kenya and all over Africa, leaving out the former. In this way, modern games have had so far a strong suppressive effect to the traditional games. They have spread and have been promoted all over as the traditional ones have disappeared more and more.

As a result of the above, the skills level of the traditional activities have gone down and no one is any more interested in their advancement. This is in a sharp contrast to the modern games whose skills are developed and advanced year after year. Little wonder then that, a major difference in these activities today is that, most of the traditional games skills are rather rudimentary with little hope so far of any more advancements in future. On the contrary, the skill levels of modern games are quite advanced and continue to improve everyday.

5.4: Scientific Analyses of Traditional Games

A notable consequence of the formalization of traditional games is the indepth studies likely to be conducted on them. This owes to the fact that, just like in modern games, a perfect understanding of the scientific principles underlying a
particular game is necessary for its successful competitive and recreational performance. Therefore, the formalization of each game will be accompanied by its thorough scientific analysis with a view to furnishing its coaches and players with vital information towards excellent skill development.

A herald to this scientific effort envisaged above is presented in the following account. This presentation is expected to serve as an example for similar efforts in future.

5.4.1: The Kinetics in the Corded Hoop (Mūbara) Game

In an effort to make the description of the corded mūbara game more comprehensive, an elaborate analysis of its kinetics or dynamics is made here. The objective is to obtain the most effective point at which to exert the pull on the hoop with the cord, as well as the most effective direction of the cord for the best propulsion. The actual movements involved in propelling the hoop are rather too fast for its complete discernment by mere observation. However, it is possible to analyse these movements using video recorded games in slow motion. Additionally, a scientifically based explanation is necessary as given below in order to shed full light to this propulsion. In so doing, a deliberate effort is made in the following analysis to be simple and systematic for clarity.

Refer to 5.1 (a), (b) and (c) on which some angles and forces utilized in this game are resolved. From figure 5.1 (a), $F$ is the resultant force in the direction of the cord while $Y$ is the point of cord attachment to the hoop.
Before the force $\vec{F}$ is applied (that is, before the hoop is set in motion), its plane is perpendicular to the direction of motion. When the hoop is set in motion, force $\vec{F}$ makes an angle $\beta$ with the plane of the hoop as shown in figure 5.1 (a). Force $\vec{F}$ can be resolved into two components: $\vec{F}_1$ and $\vec{F}_2$ as shown in figures 5.1 (a) and 5.1 (b).

The component $\vec{F}_1$ is in the direction $\alpha$ relative to the direction of motion and lies on the plane of the hoop. This component has got two effects as shown in figure 5.1 (c);

(i) It is responsible for the forward propulsion of the hoop (its horizontal component, $\vec{F}_3$).

(ii) Its vertical component, $\vec{F}_4$, tends to pull the hoop off the ground (upwards) whose effect depends on the magnitude of the original force $\vec{F}$ applied, and the point of contact $Y$ of the cord on the hoop.

Thus; from figure 5.1 (b),

$$\vec{F}_1 = \vec{F} \cos \beta \quad \text{ ............(i)}$$

Force $\vec{F}_1$ can be resolved further into two components, namely, $\vec{F}_3$ which is the actual or the net force responsible for propulsion and $\vec{F}_4$, which is normal to the direction of motion and lies on the plane of the hoop. These forces can be resolved as follows:

$$\vec{F}_3 = \vec{F}_1 \cos \alpha \quad \text{ ............(ii)}$$

Combining equations (i) and (ii),
Figure 5.1 (a), (b) and (c): Resolution of some angles and forces utilized in the corded hoop (mūbara) game.
\[ \vec{F}_3 = \vec{F} \cos \beta \cos \alpha \] (iii)

Similarly,

\[ \vec{F}_4 = \vec{F}_1 \sin \alpha \] (iv)

Combining equations (i) and (iv)

\[ \vec{F}_4 = \vec{F} \cos \beta \sin \alpha \] (v)

From equation (iii) it is clear that for maximum effective force in the direction of motion, the angles \( \alpha \) and \( \beta \) must be very small. That is, the smaller the values of angles \( \alpha \) and \( \beta \), the less the force \( \vec{F} \) required to keep the hoop in forward motion, and vice-versa.

**Observations**

If angle \( \beta \) is \( 0^\circ \) and \( \alpha \) is \( 90^\circ \), the force \( \vec{F}_4 \) is at a maximum and the forward propelling force \( \vec{F}_3 \) vanishes. The net effect is to lift the hoop vertically upwards if the force \( \vec{F}_4 \) is large enough such that:

\[ \vec{F}_4 > mg \] (vi)

where \( m \) and \( g \) are the mass of the hoop and acceleration due to gravity respectively.

The model equation (v) can explain a very interesting phenomenon observed in some aspects of hoop dynamics as follows:
If $\beta$ is slightly increased above $0^\circ$ and $\alpha$ slightly reduced below $90^\circ$, it is evident that the component $F_3$ in the direction of motion will be non-zero but small, while $F_4$ remains significantly high and vertical.

If equation (vi) holds under these conditions, then, $F_3$ will tend to propel the hoop in the forward direction, but due to absence of frictional force (while suspended in air) force $F_3$ will be tangential along the circumference of the hoop. Thus, the hoop executes circular motions.

From figure 5.1 (b),

$$F_2 = F \sin \beta \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ld -
CHAPTER SIX

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

6.1: Introduction

This chapter opens with recommendations for formalization of traditional games in Kenya. It also highlights the benefits to be accrued following such a formalization. Suggestions for further studies are also offered after which a conclusion to this study is made.

6.2: Towards Formalization of Traditional Games of Kenya in Twenty First Century.

The current trend of traditional games in Kenya as mentioned variously in this study is rather precarious. These games, despite their traditional significance coupled with potential benefits today, are on the verge of getting extinct. However, it is hoped that, after the effort made in this study, they will be formalized, adopted and promoted for use through various educational and social fora. Otherwise, unless a deliberate effort is made to have them implemented for contemporary use, they will soon be lost forever.

As indicated in chapter two, various countries around the world including the developed nations are on record for exemplary preservation and development of their traditional games. In most of the countries mentioned in chapter two, they have had their games developed and promoted to international standards as explained of the Chinese and the Scottish Highland Games in chapter two. In
China, national holidays are marked country wide with competitions in traditional games (Knutten et al., 1990). The Scottish Highland games have been adopted by different nations of the world but with a high degree of adaptation to local situations (Kenntner, 1999). The same developments are also possible in Kenya.

It should however be pointed out with a lot of appreciation that, quite a commendable effort has been made so far in Kenya towards the adoption of a few traditional activities in the educational curriculum. These include traditional dances which are major co-curricular activities in primary schools and primary teachers’ colleges. Traditional gymnastics are also included in the syllabus at the latter institutions. Unfortunately, no apparent worthwhile efforts have so far been made to promote these activities at the secondary school level. Although they are reflected in the syllabus, since no serious teaching of Physical Education (P.E.) ever takes place in secondary schools, then there are no chances of teaching traditional games. (P.E. as a subject in Kenyan secondary schools has rather been neglected for it is non examinable). The only time however when some gymnastics are taught at the secondary schools are when Physical Education student-teachers from Kenyatta University and diploma teachers’ colleges are on teaching practice. These student-teachers would make an impressive effort to include traditional gymnastics in their schemes of work and teach them. Consequently, there is a dire need to raise the amount of traditional games being taught at the educational institutions.
Among some communities in Kenya today and specifically in Mount Kenya region, a few traditional activities are evident here and there in which young children, older boys and even some adults would be seen participating for recreational purposes. For instance, these observations are common in parts of Meru, Tharaka-Nithi and Embu districts. Here, some old men are seen seated at market places in small groups playing ultimo (board) game. The màbara (rolling hoop), skidding and toboggan games among children are still witnessed here and there. Unfortunately, all these activities are still very informally done. Time has come to make a deliberate effort to have them formalized. This will be a major effort towards the promotion and preservation of Kenya's diverse cultural heritage.

As indicated in chapter two, the ultimo (board) game was widespread throughout the African content. Granted its previous popularity, it would then be rather easy to have it formalized throughout the continent. The fast growing African Association for Physical, Health Education, Recreation, Sport and Dance (AfAPHER-SD) is a valuable vehicle towards the achievement of this objective. Since the rules of such a game varied from place to place, an agreement on a common set of rules and playing procedure would form the starting point in this endeavor. However, it is quite possible to spearhead such an effort at a national level pending later developments at wider, continental or even global levels.

A similar effort can also be made in adopting two other continentally popular games explained above, namely, nthúgu (spearing the hoop) and nkindano
(wrestling) games. For the latter, a few regulations to distinguish it from other versions of wrestling of other parts of the world would be established. Granted its former popularity in pre-colonial Africa, as indicated in chapter two, its formalization and consequent institutionalization would also be rather easy.

For mbirūri (cone) game, whose occurrence was not as pronounced as for these others mentioned above, a national promotion effort would be possible for a start. Suggestions towards such a promotion and development would include coming up with some regulations as follows:

1. Being an individual game, each contestant would be given a specified period of time to play on his or her own,

2. In order to determine a winner in a mbirūri game contest, the total number of rounds played within the specified time shall be considered, where one round commences when a cone is set forth into a spin and lasts until the discontinuation of that spin. Even where a player's attempt to start-off a spin fails, this should be considered a full round. A stop watch is activated and stopped at the commencement and end of a spin respectively.

3. Where a tie arises between two or more players due to an equal number of spinning rounds within the specified time, additional time may be given to each player to break the tie as would be agreed upon.

Finally, the formalization of nthūgū and mbirūri games are shown on the video tapes prepared as a part of this study. Going by the information contained in these tapes, these games fit very well within the formalized situations and are
just ready for implementation. Similarly, many more of the games presented in
the above chapters would be equally easy to formalize.

6.3: Benefits of Adopting Traditional Games in Today's

As Malinowski points out, "...anthropology begins at home" and is a cornerstone of modern social science (Kenyatta, 1992, p. v). Through it, individuals get to know themselves and their culture better in relation to other cultures. Additionally, as mentioned in chapter one, games as well as all other cultural elements serve as miniature windows or reflections through which members of a community get to understand themselves better as well as being understood by others outside their community (Cheska, 1987). By learning and practising peoples' own traditional cultural elements such as games, individual members of that group get to appreciate themselves better as they get to know and value these activities. In other words, the learning and acquisition of traditional games skills would enhance cultural heritage as enshrined in the educational aims in Kenya. This if accomplished would also add to the variety of games available in Kenya for learning and recreational purposes.

Unlike modern games which are expensive to start up due to their high costs of equipment and facilities, most traditional games would require very limited facilities and easily obtainable or improvised equipment. They would therefore be easily started up almost everywhere by everyone.
Learners as well as other players might readily identify themselves with these games as they may have an idea of how to go about some of them. This is because, some people will have prior knowledge in these activities either because they have seen them done by others or having participated in them personally.

Since they are based on the local culture, these activities may have a higher possibility of being engaged in and practised throughout learners’ lifetime than the case is for modern games. Their formalization will be a basis for development to national and international sports levels in line with various objectives of teaching Physical Education (P.E) and games in Kenyan schools. Their adoption or formalization will be a positive step towards a cultural-educational appraisal. These games shall be equally effective in enhancing the achievement of all domains of knowledge (cognitive, psychomotor and affective) just like any modern game.

Finally, if formalized or adopted, their equipment which are locally made would have to be produced in great numbers. This would be a source of income for the local producers.

6.1: **Suggestions for Further Research**

As variously mentioned throughout this study, future researchers in Kenya should focus their attention on the study of traditional games from other...
communities of Kenya and make similar records like this one before these are completely forgotten and lost. This effort requires urgent attention.

Secondly, there are numerous informal children's activities participated in at leisure that are elaborate enough to require being studied and written down. Some of these activities are rich in their contributions towards the achievements of the three domains of knowledge to the participants. Some effort therefore is required from researchers on Physical Education (P.E.) and games to have these prolifically occurring informal games recorded down as well. Granted the fast rate of change in lifestyle among Kenyans, some very good informal games may be lost if not promptly recorded.

Finally, P.E. curriculum developers should undertake immediate feasibility studies with a view to getting the most appropriate approach for the inclusion of the activities presented in this study (as well as others to follow later) in the educational curriculum. Hopefully, a similar trend in the development and promotion of traditional P.E. and games as described in the Chinese case (chapter two of this study) shall be witnessed in Kenya.

6.5: Conclusion
This research work was primarily conducted with three main aims in mind. One of these was to provide written records on traditional games which shall serve as references for learning purposes. This need arose from the fact that, as explained under the significance of the study, the objectives stated in the
Kenyan primary education syllabus spell out the need to teach these activities in schools. Unfortunately, that document fails to outline these activities in its contents for guidance to the teachers as done for all the other games. This conspicuous and unfortunate omission might have been prompted by the apparent lack of references on traditional games. This has now been availed through this study. Additionally, the detailed information presented in this research document will further be useful in anthropological studies. This was an aim towards educational appraisal which was a point of focus in this study.

The second aim of the study was centered on the need to document and preserve traditional games which are a part of Kenya's fast disappearing cultural heritage. As these games have greatly been suppressed by the modern ones almost to total oblivion, the researcher's effort targeted at writing them down and aiding in making some records of them for preservation into the future. This was an aim towards a cultural appraisal which was also a point of focus in this study.

Granted the in-depth analysis involved in this study, only a small section of the country could effectively be covered. This apparent limitation led to the third aim of the study. This third aim was that, as indicated under suggestions for further research, the researcher hoped to initiate a series of other related studies based on the numerous communities in Kenya that could not be covered in this study. In other words, according to its third aim, this research work is expected to herald a belatedly new effort in national research on P.E. and games with a
view to improving documentation and promoting national cultural heritage through traditional games.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


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**Appendix A**

List of the Names of the Interviewees According to Home Districts (Home Area).

Notes:

1. Among the following districts, Nyandarua district was omitted for its older population was established to have emigrated from Nyeri, Murang’a, Kiambu, or Kirinyaga districts.

2. The previous districts boundaries were used as shown below since the new sub-divisions had not been established at the time these interviews commenced. The new sub-divisions vis-a-vis the previous ones are shown below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Previous districts that were followed</th>
<th>New sub-divisions (not followed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kiambu</td>
<td>Thika and Kiambu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murang’a</td>
<td>Thika, Maragua and Murang’a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kirinyaga</td>
<td>Kirinyaga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nyeri</td>
<td>Nyeri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embu</td>
<td>Embu and Mbeere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meru</td>
<td>Meru South, Meru Central and Meru North</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### List of Interviewees from Meru Community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Year of Birth</th>
<th>Home Area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>John Gituma</td>
<td>1928</td>
<td>Tharaka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barnabas M'lemungi</td>
<td>1915</td>
<td>Tigania</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kilemi Likilea Baate</td>
<td>1938</td>
<td>Tigania</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domiciano Nkirichia</td>
<td>1940</td>
<td>Tigania</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeremia Nduyo Matende</td>
<td>1930</td>
<td>Tharaka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John M'Ikiara</td>
<td>1929</td>
<td>Tharaka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas Ng’aruni</td>
<td>1922</td>
<td>Imenti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joram Ikiara</td>
<td>1926</td>
<td>Tigania</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Rengera</td>
<td>1935</td>
<td>Tharaka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ernest Kirigwa</td>
<td>1924</td>
<td>Igonji</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bernard Kanampiu Marete</td>
<td>1922</td>
<td>Igonji</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Titus Mbungu Muthara</td>
<td>1922</td>
<td>Chuka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dancan Muratha Gitandu</td>
<td>1913</td>
<td>Chuka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gerald Borre</td>
<td>1924</td>
<td>Chuka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silverster M'Binjiwe</td>
<td>1930</td>
<td>Chuka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Nkanata M’ntire</td>
<td>1932</td>
<td>Chuka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eugene Kithinji</td>
<td>1927</td>
<td>Chuka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eugenio Mwongera</td>
<td>1923</td>
<td>Imenti</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### B) List of Interviewees from Kikuyu Community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Year of Birth</th>
<th>Home</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Joseph Chege Gachonjoi</td>
<td>1926</td>
<td>Kiambu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milka Murimi</td>
<td>1922</td>
<td>Kiambu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stephen Mwangi</td>
<td>1924</td>
<td>Kiambu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simon Peter Mwangi</td>
<td>1924</td>
<td>Kiambu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter Mwangi</td>
<td>1924</td>
<td>Kiambu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patricia Nyakanini</td>
<td>1930</td>
<td>Kiambu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pauline Nyakirima</td>
<td>1929</td>
<td>Kiambu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adolf Kamau</td>
<td>1934</td>
<td>Kiambu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Esther Gathoni Karume</td>
<td>1918</td>
<td>Nyeri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simon Mwangi</td>
<td>1936</td>
<td>Nyeri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mwangi Githinji</td>
<td>1937</td>
<td>Nyeri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Muthui Muthoga</td>
<td>1924</td>
<td>Nyeri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Josphat Munga</td>
<td>1915</td>
<td>Murang’a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mwangi Kaihu</td>
<td>1930</td>
<td>Murang’a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mzee Kangangi</td>
<td>1926</td>
<td>Murang’a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wambui Muchiru</td>
<td>1912</td>
<td>Murang’a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kahara Kibugi</td>
<td>1914</td>
<td>Murang’a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mwai Karume</td>
<td>1936</td>
<td>Kirinyaga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ndwiga Njiru</td>
<td>1928</td>
<td>Kirinyaga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicodemus Muriuki</td>
<td>1933</td>
<td>Kirinyaga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAME</td>
<td>YEAR OF BIRTH</td>
<td>HOME AREA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Njeru Kirima</td>
<td>1924</td>
<td>Mbeere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Njiru Karingi</td>
<td>1937</td>
<td>Mbeere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ndewiga Murwanthi</td>
<td>1928</td>
<td>Mbeere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Livingstone Ireri Mutura</td>
<td>1930</td>
<td>Mbeere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul Ireri Ngoru</td>
<td>1908</td>
<td>Embu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samuel Ireri Shem</td>
<td>1927</td>
<td>Embu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erastus Njeru Nginyane</td>
<td>1933</td>
<td>Embu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas Gukingi</td>
<td>1919</td>
<td>Embu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rael Ndagora Nephat</td>
<td>1926</td>
<td>Embu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nephat Ngare</td>
<td>1924</td>
<td>Embu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rufus Karingi</td>
<td>1919</td>
<td>Embu</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B

A Sample of the Letters Sent to the Questionnaire Respondents

Mr. Peter Wanderi Mwangi,
Department of Physical Education,
Kenyatta University,
P.O Box 43844,
Nairobi.

To: .................................................................
.................................................................
.................................................................

Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE

This is a request for your indispensable help.

I am a researcher at Kenyatta University, P. E. Department, investigating on the topic, "Traditional Games of the People of Mount Kenya Region" for my Ph D thesis. Attached herein is a questionnaire based on this area of study.

I have chosen you owing to your knowledge in this area to kindly fill this questionnaire in order to give me the required information which will be solely used for the purpose of this study only.

I thank you most sincerely in advance.

Yours faithfully,

Mwangi P. Wanderi,
Lecturer, Department of P.E., Kenyatta University
Appendix C

Research Questionnaire

In the following questions, the physical activities being asked for are the various exercises, games and plays which were performed at different stages of life by the members of the traditional society.

1. Your answers will be based on ------------ community. Tick appropriately (Kikuyu/ Embu/ Meru).

2. Please state your age.-------- years old.

3. State how you obtained the knowledge of the community stated above.

Tick the appropriate answer: By reading/ By participation/ By observing/ Any other(State it appropriately below).

4. In the table below, list the various traditional physical activities in the tribe that you have indicated for children. Kindly list as many as possible indicating "B" for boys' activities, "G" for girls' activities and "BG" for the common ones.

5. In the same table, indicate according to your opinion the aims and benefits of participating in each activity mentioned in (4) above by the respective group. Also indicate the benefits of the activity to the community in general.

6. Indicate also the time/seasons of the year when these were performed.
TABLE I

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Aims</th>
<th>Benefits/ Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>i</td>
<td>i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ii</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>iii</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>iv</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>i</td>
<td>i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ii</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>iii</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>iv</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(In total, twenty spaces were provided for the above information to be filled in. That is, the activities column extended up to xx).

7: In the table below (Table II), list the various traditional physical activities that existed in that tribe for the uncircumcised youth. Give as many as possible indicating "G" for the girls' activities, "B" for the boys' activities and "B/G" for the common ones.

8: Indicate the benefits of these activities to the participants and the community in general.

9: Use the same table to indicate the seasons when these were performed as provided in the table.

(A TABLE SIMILAR TO THE ONE DESCRIBED ABOVE WAS PROVIDED AS TABLE NO. II)

10: In the table below (Table III), list the various traditional physical activities
that existed in that tribe for the senior members of the community i.e. from the circumcised, unmarried persons onwards. List as many as possible differentiating men’s activities from women’s activities by putting “M” or “W” respectively, and “M/W” for the common ones.

11: Use the same table to show the benefits of these activities to the participants as well as to the community in general as per the spaces provided.

12: Indicate the seasons as provided in the tables.

(A TABLE SIMILAR TO THE ABOVE TWO WAS PROVIDED AS TABLE NO. III).

13: According to Jomo Kenyatta in the book “Facing Mount Kenya”, the Gikuyu warriors used exercises to train for fitness in order to prepare to “…meet any danger with confidence”.

(a): Was the same true in your community? YES/NO

(b): From what you know, which exercise were used?

(c): Were the exercises mentioned in (b) given individually or in groups? Please explain on the space provided. (SOME SPACE WAS PROVIDED).

14: Are there any activities from all what you have listed above that you would propose for introduction into today’s educational curriculum?

Kindly put an (X) sign against them on the three tables above.
Appendix D

Group Interview Session

A picture showing a group interview session at Ena in Embu. The names of these interviewees from the left were Thomas Gukiingi (in glasses), Samwel Ireri, Gichindano Ngoru, Erastus Njeru and Jemime Ireri. The researcher, Mwangi P. Wanderi is seated in front of them.