

AMERICAN SCENE

THE THOMAS GILCREASE INSTITUTE OF AMERICAN HISTORY AND ART, TULSA, OKLAHOMA



AMERICAN SCENE

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The vast Gilcrease Collection is an unbounded source for telling the story of the American Indian — whether prehistoric or historic — whether north, south, east or west. Seldom are we faced with “do we have the material to illustrate such a feature?” — instead we are more often frustrated by making a choice between the excellent artifacts and art available. In this issue we have utilized both, as we often do, to present a more graphic picture of the American Indian. We see the variety of materials used and can be reminded again that the so-called primitive mind was superbly ingenious — and that his body was, generally speaking, in a much finer condition than that of the “man on the street” of today’s society.

Throughout recorded time, a major emphasis has been placed on the varied facets of Indian cultures; yet somehow their toys, games, sports, amusements, and many forms of recreation have not been dealt with extensively. Our own research disclosed that many of the objects in these areas were not recognized by anthropologists and collectors and therefore often did not fall into the scholar’s hands for further study and analysis. We are left only with speculation as to how many unrecognizable artifacts were overlooked, how many other games, sports, and toys amused and occupied the social and religious hours of the Indian. Meanwhile, we are grateful to both the Indian and white artists and crafts people for what they produced. The results of their efforts provide a more deliberate study of the subjects reviewed in this issue.

Surely you, the reader, will join us in our own awe of the great variety and ingenuity employed by the Indian — and be equally surprised to learn the extent of their interest and talents in games of competition and chance, as well as their love for their children as reflected in the toys made for them.



Northern Plains doll with fringed, soft tanned hide dress and boots, decorated with trade beads and porcupine quills.

It would be difficult indeed to locate or even imagine a society in which the children had no toys. Conversely, it is difficult to find descriptions of cultures which include more than a passing comment on toys. This is an unfortunate oversight on the part of ethnographers.

Archaeologists are frequently at a loss to decide whether or not a small object excavated—except in definite context—is a toy or merely a miniature, the function of which was magical, religious, or decorative rather than an imagined representation of a full-size animal or object. Toys, like the objects they represent, get broken or lost and sometimes they are only sticks or pebbles which, once having lost their function, have also lost their identification, and are indistinguishable from rubble. They are frequently much more difficult to identify than are the tools or other possessions of adults.

Toys may blend indistinguishably with games on one hand or with functional tools on the other. Many chemistry sets have evolved into laboratories, and no doubt many toy bows have put meat in the pot before being discarded for a full prototype. This is not to imply that the toy preceded the utensil, weapon, or mode of transportation used by the adult community. The toy train or small scale model was made after—not before—the full-size locomotive was invented, just as the Indian boy's or girl's bow and arrow or travois was made to imitate those of their father or mother.

Toys generally reflect the economic activity of the society in which they occur. They are, generally speaking, the training devices of that society. In a primitive society where vocation is limited and usually predetermined, the

variety of toys will be relatively small. In modern societies, a child's interest, with the aid of toys can be directed toward chemistry, mathematics, aircraft, home economics, clothing design, medicine, space exploration, and on and on. Many children receive an added incentive to read in order to learn more about their toys and their possible future use.

The interest is just as intense with the Plains Indian boy who, in using pebbles to represent horses, practiced ways to make off with an enemy's herd, or with a Plains Indian girl who learned how to load a toy travois pulled by a stick horse.

Except for relatively late collections, a search for American Indian toys in museum collections can be almost as discouraging as searching for the word toy in the indices of books about Indians. Too many Indian toys seem to have been perishable, or of no great interest to collectors, or just natural objects such as the Plains Indian boys' pebble horses. Even if the pebbles had been saved and collected by someone, many years later the meaning would have been lost, unless a careful notation had been made.

In the Gilcrease Collections, there are any number of artifacts which may well have been toys as they emulate objects of the adult Indian world. Some of these objects may possibly have been made by Indians for the tourist trade and consequently ended up in the hands of a non-Indian child.

In the toy and game category of the Gilcrease Collections, there are some Indian "ring and pin" specimens. This amusement is similar to the European pastime of cup and ball. Many Indian toys and games are similar to those used by children in other parts of

TOYS



the world—further proof, if any is needed, that children are much the same the world over. In playing “cup and ball,” the European method was one “in which the ball may be caught either in the cup or upon the pointed end of the catching implement.” In the Algonquin and Siouan form of this activity, a series of phalangeal bones are strung with a wire needle. Grasping the needle firmly, the child (or adult) swung the bones in the air and attempted to catch the bones or their beaded ornaments on the end of the needle. If the needle caught the bone nearest to it, the player received ten points; second bone, twenty points; third bone, thirty points; fourth bone, forty points; and for the tassel of beads on the end, fifty points. The Cheyenne and Penobscot called this the “lover’s game” since it was an accepted joint amusement for adolescent girls and boys who were courting.

Also in the museum collection is an interesting miniature of another widespread Indian game called double ball. Little girls enjoyed this sport, or game, and used the miniature ball although they played by the same rules that govern the game as played by adults. The full-size ball used by grown-ups is often decorated with beads as is this particular miniature. Many Indians of the Southwest, the prairie-western Woodlands, the Plains tribes, and some tribes in California play the game of double ball. In the northeastern portion of the States, the game is considered a woman’s game and has been described as a sort

of “female lacrosse” or stick ball. In some cases, the goals are a mile apart and the game is very strenuous.

In the Northeast, the double ball is wrapped with a single piece of tanned hide and shaped in such a fashion that it resembles a dumbbell. The balls are manipulated with sticks which are curved or knotted at one end. The object of the game is to pass the balls through the goals. The distance between the goals differs from tribe to tribe.

Little Indian girls were not excluded in the universal pastime of “playing house,” and their toys reflect this interest. There were, for instance, boy and girl dolls in native attire, small parfleches, travois and horses, baby cradles, and tipis—an ample number of toys to “make believe” for many hours of play.

Toys (and miniatures) have become an excellent educational source because they are frequently near-perfect replicas of actual objects in the particular society. For instance, we can see how a travois was constructed, how it was utilized and how it was transported by being harnessed to a horse. A toy parfleche illustrates the artistry applied to Indian “luggage.” Cradles for dolls were exact replicas of those used by Indian mothers, and the children’s tipis were carefully constructed and decorated in the fashion of the family tipi.

Dolls were often made from whatever could be located and, at times, little attention was given to applying facial

features, but other details often neared perfection. Beaded and fringed buckskin-pants, shirts, and dresses bore a striking resemblance to tribal clothing. In the western Plains where “stroud cloth” was provided by white traders, it was not uncommon to find a female doll in a beaded cloth dress. The bodies of the dolls were sometimes made of stuffed leather, cotton, or hide. Other material used included wood, corn husks, stone, clay, or even ivory.

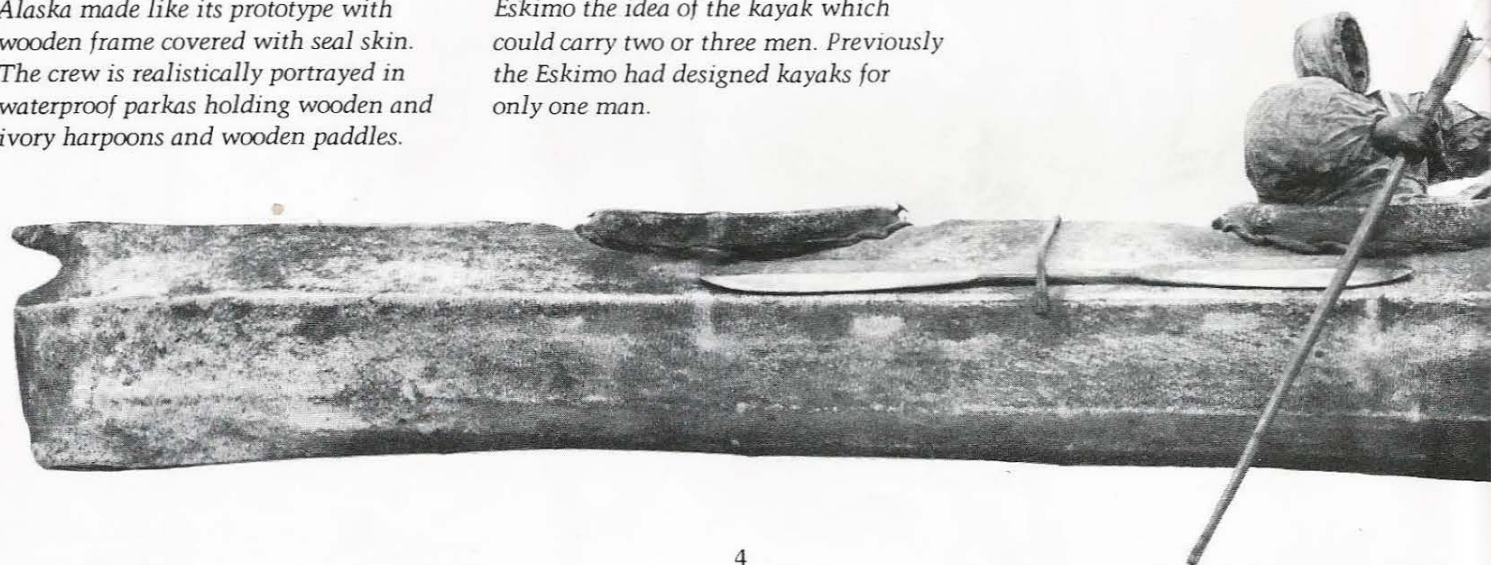
Toys, or miniatures, were not always used for play. They could serve as a method of training as well. In the Southwest, miniatures of the Kachina gods were used to train children in the identification of their gods, thereby preparing them to take their proper place in the religious ceremonies of the area. Consequently, children did not actually play with Kachina dolls. Also in the Southwest, as well as in other areas where ceramic items were manufactured, little girls made toy items from clay which acquainted them with the feel and technique of shaping, finishing, and firing the vessels used in domestic and ceremonial life.

In *Indian Boyhood*, by Charles A. Eastman, illustrated by E. L. Blumenschein, and published by Little, Brown, and Company of Boston in 1917, we find a description of a game that could conceivably have been played by Indian children in any part of the country, although Eastman is referring specifically to the Southwest:

“Occasionally, we also played

Miniature three-man kayak of western Alaska made like its prototype with wooden frame covered with seal skin. The crew is realistically portrayed in waterproof parkas holding wooden and ivory harpoons and wooden paddles.

The Russian traders introduced to the Eskimo the idea of the kayak which could carry two or three men. Previously the Eskimo had designed kayaks for only one man.





'white man.' Our knowledge of the pale-face was limited, but we had learned that he brought goods whenever he came and that our people exchanged furs for his merchandise. We also knew that his complexion was pale, that he had short hair on his head and long hair on his face and that he wore coat, trousers, and hat, and did not patronize blankets in the day-time. This was the picture we had formed of the white man.

"So we painted two or three of our number with white clay and put on them birchen hats which we sewed up for the occasion; fastened a piece of fur to their chins for a beard and altered their costumes as much as lay within our power... Their merchandise consisted of sand for sugar, wild beans for coffee, dried leaves for tea, pulverized earth for gun-powder, pebbles for bullets and clear water for the dangerous 'spirit water'. We traded for these goods with skins of squirrels, rabbits and small birds."

At the same time Indian boys were playing "white man," little white boys were probably playing "cowboys and Indians."

In the northern most part of North America, we find the Eskimo who, throughout most of the year, lived in small family groups, gathering food and filling the larders. But on special occasions, during the mild seasons, they



(Top) Small baskets are more difficult to weave properly than are larger examples. Even if used as toys, they were made for, not by, children.

(Above) Eskimo ball stuffed with moss or grass, covered and decorated with varicolored soft tanned leather.

(Far Left) Most Kachinas represent the unspecified ancestors of the Pueblos. The dolls are used to train children in identification of the real Kachina personators.



would hold large reunions with distant friends, neighbors, and relatives. Much of the joy in these gatherings was directed toward the children's games and many forms of play. Probably because of the harsh climate and rather forbidding geographic area in which they lived, these gatherings were an occasion for much happiness—happiness because they were with friends and family who,

for most of the year, were inaccessible due to the long severe winter season.

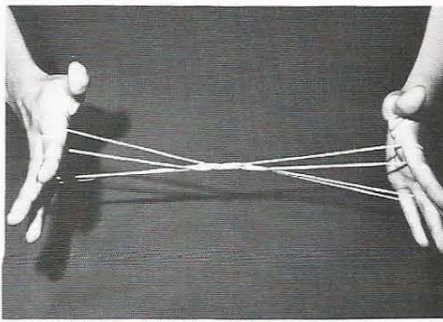
At these reunions, games such as blanket tossing were popular. They also enjoyed ball games in which they used decorated leather balls stuffed with grass. Sliding down slopes on skins was a favorite pastime, as it was with their Plains counterparts far to the south. In some areas children used small snow

knives to carve and erect miniature igloos. They also made models of houses, sleds, and kayaks. Weapons were constructed by adults with help from the boys who would soon be working on those of prototype size. Little girls used miniature seal oil lamps and practiced making small items from skins and hides. As tales about protective supernatural beings were told in the long



winters, miniatures of these supernatural are carved of steatite or ivory and presented to the children to help them remember the stories.

One of the more widely distributed and also one of the simplest of toys used by Indian and Eskimo children was the string or narrow thong used to make various, sometimes intricate, patterns between the fingers. This game,

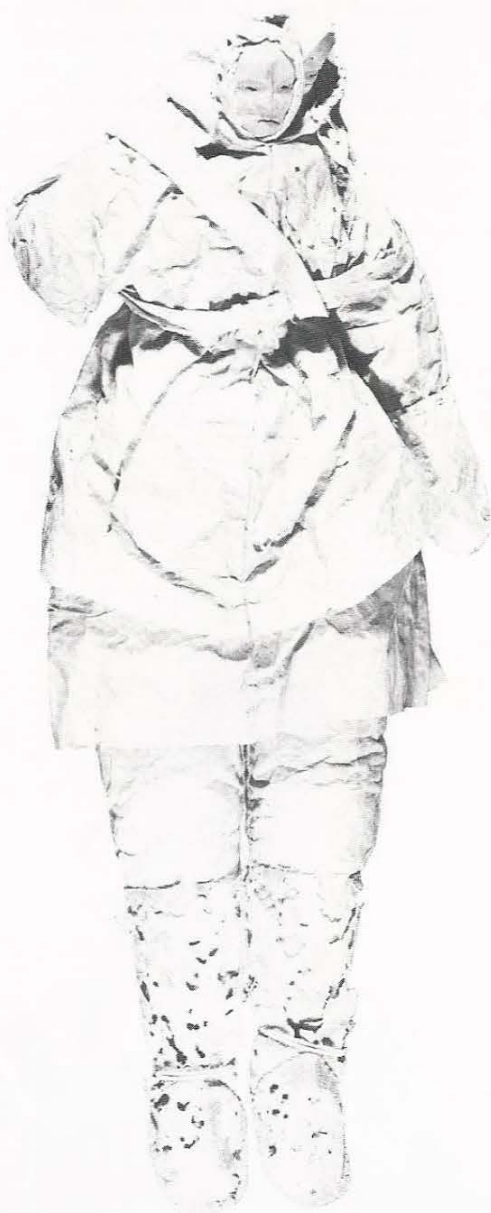


This game known as "Cat's Cradle" became quite elaborate among a number of American Indian groups. It has been, through the years, a popular pastime throughout the world.

Dolls of various North American Cultures: (Left to Right) Navajo of the Southwest and Matachina Dolls of the Pueblo area, Eskimo and Apache.

or pastime, was called "cat's cradle" by the Europeans. Among the southwestern Indians, specifically the Navajo, the game is frequently associated with weaving and with spiders although the figures created might resemble a bolt of lightning, or even the shape of stars or animals. The Navajo played the game only in the wintertime as many of the images they created resembled spiders





Eskimo mother-and-child doll made of skin and soft tanned hide. The faces are made of wood.

and animals, and the Indians did not want these creatures to watch them.

This pastime was given various names among the tribes. The Sioux called it "the game of wrapping a string around and between the fingers game." If not too original, the name was certainly descriptive. The Sauk and Fox called it the "parcel game." Among the Pueblo Indians of Cochiti, the game was known as "string playing," and the Pomo of California called it "tangled up" — an apt title. The Zuni, like the Navajo, felt that the game, which they called the "netted shield," was a gift of the spider, and that the idea was borrowed from the spider's web.

The figures created with this simple device would be somewhat difficult to visualize in many instances without help from the performer. The Navajo and Apache formed, as mentioned before, streaks of lighting and also big stars, double stars, and even horned stars. The Navajo made constellations such as the Pleiades. They made the shapes of coyotes, owls, snakes, horned toads, ponchos, hogans and other items familiar to their every day life.

The Eskimo favored such shapes as hills and ponds, and from the animal kingdom, bears, foxes, ravens, wolves, rabbits, deer, and even whales and walruses.

Some patterns were more easily discerned such as the relatively simple geometric forms made by the Cochiti — chicken feet, butterflies, and bows. Those of the Maricopa of Arizona were exceedingly elaborate — frequently involving multiple strings with involved intertwining although the subjects were not much different from those of the other tribes.

Another toy item in the collections is that of a racket used in the Passamaquoddy version of lacrosse or stickball. The racket differs in that the netted end is not fully hooped, but rather it is bent at a right angle and netted from the tip on the bent end back to about half the length of the long end. The adult Passamaquoddy game was played by both men and women as a "keep fit" exercise.

Whether as toys or as miniatures, the Indians manufacture quite an array

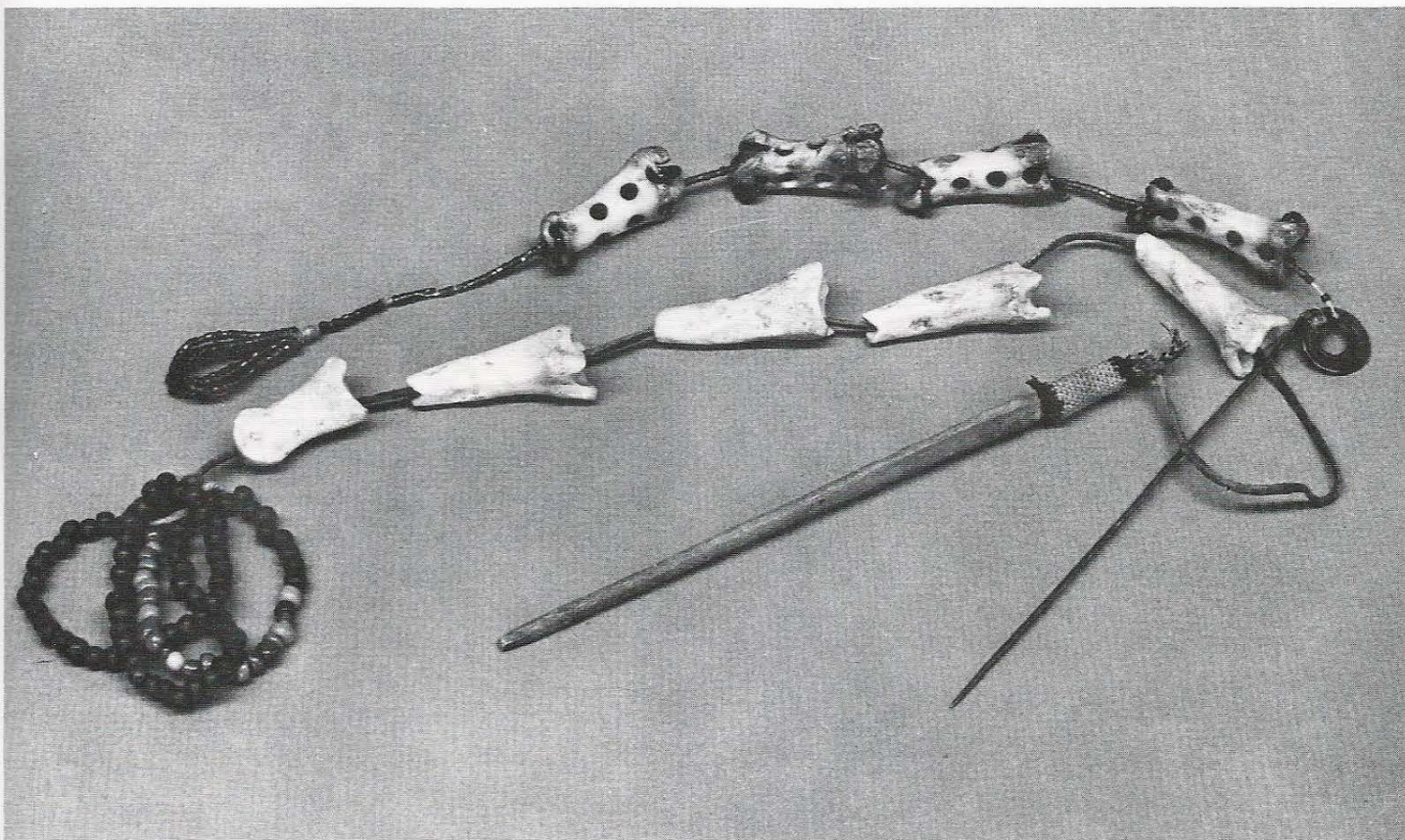
of small replicas of full-size objects.

As the tourist trade has increased, more of these undersized items have been made. Almost anything Indians have ever made, from tipis to totem poles, may be found in miniaturized form in children's playrooms or in collections from Malibu to Munich. At the same time, toy cowboys, six guns, and Douglas DC-3's are found in Indian homes from Toronto to Tierra del Fuego.

Many adult collectors of Indian manufacture also seek small items as being the finest examples of Indian crafts to be found, such as the exceedingly small and well-executed baskets that come from the Northwest Coast and the fine miniature pottery from the Pueblo area. These are viewed as works of art of the highest order and are more difficult to make and decorate than the full-size items.

One of the major factors in determining the form and type of an Indian's toys was his environment. For instance, where the weather was mild and the people spent most of the day in the open, there was less need for toys to entertain the children. Instead, they amused themselves by imitating adults at work or by fishing, swimming, and in group activities which usually did not require equipment.

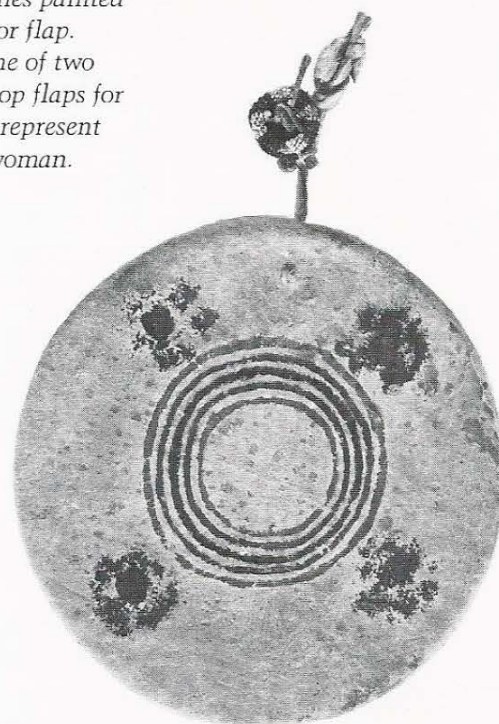
Many people believe that prehistoric people did not have toys because their life-style was too harsh for such luxuries. But does it not seem likely that children even then instinctively played with whatever was around just as a kitten today plays with a ball of string or a dog chases his tail? Actually it was the primitive societies who used the archetypes of most toys and playthings: a round stone thrown from child to child is the ancestor of the ball; pebbles were used as marbles; gourds filled with pebbles or seeds were used as rattles; a young boy probably straddled a tree branch and dragged it along, and this developed into the hobby-horse of today. Thus, "as man developed in skill and sophistication, toys developed with him." Play has quite naturally been a part of childhood throughout the ages and "is the means through which the world is explored and basic manipulative skills are developed."



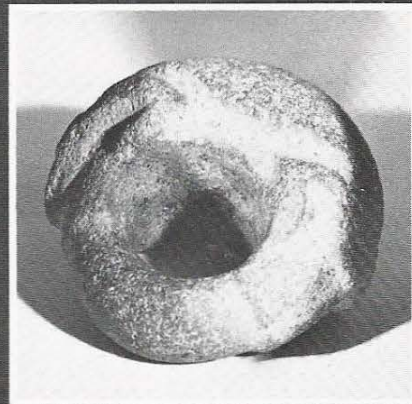
"Ring and pin" games made with bone and metal pins which are linked with sinew or leather strips and decorated with beads.



Miniature tipi with battle scenes painted on the exterior and on the door flap. The long pole on the left is one of two such poles used to adjust the top flaps for proper ventilation. The dolls represent a Northern Plains man and woman.



Miniature shield covered with soft tanned hide and decorated with pigments.





Games & Sports

Americans, it seems, have always had considerably more than a passing interest in sports and games. Hopefully we will leave adequate artifacts, or visual data, to aid future generations in reviewing these events in our cultures. Unfortunately, we are lacking many details of pre-Columbian amusements and must piece together, somewhat like a puzzle, the *who did what, when*

they did it, *how* they did it—as well as specifics on the paraphernalia *used*.

Among the more popular group amusements to survive from the Indian cultures are variations of lacrosse and hockey. Both games were widely distributed in North America, and written observations describe contemporary football as being “ladylike” compared to these Indian games.

ABOVE: Mayan pottery effigy whistle with deer headdress shows a ball game player with padded knees, padded right hand and wrist, and the yoke around the waist.

LEFT: The Totonac palmate stone illustrates how a Mayan ball game player wore the yoke and palmate stone. His left knee is padded for protection and in his left hand he holds a box-shaped ball game handstone. There is no conclusive evidence that the stone yoke, often weighing fifty pounds, was used in the actual game. It was probably used in the pre-game ceremonial activities. The loop handled handstone (Inset) is one of many styles used in the game. This stone probably deflected the ball and protected the hand and steadied the player.

George Catlin described the Choctaw ball game (lacrosse?) as being "the most beautiful" and "exciting" game he saw among the Indians. The goals of two upright posts were set between 220 and 275 yards apart. Each player had two sticks which were "bent into an oblong hoop at the end, with a sort of slight web of small thongs tied across, to prevent the ball from passing through." Holding a stick in each hand the player would leap into the air, catch the ball between the two nettings, and throw it. It was strictly against the rules to touch the ball with the hands.

Each player wore only a breechclout, a beaded belt, a "tail" made from quills or horsehair, and a horsehair "mane" around the neck.

As hundreds of players frantically struggled for possession of the ball, they could be seen actually leaping "over each other's heads, and darting between their adversaries' legs, tripping and throwing, and foiling each other in every possible manner" and each voice resounding in shrill yells and shrieks. Every possible means was employed to prevent the opposing team from scoring. As a result, many personal skirmishes took place. However, this did not delay the game. The teams continued playing as the clusters of fights were settled by those involved. At times, fifteen long minutes of frantic and bloody playing had passed before one side scored. But each time the ball passed between a set of stakes (the goal), one point was made and the judges declared a one minute halt to the game—a rest that was no doubt gratefully received by the contestants.

Then, as now, one of the important aspects of sports was that of gambling on the event. In 1895, a correspondent for the *San Francisco Examiner* reported in that paper that he had witnessed the game of the year between two tribes in which the stakes were "12 Winchester rifles of the latest pattern, 11 sound horses, 7 buggies, 100 blankets, 43 shawls, an uncounted pile of

mats, clothing for men and women...and \$49 in money!" This particular game was one of chance and yet the leader of the unsuccessful team proved to be "a thorough sport; for, in addition to his contribution to the stake of his tribe, he staked and lost his greatest treasure, a knife; [as well as] shiny brass rings, all his money (\$60), his watch, his rifle and his harness, his buggy, and his horse. He advised his companions on the team to bet everything they had, except their canoes. He insisted they should keep those in order that they might have some way to get home. He was not so careful of himself as of them, for he had to walk when the time came." The recorder pointed out that most of those who paddled home "felt the sharpness of the weather, for shirts and trousers were exceedingly scarce..."

It is safe to say that almost without exception, gambling took place wherever Indians and Eskimos held games of chance or skill. An equally interesting fact is that ball games were widespread. For simplification there are about eight major kinds of ball games. The first three being almost universal among Indians:

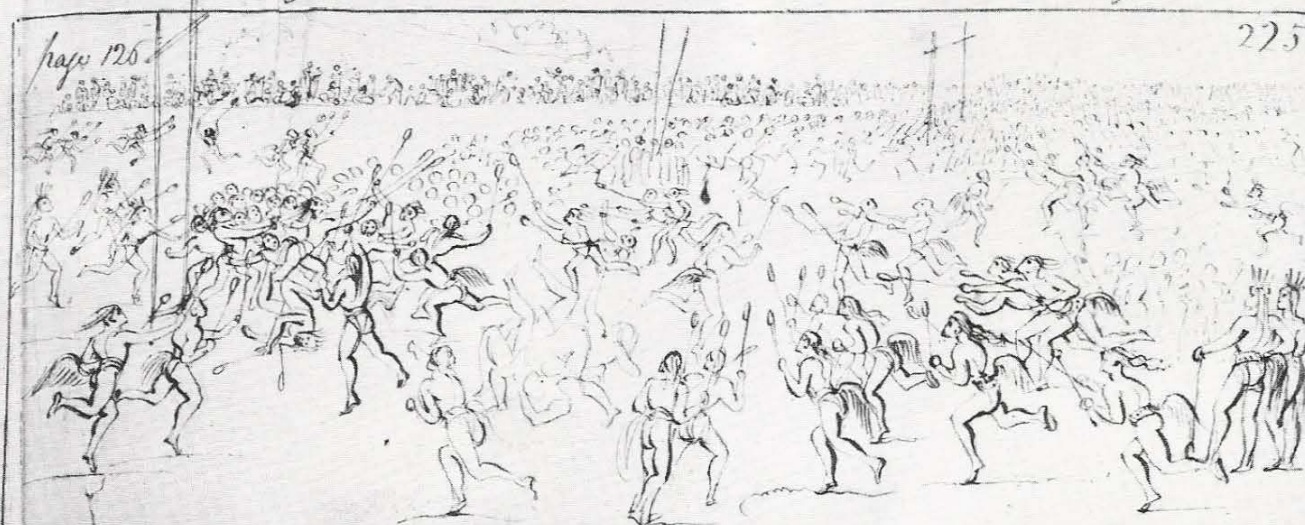
- 1) *Racket*, in which the ball is tossed with a racket; played by men.
- 2) *Shinney*, in which the ball is struck with a club or bat; played by both men and women (depending on the tribe).
- 3) *Double-ball*, played with two balls or billets tied together, tossed with a stick; chiefly played by women, except in northern California where men did play.
- 4) *Ball-race*, in which a ball or stick is kicked; similar to "kick the can," (but much more strenuous), and found only in the Southwest, into Mexico and westward to California.

In addition to the above, yet confined only to a few tribes:

- 5) *Football*, many variations; played by men and women.

Choctaw Ball Game, original sketches from George Catlin's sketch book in the Gilcrease Collection. "It is no uncommon occurrence for six to eight hundred or a thousand of these young men, to engage in a game of ball . . . And I pronounce such a scene, with its hundreds of Nature's most beautiful models, denuded and painted of various colours, running and leaping into the air . . . in the desperate struggles for the ball, a school for the painter or sculptor, equal to any of those which ever inspired the hand of the artist in the Olympian games or the Roman forum." Catlin.

Ball Play of the Choctaw Tribe (Ball in the Air)



Carl Bodmer, the artist, recorded through art what he and Maximilian, Prince of Wied, saw on their journeys in the 1830's, and the Prince wrote: "We observed many handsome men, in fine new dresses, some of whom were playing the game called billiards (or hoop and pole)." Carl Bodmer, **Winter Village of the Minatarees**, color lithograph.



The *Chungke* stone, which belonged to the town or community, was a disk with a convex edge and concave on both sides. It measured approximately an inch and a half thick and five inches across. Below: The *Ball-race* game, similar to "kick the can" but much more strenuous, was played with a ball of stone.

- 6) *Hand-and-Football*, a large ball is used; played by women.
- 7) *Tossed ball*, a ball is propelled with a bat or racket; played by adults or children, and by women or men.
- 8) *Ball-juggling*, two or more balls are used; played by all.

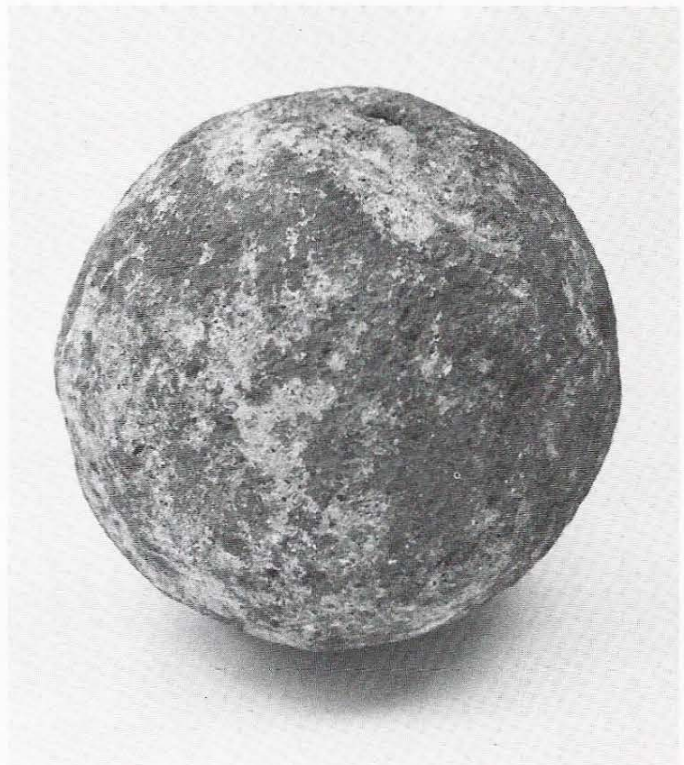
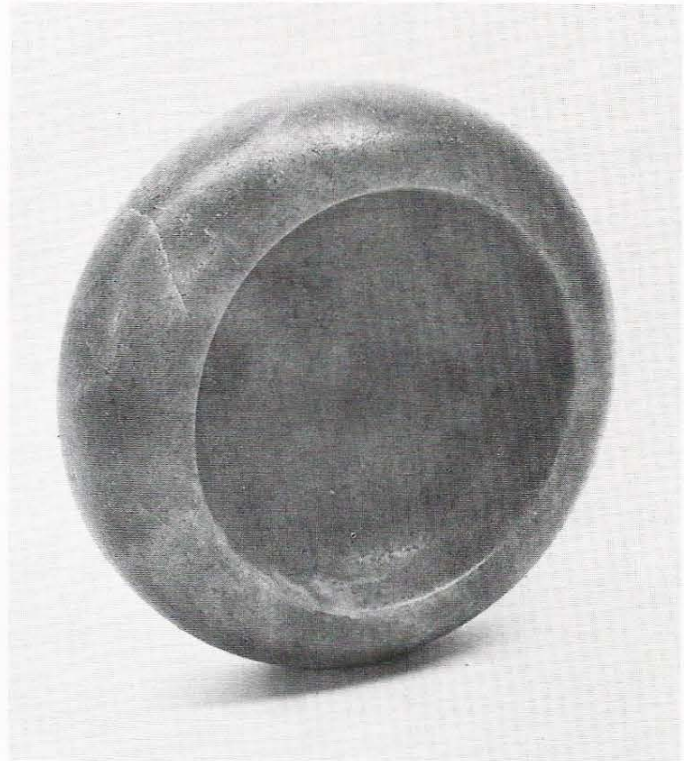
There is nothing to indicate these ball games were introduced by non-Indians/Eskimos. The materials used for balls varied greatly but the most common form was covered with buckskin. Some balls were made of stone, bone, wood, cordage, or various materials covered with buckskin.

The warriors of the Cherokee and Choctaw were well known for the game of *chungke*. This game is so old that the burial mound builders, and probably their ancestors too, played it. Records indicate that variations were played throughout America. In the classic form of the game, two men played, each with a tapered pole measuring eight feet. One *chungke* stone was used between the two players.

As the players ran abreast on a field approximately 200 feet long, one rolled the stone, on its edge, ahead of them. Running behind the stone, the players threw their pole—much in the manner of throwing a javelin. One point was scored for the pole that came closer to the stone after it stopped rolling. Two points were given if the pole touched the "dead" stone.

In the 1700's a recorder said, "Their favorite game of *chungke* is a plain proof of the evil consequences of a violent passion for gambling upon all kinds, classes, and orders of men..." and that they bet heavily. His story told of one player in 1771 who had bet all the skins he owned, lost them, and returned time and time again, each time with more valuable holdings, until finally he lost all that he owned. After that, he borrowed a gun and shot himself.

We know the Mayans at Chichén Itzá in



William de la Montagne Cary's oil, **Indian Marksman** illustrates the arrow game played by the Assiniboin men and boys in Montana. An arrow or stick was placed in the ground or snow and each player threw other arrows at it until it was struck. The one who struck the target was the winner of all the arrows on the ground.





Yucatan (as well as others in Mesoamerica), played an impressive ball game on elaborately constructed ball courts. Details of the game and its paraphernalia differ — much is left to speculation. It seems the players were assigned fixed positions on the court, comparable to today's volleyball. The purpose of the game was to bounce the rubber ball from player to player, and a score was made when the ball touched the floor of the opposing team. "The aspect of gaining ground as in modern soccer and football, was not evident."

Spanish Conquest accounts relate that the ball was not permitted to come in contact with the player's bare hands, calves, and feet. He was required to use his thighs, buttocks, and hips to strike the ball. Apparently a "leather or basketry belt" (yoke?) was worn around the waist. It frequently became necessary to strike a low ball and to do this the player dove to the plaster or masonry floor of the court. Because of this action, pads were worn to protect them from injury. Essentially the equipment worn was a tunic, hip-leather, glove, face net or mask, head-gear, arm pads, knee pads, and sandals. Over the tunic was the carved yoke. "Sticking upward from its front was an elongated carved object, possibly a palmate stone." It is speculated that the stone yokes and stone palmates were worn in the processions or ceremonies connected with the game. A human sacrifice seems to have played a major role in these pregame activities.

While George Catlin was at a Mandan village on the Upper Missouri in the 1830's, he sketched and wrote some of our most important accounts of Indian "festivities and amusements" — which include sports and games.

The following is Catlin's account of their archery, a favorite amusement: "...the young men who are the most distinguished in this exercise, assemble on the prairie at a little distance from the village, and having paid, each one, his 'entrance fee', such as a shield, a robe, a pipe, or

other article, step forward in turn, shooting their arrows into the air, endeavouring to see who can get the greatest number flying in the air at one time, thrown from the same bow. For this, the number of eight or ten arrows are clenched in the left hand with the bow, and the first one which is thrown is elevated to such a degree as will enable it to remain the longest time possible in the air, and while it is flying, the others are discharged as rapidly as possible; and he who succeeds in getting the greatest number up at once, is 'best', and takes the goods staked!"

The Pawnee derived considerable pleasure from games that helped them to develop physically, and which aided in the training of their senses, resulting in their becoming more proficient in competitions and other tribal activities. One such game was played with arrows. A chosen leader started the game by shooting an arrow about the distance of sixty paces from him. The object of the game was that each player attempted to shoot an arrow to fall directly across the leader's arrow. The person who accomplished this was allowed to keep all the arrows that were shot in the game.

All manner of arrows, darts, and javelins were designed for use in games over a wide area of America. Some were hurled on ice and snow, others were thrown through the air. Snow-snakes are probably best known and, as the name implies, they were used in colder climates and meant to glide in ruts of ice or snow. The *snake* was most often a long rod which curved up at one end or which came to a point at one end.

The Crow and Oglala Dakota (Sioux) Indians were only two of many groups who used a game arrow or javelin made from a thin sapling and tipped with a painted horn. The Oglala men who played the game called it *pte heste*, or game of the cow. Using the same number of arrows, each player stands on a marker line, throws his arrow underhanded against the

"... a few miles below the Sault ... high bettings had been made ... Indians had gathered to witness an Indian regatta or canoe race, which went off with great excitement, firing of guns, yelping, &c. The Indians in this vicinity are all Chippeway, and their canoes all made of birch bark ..."
 Catlin. George Catlin's ink sketch **Boat Race of Chippeway Indians.**

"... I frequently witnessed ... sailing with the aid of blankets, which the men carry; and when the wind is fair, stand in the bow of the canoe and hold by two corners, with the other two under the foot or tied to the leg; while the women sit in the other end of the canoe, and steer it with their paddles." Catlin. George Catlin's ink sketch **Log Canoes of the Sioux, Sac & Fox Indians sailing down the river with the aid of Blankets.**

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Boat Race of Chippeway Indians

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Log Canoes of the Sioux, Sac & Fox Indians sailing down the river with the aid of Blankets.

ground, hopefully to glance the full distance to the scoring line twenty or thirty feet away. The Crow game probably was played in the same manner, but the arrow was whirled rapidly with a vertical motion and when proper momentum was attained, the arrow was released. The player having the best score was awarded all the arrows used in the game.

Billiards, more frequently called the game of hoop-and-pole and/or wheel-and-stick, was played by men throughout North America. Basically the object of the game is to put a spear or forked dart through a rolling hoop. The score is determined by where the dart falls in relation to the hoop. There is remarkable diversity in the implements used and the method of playing the game. Hoops were made of curved sapling, netted or lashed with rawhide, twined with cord or beads, bark or corn husk.

One form of the hoop and forked pole game, played by the Cheyenne, was an event of annual summer festivals, and camp played against camp. The game started during the morning and continued until it was "called" at noon. At that point the winning group was rewarded by the losers with a feast.

As long ago as the prehistoric Thule period, Eskimos sculptured tiny flat-bottomed birds of ivory. Although we cannot be absolutely certain that culture group used the birds in a game, it is most probable they were game items. The Eskimo of St. Lawrence Island are well known for using these birds in a game called *tingmiujang* which was similar to "jackstones." The player tosses a handful of the birds into the air. Any bird that falls facing the player or setting upright is taken by the player. Everyone takes turns until the last bird-figure is taken up. The winner is the person with the greater number of birds.

The Haida of Alaska were no exception to man's addiction to games involving gambling. It seems too, according to an observer in the

early 1900's, that if a player could cheat in an unobtrusive manner he was all but congratulated — certainly not frowned upon — by those observing the games. One game in particular was played with highly polished, decorated or carved cylindrical sticks four or five inches long. One stick in particular was designated as the "bait" stick. The point of the game was to place the bait stick in one of several clusters of sticks which had been concealed in cedar bark. Another player tried to guess in which cluster the "bait" was hidden. If successful, it was then his turn to play. If he was unsuccessful, his opponent scored one point and the procedure was repeated.

The Konkau in California had a myth about a guessing game in which cheating had occurred. The Konkau's culture hero, *Oankoitupeh* (the Invincible), gambled in a guessing game with *Haikutwotepeh* and won back his grandfather's tribe. According to the myth, the grandfather lost to *Haikutwotepeh* because the latter cheated.

In this particular hand game, four short tubular pieces of bone were used. Two were plain and two were closed at each end with wooden plugs. All four were individually rolled up in dry grass; the first player held up one in each hand, and the other person held up two in the same manner. If the first player matched his with those of the other person he counted two; if he failed to match them the other person received the count of one. Sixteen pieces of wood were used as counters, and the first player to get all sixteen was declared the winner.

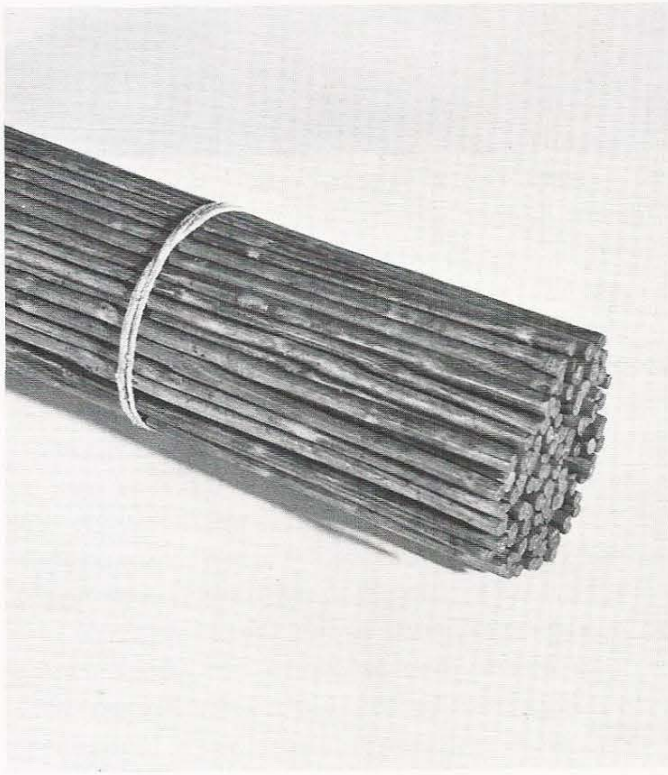
On the Umatilla Reservation, around the turn of the century, a group of men played cards and kept count with tally sticks. This game, and others, was held under a green bough built of posts. Well protected from the sun, two groups of twelve women each sat in rows facing each other. A hand game similar to "button, button, who's got the button" was in progress. Both sides were singing and swaying their arms and hands in

Gambling appears to have been universal among Indians of North America. Dice used in many games of chance were often carefully shaped, polished, and/or decorated with specific markings. The Pima, and possibly prehistoric Woodland Culture groups as well, used plain bones from such species as the bison. If the pitted side fell downward, the player was required to forfeit the bone to his opponent.

In a game similar to "jackstones," the Eskimo of the North spent many hours during the long winter months betting on the outcome of this amusement. The manner in which the birds fall is an important factor in the game.



A popular dice game played by the prairie tribes required a basket, approximately six or eight inches wide and usually woven from yucca, and five dice that may be round, elliptical, or diamond-shaped with markings burned on one side only. One pair must match and the remaining three must match but differ from the pair. Below: A large pile of tally sticks was used to maintain the score of the game.



Tribes in the Northeast Woodlands and some in the Northeastern Plains gathered from miles around to the shore of a river or lake to watch the highly competitive boat races. William de la Montagne Cary's oil, **Canoe Race**.



unison. Using four tubular-shaped bones (two plain and two with a black band around the center), the leader of one side manipulated them down the line and the leader of the other side attempted to guess who had the bones. The count was kept with twenty sticks (each side having ten), which were stuck in the ground in front of the leader. All the players had made wagers on the outcome, and the stakes consisting of blankets, strings of beads, silk handkerchiefs and money were placed between the two rows of women.

Throughout the Indian population, betting on games of chance was a favorite amusement and various forms of dice quite naturally evolved. These "dice" games were essentially the same as Europeans' games in that the count was based on the markings that were uppermost when the dice came to rest.

There was a multitude of variations in shapes and markings of dice, and the stick dice was a popular variant. An everyday summer amusement among the Kiowa, Comanche, and Apache women in the southern Plains was the stick dice game which had some of the same features as monopoly. Small groups of women sat around the game blanket with its marked "course" for half a day and sounds of laughter and good-humored jokes could be heard as a player was sent back to the beginning, or if her play caused her to fall in the "creek" area. Four sticks with special markings and colorings were held in one hand and thrown down on end upon a stone in the center of the blanket. An intricate system of counting and moves never seemed to confuse the players.

A game of dice played by the Cheyenne is called *mo'nshimûnh* (their modern card games carry the same name). The Arapaho call their dice game *tau' sêta' tina*, which means to strike or throw against something. This particular game was recorded as early as 1634 as "hubbub" and it was played then just as it's played today. The

only variance seems to be that at that time men played, and songs were sung during the game. The game as we know it today is played only by women — who, by the way, seem to hold a record for gambling addiction. The necessary items for this game are five dice (usually bone), a basket bowl, and a large pile of tally sticks. Any number of females may play but generally a set of partners plays against another. The dice are tossed from the basket, and the manner in which they fall into the basket determines the number of points scored. One hundred points is a game.

To explain the scoring, the pair will be designated as "rounds" and the remaining three as "diamonds." "In every case all of one kind at least must turn up to score a point. A successful throw entitles the player to another throw, while a failure obliges her to pass the basket to someone else. The formula is: One only of either kind counts 0; two rounds, 3; three diamonds (both rounds with blank side up), 3; three diamonds blank (both rounds with marked side up), 3; four marked sides up, 1; five blank sides up, 1; five marked sides up, 8."

The bone dice game played by the Pima was called *tanwan* and it was played by two people who sat facing each other several feet apart. With the hand held upward, the bone dice was held between the thumb and forefinger and twirled into the air. The manner in which the bone came to rest determined the count. If the pitted side fell upward, the player retained the bone, received one point, and threw again. The player was allowed to keep possession of the bone as long as it fell pitted side up. Once the pitted side fell downward, he was required to forfeit the bone to his opponent. The game was won by the player who had all his opponent's counters.

Written records tell us much concerning the games, sports and amusements of people, and these records are enlightened by the artifacts (or specimens) and pictorial renderings in the Insti-

Long before the Indian ever saw men from other cultures, he had his own unique forms of sports and games of chance. Many of these activities were so much a part of their own cultures they seemed to have no need for "foreign" games. It was not until much later in their history that they adopted games and sports of other cultures. William de la Montagne Cary, *Going the White Man's Way*, bronze.



tute's collections. There comes a time, however, when the facts are not "cut and dried" and we must make a value judgment. For instance, we know that dice have been formed from bone into many shapes. We also know that the Pima of Arizona found it unnecessary to "shape" dice from bone and instead used the natural astragalus of bison (one of the proximal bones in the foot of this higher vertebrate). In the Gilcrease Anthropology Collection there are a handful of small bones which were obviously used for some purpose at a time estimated to be between 1000 B.C. and A.D. 700. These bones (smooth from being handled), were found in archaeological digs in the 1920's in Crittenden and Mississippi Counties in Arkansas as well as near the Mississippi River in Tipton County, Tennessee.

Because gambling, and "dice" in particular, was so widespread and has been a popular game

throughout recorded time, is it not quite feasible that these "undesigned" bones were used in prehistoric times as dice and that a group of Woodland Culture Indians may well have played a game similar to the Pima game of *tanwan*?

In summary we can now piece together what we know about Indian sports and games: that the Indian, in Mexico and North America, participated in many sports, games, and amusements; that various forms of ball games seem to have been the most prevalent activity in this area; that there were sports and games played only in the winter and others played only in the summer; that the paraphernalia media was most often determined by the environment in which the activity occurred; and that in the category of amusements/games, all kinds of dice and betting occupied much of the indigenous American's pastime.

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