

**THE MATERIAL CULTURE OF CHILDREN'S PLAY:  
SPACE, TOYS AND THE COMMODITIZATION OF  
CHILDHOOD IN A GREEK COMMUNITY**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis is an ethnography of children's play in Palaia Phocaea of Attica Greece, with a particular focus on its material aspects: the spaces and objects of children's playful interactions with the social world. The evidence is also used to discuss various theories as to the impact of the commoditization of toys.

Chapter 1 introduces the theoretical perspectives adopted throughout the thesis and the key concepts employed such as the notion of interpretive reproduction and cultural appropriation.

Chapter 2 spells out the methodological problems of research with children, in order to discuss the adopted research strategies and methods.

Chapter 3 provides a historical background and a summary of the changes that transformed the economy of Phocaea, as a context to children's play and its social parameters.

Chapter 4 focuses on play at school, including factors beyond the school environment that influence children's play in the school playground. The main issues discussed concern the appropriation of space for the performance of children's play related projects, debates on gender separation in the school playground and questions regarding the performance of gender and age identities in the school playground of Phocaea.

Chapter 5 turns to both issues of appropriation of space and its contestation in the context of neighbourhood play. The emphasis is on the construction, transformation and reproduction of social, spatial and temporal boundaries that circumscribe children's play and their relationships to adults and other children.

Chapter 6 deals with children's play at home as the main site of symbolic constructions and hence with children's imaginary domains to address issues arising from the commoditization of toys and their influence upon children's play.

The thesis concludes with a general discussion of materiality and play and of the commoditization of children's culture

*To the memory of my dad,  
a man who played the game of life  
with dignity and courage - to the end.*

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\*All photographs by Cleo Gougoulis

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **Scope of the thesis and ethnographic setting**

This thesis is an ethnography of children's play with a particular focus on its material aspects: the spaces and objects of children's playful interactions with the social world. As contemporary playthings are the products of global capitalism rather than creations of local children's – or adult's – craftsmanship, the thesis also deals with the theoretical questions arising from the commoditization of play.

My fieldwork took place from June 1988 to May 1989 in Palaea Phocaea of Attica,<sup>1</sup> or simply Phocaea. Phocaea is a seashore village located 52 km SE of Athens with a population during the period of my stay of 2010 inhabitants. In terms of my particular interests recent economic developments in the community, including the exposure of Phocaeans to a global toy market, suggested that research in this particular area would be appropriate. The thesis seeks to bring together theoretical insights within the anthropology of childhood, and anthropological approaches to material culture and consumption. It does so by examining children's play in three different social and spatial contexts of the particular community: the school playground, the neighbourhood and the home and its environs. Stress is then laid on how children interact with the artefactual world – objects and socially constructed space – to transform and reproduce each other.

Space emerges as a structural feature of my thesis, as children's play culture is linked to interpretations of space and place, as domains for the negotiation of power between adults and children, and between children of different "play groups". My ethnographic material suggests, in line with current theoretical trends in the sociology of childhood, that children are active participants in these contests of power. In my search for a theoretical framework to account for children's active engagement with special contexts and with toys, I turned to the concept of

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<sup>1</sup> The theoretical and methodological implications of the time-gap between the completion of the main bulk of my fieldwork and the submission of the thesis are discussed in chapter 2. The reasons for this temporal anomie are largely due to the fact that my research coincided with a particular stage in my life cycle that had to accommodate the conflicting commitments of academic qualification with motherhood, professional work and the unfortunate loss of a parent.

appropriation, as best describing the quality of children's playful engagement with spaces, things and social relationships.

### **Appropriation in play as children's culture and children's play spaces**

The framework for defining children's agency has been sought in a combination of perspectives ranging from symbolic interactionism and social phenomenology to social constructionism and a particular blend of Marxism with semiotics introduced by the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (James and Prout 1990: 14-19). The notion of children's play as appropriation draws on the legacy of radical cultural politics the 1970s which focused on age-based subcultures as forces of resistance to capitalist domination (James and Prout 1990: 19; Skelton and Valentine 1998: 12-17). Sociological approaches to childhood, play and children's material culture studied children as semi-autonomous groups holding a different and perhaps opposed world view to that of dominant adult society. Children's agency was understood in terms of appropriation or counterhegemony notions that had been broadly used in cultural studies, to frame an understanding of youth cultures. Children's play within this model of children as subcultures or "tribal children" (James, Jenks and Prout 1998) emphasized children's play in playgrounds as counterhegemonic to adult control (e.g. Hardman 1973a, 1973b, 1974a; James 1979; Sluckin 1981).

The merits of this view was that children were seen as social actors. Research centered on children's experience and use of space and in the particular way in which children defy and surpass adult structured environments (see Holloway and Valentine 2000b: 7-8 , 12). Its drawbacks were located in the fact that it produced free-floating models of children resisting adult control, while leaving the structures which shaped both children's experience and adult control relatively unexplored. Therefore a new perspective developed within the same antithetical tradition, among social geographers, who drew on the burgeoning literature about the social construction of childhood (new sociology of childhood) to forward a view of children as a minority group oppressed by adult structures of domination. This integrated a political commitment: to give voice to children as competent social actors in an adult dominated world with the development of child centred methodologies based on the underlying assumption of the fundamental competence of children. The view of children as competent social actors was supported by

various strands of critique of Piaget's theories (e.g. Donaldson 1978 in James 1993:102-103), and psychologically oriented geography examining children's mapping abilities and spatial cognition- (Holloway and Valentine 2000b:8)

Within this framework, space becomes an arena of contestation between unequally positioned groups for control of the conditions of social life. Children are seen as social strategists using their spatial autonomy to expand their control over an adult structured time-table (e.g. the work of Katz 1998 in Sudan and Punch 2000 in Bolivia).

Recent works have looked into the writings of Foucault, Giddens, Bernstein and Bourdieu as a necessary corrective to earlier celebrations of children's creativity to the detriment of an analysis of wider social structures (James and Prout 1995: 81).

The idea for instance that "schools are physically set up to maximize surveillance of students with few private spaces and a staff who continually watch with eyes that mix benign pedagogical goals and affection with control" (Thorne 1993: 127), draws on Foucault's dictum that in modern disciplinary societies the control and distribution of people in space becomes of central concern, as disciplines can be effective through the control and structuring of space (Tilley 1994: 70). Children's agency in the playgrounds in that sense may be constrained by the fact that "teachers sort the students into manageable groups and structure their daily routines according to the curriculum, the social process that animates and gives meaning to the school as a formal organization. It is further limited by the fact that teachers also "regulate the students activities, movement, posture, talking, possessions etc" (Thorne, 1993:29, James, Jenks and Prout 1998: 41). These issues will be discussed in detail in chapters 4 and 5 of this thesis.

My own work concentrates on acknowledging the wider grounding of play and its socializing potential in material culture, which is addressed in the next section.

### **The contribution of material culture studies: Towards a unified approach to space and toys**

In looking for a general framework to discuss the limits to children's agency, that would account for both children's use of space and their use of objects - as commodities - in play I have taken advantage of a series of studies in material culture that specifically focus on the processes of cultural appropriation.



Miller (1987) emphasized the transformative potential of consumption as an interpretative social practice in terms of recontextualization (or resocialization). It is referred to as the end process of Hegel's notion of objectification as self-alienation and sublation (1987:28.) By transforming their kitchens the tenants of a North London Council estate they **appropriate** them - they complete the dual process of objectification through sublation, i.e. through transforming the products of alienation into inalienable goods, i.e. goods invested with personal meaning (Miller 1988).

The idea of appropriation is derived from the work of Hebdige on British subcultures (1981). In Miller's reading of Hebdige (1995b: 30), "people appropriate the objects of consumption to construct moral projects, not necessarily intended by the producers". Consumption for Miller in his later work becomes (1995b: 37) more than a shift or appropriation of meaning (as in McCracken 1988: 71-78) or "really" about identity (Friedman 1994). It is identified with the entire process of (Hegelian) objectification rather than its end (sublation).

Complementary to this is Appadurai's biographical approach to objects (1986) and his attention to the transformation of meaning in different contexts. This dovetails with Hebdige's description of the transformation of meaning across sites of the commodity chain, and Miller's concept of appropriation.

For Miller this appropriation is a recontextualization of objects in their use (or in consumption as an economic and cultural activity), which are reworked and transformed. For example, as Miller (1987: 105-106) argues on Bourdieu (1977):

"Although the object may be closely associated with the most fundamental and hidden aspects of socialization this does not mean that it must be analysed only by determinant rule-based objectivist procedures, since as an instrument of social strategy it retains a high degree of flexibility".

Miller therefore employs Bourdieu's notion of habitus in order to create a process for interpreting objects and artifacts in context, i.e. a social group's perspective on some forms is always predicated upon the historical conjunctures of its dispositions. Bourdieu's theory has been also influential in defining the role of children's culture – and thus of play – in social reproduction. This process has been developed in the work of Corsaro (1997).

### **Sociological approaches to childhood and the limits to agency: Corsaro's theory of interpretive reproduction**

One of the most fruitful theoretical approaches to children's participation in the social world that seeks to transcend both the objectivist pitfalls of traditional socialization theories and subjectivist pitfalls of free-floating models of children examine both structure and action. has been elaborated by Corsaro, who introduced in the last decade the notion of interpretive reproduction.

Corsaro draws on Vygotsky's social constructivist model of child development and especially his notions of internalization, and his theory of learning as occurring within a zone of proximal development. Cultural learning, constitutes an active process of internalization or appropriation taking place in meaningful social interaction, i.e. within positioned activities (situated activities- Goffman 1961; Corsaro and Evaldsson 1998: 380). These meaningful social interactional contexts (the daily routines and practices- where habitus is communicated) constitute zones of proximal development. Interaction with adults and peers is crucial in this process- it is not a mentalist, procedure taking place in social isolation, as a child interacts with the world (Piaget) through processes of assimilation and accommodation.

Play constitutes a zone of proximal development for children as it takes place "between the actual development level as determined by the independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Vygotsky 1978 in Corsaro 1997:16). Corsaro further elaborates on Vygotsky's notion of appropriation and Bourdieu's understanding of social reproduction to formulate a theory of children's culture as interpretive reproduction, a notion that "captures the innovative and creative aspects of children's participation in society" and the constraining aspects of this process. The notion of interpretive reproduction thus brings together structure and practice (Corsaro 1997: 18).

Children do not simply internalize the world around them. They strive to make sense of their culture and to participate in it. In attempting to make sense of the adult world, children come to collectively produce their own peer cultures, and actively participate in the production, reproduction and potential change of adult culture. The notion of interpretive reproduction is particularly useful as it can be applied to space, toys and all aspects of children's culture, and as such it has been adopted as a general framework to understand children's participation in local and global cultures.

Before turning to the presentation of this thesis I shall briefly deal in the next section with the anthropological treatment of children and play in the ethnography of Greece.

### **Children's Play in the Ethnography of Greece**

Children in the pioneering ethnographies conducted by American and British anthropologists in the 1960s and 1970s have been examined in the context of their structural position within the elementary family or kin group. Early ethnographies deal with child upbringing methods, parent-child relationships and patterns of children's enculturation or socialization into dominant values of village life as struggle (Friedl 1962) honour and shame (Campbell 1964), and later – under the influence of structuralism – of major social polarities e.g. the ingroup-outgroup (*Dikoi-Xenoi*) distinctions identified by (Zatz 1980). Reference to play was scattered through these ethnographies, rarely reaching a level of analysis beyond brief descriptions (e.g. Campbell 1964:156) usually in order to illustrate other points. For example the fact that children played in the streets of the urban locality studied by Hirschon (1989) was used to as an example of the people's informal outdoor patterns of everyday sociability. Hirschon, later produced an intriguing article on adult-children's verbal play forms (by using a broad definition of play which included lying, discipline through the use of tall tales, and fictitious threats to punishment) as reproduction of power relationships based on the principles of gerontocracy (Hirschon 1992)<sup>2</sup>.

Three extant ethnographies on children (Makrynioti 1982; Henze 1992; Avgitidou 1994) are not specifically focused on play but deal with children's playful activities in some length<sup>3</sup>. Makrynioti (1982), a sociologist of education, in her pioneering ethnography adopted a symbolic interactionist approach to the study of a Greek classroom. Makrynioti used Bernstein's theory to focus on the hidden curricula reproducing gender asymmetries in the primary school of her study. Her detailed and insightful ethnography also included a section on play's role in gender socialization which was nevertheless influenced by the dominant theoretical trends of

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<sup>2</sup>For a more detailed discussion of Hirschon's points see chapter 5, section on teasing among children.

<sup>3</sup>Some anthropologists have focused on adult play as a manifestation of contestive forms of male (Hezrfeld 1985; Papataxiarchis 1999) and -fairly recently- also female sociability (Reizakis). The latter is one of the very few examples in the ethnography of Greece that explores the dark side of play, where people's reputations and lives are toyed with in power games between young women and less

the 1980s that approached play as static sets of rules and gender differences as deficits (see chapter 4 on critique of these approaches). Henze's ethnography of children's apprenticeship into linguistic and bodily practices in Thessaly explored parent-child interactions during learning and teaching processes.<sup>4</sup> Play in Henze's fascinating account is clearly viewed by parents as a context of learning, although it takes place in the sphere of fiction. Those parents, who expect their children to follow their own occupation when they grow up, are taken to the fields and given miniature tools to play with, until they are old enough to perform real agricultural work. Parents, who do not envisage their children as future farmers leave them at home with grandparents. Henze includes other learning processes (e.g. cupping) that are framed as play but are in fact scaffolded by parents within the mode of make-believe. Although it is mainly dealing with adult-child interactions in cultural routines, Henze's work also provides some very interesting examples of children teaching other children tokens of popular culture (e.g. commercial jingles) included apprenticeship during play. Avgitidou (1994, 1995), compared the formation of children's friendships in a Greek and an English preschool setting, through examining their daily cultural routines. Play in Avgitidou is approached from within the framework of social constructionism (1997, 2001b) and is further analyzed in terms of Corsaro's theory of interpretive reproduction, where children through their backstage play activities (e.g. by smuggling toys into school despite the teachers prohibition) contribute to secondary adjustments of school regulations that have impact on their daily lives.

Trakas (1987) was one of the first anthropologists to focus specifically on children's play in Greece. Although her material was not ethnographic but relied on interviews with children and parents' childhood memories, she did pinpoint interesting structural features of some games, e.g. the prevalence of forfeits in the form of corporal punishment of the losers at the level of the parental generation, the tendency of contemporary boys to form hierarchical groupings, and the role of kinship in marking children's in-group – out-group distinctions. Kloni (2000) illustrated the absence of work-play dichotomies in a Greek Epirote village and examined the changes brought about to local children's traditional hierarchical

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powerful men in a Chiot village (Reizakis 2001). See chapters 4 and 5 in current thesis on commentary and on the darker sides of children's play in Phocaea.

<sup>4</sup> I thank David Sutton for bringing Henze's work to my attention.

relationships by the cash flows from immigrant parents. Tsigra (2001) employed Clifford Geertz's approach to social phenomena as texts and his method of thick description to preschooler's play, following James (1993) and Schwartzman (1977), in order to discuss how children during pretense strategically manipulate their present relationships by referral to their future roles that are enacted during play. In my own work I have attempted to explore various issues e.g. the consequences of the commercialization on Greek children's play (Gougoulis 1986, 1995), an early approach to themes explored in this thesis but predominantly based on folklore material), the content and structuring of children's pretense (1999a) and its contribution to the reproduction of gender stereotypes (1992, 2000b). Further publications have focused on a critical appraisal of discourses on play in Greek society in the 19th and the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries (1999 b, 2000a) and on a critique of the epistemological foundations underlying Greek Folklore's approaches to children's play 1850-1950 (Gougoulis 2001).

### **Summary of thesis chapters**

The thesis builds on the more recent trends in Greek ethnography and the sociology of childhood, which are in tune with the view of children as actively participating in the social world. Throughout the thesis this participation is viewed in terms of Corsaro's theory of interpretive reproduction of their socialization, while their interaction with the material viewed in terms of children coming to terms with structured resources (spaces or toys) for action.

Chapter 2 opens the discussion by spelling out the methodological problems of research with children. This is the section that deals with the relationship between concepts of childhood and the development of research strategies and questions, the problems considered to arise from the encounter between a female indigenous anthropologist with children of her culture. The discussion concludes with a focus on research ethics and with the problems arising from the time gap between fieldwork and submission of thesis.

Chapter 3 provides a historical background to the ethnic tensions in the community, and a summary of the changes ensuing the opening of the coastal road that transformed the economy of Phocaea, as a backdrop against children's play and its social parameters.

Chapter 4 deals with play at school – one of the privileged ethnographic settings for the study of children’s play in modern western societies – to draw together insights from factors beyond the school environment, which organize children’s play in the school playground. This is the section of the thesis which deals with issues of appropriation of space for the performance of children’s play related projects and with questions regarding the development of specific gender and age relations in Phocaea vis-à-vis other ethnographic reports of school play.

Chapter 5 discusses both issues of appropriation of space and its contestation in the context of neighbourhood play. The emphasis of the chapter is on the construction, transformation and reproduction of social, spatial and temporal boundaries that circumscribe children’s play and their relationships to adults and other children.

Chapter 6 deals with children’s play at home as the main site of symbolic constructions and hence with children’s imaginary domains to address issues commonly viewed to arise from the commoditization of children’s play and to ask what difference toys make on children’ play.

The thesis concludes with a general discussion on the materiality of play and on issues concerning the commoditization of toys.

## CHAPTER 2

### APPROACHING CHILDREN: METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES

#### Introduction

Since the publication of *Writing Culture* (Clifford and Marcus 1986) and the simmering down of the subsequent debate, it has become an established routine in ethnographies to reflect both on the research process per se and on the conditions of the production of the ensuing anthropological text, as it is widely held that “the explanations of social life offered by the researchers in the form of written texts are inevitably marked by their peculiar authorship and fieldwork style” (James, Jenks and Prout 1998: 170). The “field” in my case mainly -but by no means exclusively- was children’s play spaces i.e., all those social settings where play took place in the school, the neighbourhoods and the homes of Phocaea’s primary school children.<sup>1</sup>

In this chapter I shall attempt to address questions related to the choice and the implications of adopting particular research strategies in the context of anthropological debates on the nature of research in one’s own culture and the nature of research with children. The discussion will focus on the limits posed on my research by the particular way I entered the field, as a native, female adult researcher to study children’s play as part of global systems, by the way I situated myself and was situated by others in the field vis-à-vis the cultural construction of childhood as different from adulthood, and by the time gap between the “ethnographic present” of the field experience and the present ordering of that experience into a written ethnographic account of children’s play.

#### **2.1 Entering the Playground: Indigenous Anthropology and the study of children’s play in an era of globalization.**

One of the main questions that my thesis addresses is the commoditization of children’s play in an era of globalization. My interest in the commoditization of

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<sup>1</sup> In fact, I followed children around in all settings and social occasions in which they were daily involved, as participants in their peer culture (e.g. karate and traditional dance classes, Sunday School, birthday and name-day parties) and adult culture (church services, life-cycle and Christian calendar rituals, festivals), as play is not limited to play settings (see Chapter 5). I also observed children’s toy consumption and gift exchange practices as situated within a national system of production and distribution, as well as within local retailing strategies.

children's play, originated in a dual perspective: Marxism and folklore.<sup>2</sup> Marxists and folklorists are sensitive to social change. Despite their contrasting viewpoints, as Marxism glorifies change (see for example Berman 1983) and folklore has historically regarded it in terms of loss, both share, for different reasons, a polemical approach to the products of the culture industry. With regard to children's culture this view has been often put forward as a doctrine about the demise of traditional games.<sup>3</sup>

Commercial toys and traditional games are contrasted in this view, the first being regarded as forces of alienation and the second as examples of children's creativity. This view may be found, for example in Wollen (1979), while my own MSc dissertation was based on a similar assumption (Gougoulis 1986). My evidence came from interviews with children during a short visit to Phocaea in 1986, who were able to list and describe over thirty games, which have been reported as traditional in previous collections of games (e.g. Opie and Opie 1984; Loukopoulos 1926). Games, I then claimed, had not been commercialized i.e. alienated by the market, unlike the case of toys. While children's toy worlds had been usurped by the manufacturers, games displayed resistance to capitalist penetration. My initial distinction between toys and games as a method of examining diachronical change in children's play followed from this "discovery". As I later delved into anthropological and interdisciplinary literature on childhood and play before embarking on the field, I modified my perspective. First I adopted a more active view of children as competent social actors and active participants in their socialization, which was heralded by the work of Charlotte Hardman (1973a, 1973b) and fully developed by a number of scholars who established what is now known as the "new sociology of childhood" (James and Prout 1990; Corsaro 1997). My second modification came from theoretical readings on play and particularly Jean Piaget's developmental staging of play as a progression from symbolic play to games with rules (Piaget 1962) and by Roger Caillois' influential definition and classification of play along a continuum,

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<sup>2</sup> My relationship with folklore owes to my first academic degree in the faculty of Philosophy – which in Greece includes classics, linguistics and folklore among other courses – and my professional involvement by virtue of my affiliation to a Folklore Museum in Greece.

<sup>3</sup> See Postman (1983) and the lengthy refutation of his arguments by Factor (1988). Also see the contextualization of the debate e.g. by examining different definitions of the term "traditional" in Bishop and Curtis (2001: 8-13). See chapter 4 on the implications of the demise of traditional games hypothesis on children's playtime at schools.



whose two antithetical poles were occupied by free play, exuberance and make-believe on the one hand, and rule bound games on the other (Caillois 1961).<sup>4</sup>

Both perspectives were not without their problems. Piaget's theory of cognitive stages was increasingly attacked by social scientists (see footnote 13 in this chapter) both for its asocial view of children and play and for its primitivizing of children (James, Jenks and Prout 1998). Caillois' conceptualizing of play was criticized for its dichotomous perspective, which was clearly challenged by the work of Vygotsky (1985), who illustrated the coexistence of rules and symbolic representation in all play forms, and by Ehrman (1968) for the underlying analogy it implied between nature and culture. Notwithstanding the criticisms of Caillois' model, it is still thought of as a useful point of departure in several modified and less contrasting forms (e.g. Evaldsson 1993). Corsaro and Evaldsson have recently offered a new way to theorize about play and games by taking into consideration both their difference in terms of structural properties and in terms of performances. Their solution is to regard play and games as situated activities (Goffman 1961; Corsaro and Evaldsson 1998).<sup>5</sup>

When I embarked on fieldwork in June 1988, debates were heated on the consequences of the development of an aggressive promotion of global cultural products to children through the synergy of the media, major toy-making companies and the licensing industry. More or less in the line of "the medium is the message", toy critics argued that the toy market straight jacketed children's imagination by offering ready made scenarios, and inculcated questionable values into children such as the admiration of glamour, vanity, aggression and violence. In 1986 a leading play theorist, Brian Sutton Smith, challenged toy critics' views by arguing that by virtue

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<sup>4</sup> It should be noted that, although Caillois (1961: 27-35) used the ancient Greek term *paidia* to define "the spontaneous manifestations of the instinct of play" as one of the two polar types of his continuum, this term has ceased to exist in Modern Demotic Greek. In Demotic Greek the single term *paichnidi* or *paignidi*, has been used, at least since the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, to designate *play* (as a generic activity), *game* (as a rule-bound playful action) and *toy* (see Gougoulis 1993, 2000a). While Ancient Greek had clear cut terms for toy (*athyrma*), contest (*agon*) and play (*paidia*, *paizein*), Modern Greek retained the terminological distinction between play (*paichnidi*) and contest (*agonas*) but used the same term for toys and play. The broadening of the term *play* has led some folklore theorists (e.g. Meraklis 1986: 34) to argue that the conflation of toy, game and play in the single term *paichnidi* suggests the reflection of the commoditization of play in the Greek language. Such a contention, however, does not seem to be supported by historical evidence, as the commoditization of toys – in terms of a widely spread phenomenon – only occurred after the Second World War in Greece (see Gougoulis 1986).

<sup>5</sup> Corsaro and Evaldsson draw on Goffman (1961) to define children's games as situated activities, i.e. as activities where the interactional context of the players is taken into account. Stress is laid on the

of play's assimilatory character contemporary toys were subsumed during pretense to larger imaginative schemes. The debate was challenging for me. It suggested that the only way to determine which of these views best described the situation for the children of my country, was to explore the content and context of children's play by participant observation with children in all their natural environments. By locating my research across different settings used by the same group, i.e., the children of a particular locality/community, I was hoping to transcend the limitations of previous research in laboratory ( e.g. by social and developmental psychologists) or structured settings such as schools, preferred for various reasons by many social scientists studying western children (see Schwartzman 1983 for a detailed discussion). In fact the decision to locate my ethnography across the different settings of home, school and neighbourhood, although initially based on my focus on the materiality of play, also yielded some interesting results vis-a-vis received wisdoms on the presence of divided cultural worlds across gender lines, a view also referred to as gender segregation ( see Thorne 1993 for a critical account). By comparing for instance the structure of children's play groups in the neighbourhoods, and at school, I had the opportunity to see how children's kin and residence patterns of playgroup formation in non-school settings were filtered in the school playground by the age grading emphasis of the school system. My experience of play in different settings, also offered some interesting nuances concerning the performative aspects of gender construction and reproduction, by viewing how gender relationships during play were not simply a matter of dividing among single sex play groups (which was not the norm anyway) or forming same sexed play preferences, but of performing gender within or across playgroups and play events ( see chapters 4,5 especially the discussion of football).

Having come of age in Greece during an era of strong anti-imperialist movements in the aftermath of the struggle against the military dictatorship (1967-1974), my theoretical concerns were biased – as already stated above- by a marxist theoretical and political standpoint and a particular interest in those theoretical trends in anthropology and cultural studies that were concerned with the detrimental effects of globalization on local cultures. My decision to study children and their play was heavily influenced by debates concerning play's relationship to socialization and

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performative aspects of games, an approach which emphasizes "the interactive actions of separate players into joint social projects". (Corsaro and Evaldsson 1998: 380).

social reproduction. Anthropologists who had worked in Greece before the 1990's had tended to focus on depopulated or "traditional" rural areas. I needed an economically and demographically flourishing community with representatives of all generations. Phocaea, an area I knew through friends as a holiday resort for Athenian families with young children, seemed to fulfill my research requirements ( see chapter 3). This had been corroborated by an initial visit to the community for my M.Sc Project (cf. Gougoulis 1986). How well equipped was I, however, being a "native" anthropologist, to transform my field experience to anthropological knowledge?

The problems considered to arise from the circumstances where the anthropologist and the research subjects, ( the "natives") belong to the same culture have led over the last 20 years to a discussion on whether anthropology at home or indigenous anthropology constitutes a methodological benefit or a drawback (e.g. Jackson 1987). With the relativizing of anthropology's object and the questioning of the distinctions between self and other it has also been argued that indigenous anthropology may be a contradiction in terms (Hastrup 1999), since all modes of anthropological knowledge (subjectivist or objectivist) are opposed to the practical mode of knowledge which is the basis of ordinary experience of the social world. (Bourdieu 1990: 25 in Hastrup 1999:357). Furthermore, sharing the same nationality does not make oneself necessarily indigenous. As Hockey's work on old age has shown, biographical distance can offer the experience of cognitive and cultural dissonance integral to anthropological understanding, because it is culturally constituted as "other" ( Hockey 1990 in James 1993: 13 ). How "indigenous" is an adult anthropologist among children of his/her own culture? If the past is a "foreign country" so is age, in the sense that people of different age categories not only might "do different things" but also might view each other as doing different things. Although I do not, and did not at the time of my entry into the field, conceptualize children as a kind of autonomous "tribe", (as described by Hardman 1973b), a view that would be in direct contradiction to my research questions on the way play relates to global processes, my experience in the community playground during the first month of my research certainly did not make me feel at home. Far from it. I was avoided as an obnoxious intruder and children tried to trick their way out of my attention. Childhood in Greece, as in Britain is a period of dependency. In Phocaea, where children are highly visible in public spaces, they are also subject to every

adult's gaze and implicit or explicit control of their movements and behaviour. My adult status was obviously threatening and therefore my first attempts to approach the playground as "foreign country" met with failure.

The choice of research techniques is not merely a practical question of responding to circumstances. Defining strategies for participant observation, as James, Jenks and Prout (1998: 169-188) and Punch (2002) have pointed out, is closely related to questions regarding perceptions of childhood, which in turn affect the whole process of research design, methods, ethics of participation and analysis. (Punch 2002: 321).<sup>6</sup> The next section will deal with the theoretical underpinnings and implications of each choice.

## 2.2 Doing Research with Children

When I left for the field in 1988 not much had been written on the research strategies an ethnographer wishing to study children should adopt, as reflexivity was just beginning to be considered an issue that had some relevance to the production of anthropological texts. While the studies of two pioneering anthropologists (Hardman 1973a, 1973b, James 1983) offered me some insight into the issue, on finding myself with a particular theoretical baggage in the field, in mid June at a time when schools were closed, and my contacts were limited to a couple of families, I realized that I had no clear answer to the question of how I was hoping to approach children. I therefore proceeded very much by trial and error, experimentation and intuition. What will follow then, is an attempt to theorize *a posteriori* that experience in the light of the prolific literature that emerged after the main bulk of my fieldwork was completed.

Over the last 15 years many works have appeared that explicitly discuss the question of approaching children in terms of the nature of the research vis-à-vis adult informants (Punch 2002) and the problems arising from the differential power status between researcher as adult and research participants as children.

Fine and Sandstrom in a seminal work published in 1988 presented a range of possibilities offered to researchers according to the age of the children ( preschoolers, preadolescents and adolescents) in a continuum from detached observation (Sluckin 1981) to participant observation. They defined three possibilities for doing participant observation with children, which are more or less still valid research

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<sup>6</sup> But see footnote 10. This process should not be seen as operating in a unidirectional fashion.

strategies today: the friend role, (Fine and Sandstrom 1988:17-18), the reactive role (Corsaro 1981, 1997: 29) and the least adult role (Mandell 1988).

The least adult role involves assuming a standpoint among children as equals. The researcher goes “native” , by resisting any form of adultist behaviour in the hope of exploring the unknown “tribe” of children. Childhood in these terms is a separate and antithetical to adults subculture which resists its marginal position in adult culture by thriving on categorical opposites illustrated in daily routines such as food (James 1979), play ( Hardman 1974a; Glassner 1976) and lore (e.g. Opie and Opie 1987; Knapp and Knapp 1976 and other folklorists). This view of childhood may be summarized as the concept of the “tribal child” (James et al. 1998: 180-184). The criticism that has been raised against this approach is that it unduly exoticizes children as “others” in the same way as anthropology has exoticized other cultures (ibid:181). My brief experience of childhood in Phocaea and my readings of ethnographic accounts of other Greek communities focusing on children as members of the extended or nuclear families, precluded any adoption of a tribal child viewpoint, as children clearly shared the daily activities of adult social life, while also participating in their own peer cultures (their local and global, traditional and commercial cultures). Furthermore, I believe –in agreement with Fine and Sandstrom (1988:17)- that it is neither possible nor desirable to erase the obvious differences between adult and children, since researchers are in general obliged to behave in certain non-childish ways, such as organizing interviews.

The reactive role (Corsaro 1981, 1997) involves adopting a friendly but marginal and consistently non-interventionist attitude to children. The researcher is guided by children in participant or non-participant observation, withdrawing at request and avoiding the roles of arbiter or care-giver. This is not always possible especially when working across settings and with many age-groups, as the anthropologist in his/her capacity of what is culturally held to be a responsible adult, and citizen cannot close his/her eyes in the face of injury, obvious danger or mishaps of the minor research participants. In fact most researchers report cases where they had to interfere for one reason or the other by virtue of their responsibility and accountability as adults or simply by empathizing with victimized children (James 1993; Corsaro 1985 in Fine and Sandstrom 1988:45) and I was no exception to this rule. There were very few occasions, all outside the school context, when I was faced with no other choice than to interfere in a dangerous conflict- e.g. when children

renowned for their temper tantrums were involved- by making a firm suggestion that changed the course of the interaction.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, anthropologists are often required or expected to offer minor services in return for remaining in the school facilities over a longer period of time. The line is tenuous but most researchers agree that it is possible to offer help when required, while remaining removed from any association with the control system. In my case, I occasionally helped a couple of children with their Maths homework, offered a few guitar lessons for beginners to older siblings of the children I worked with<sup>8</sup> and was required by the school staff to help with the preparation of the annual celebration of the “Polytechneio”, the commemoration of the student’s uprising against the military dictatorship in 1973,<sup>9</sup> by accompanying the singing children with my guitar and by teaching some songs to the students of the 5<sup>th</sup> grade. Although the children had been warned by their teachers that they would be punished if they failed to respect me, the music lesson turned out to be an outburst of mischief and an occasion for having fun. Despite the chaotic situation that followed, as many boys stood up and performed mock dances while the rest of the class clapped along, I did nothing to restore order as long as they were singing the songs. In fact it was the girls of the class that took up the authoritarian role by shouting from time to time “quiet”! When the lesson was over, the children were enthusiastic about the whole event and asked me to teach them “forever”. The teachers were also pleased, despite my “anarchist” attitude towards children, as the celebration day was a success.

A research strategy that seems to be gaining in popularity in the last decade is the adult friend role, a participant observation role emphasizing the need to establish

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<sup>7</sup> Luckily, these instances were rare, as children of primary school age were expected to take care of themselves, while older children- girls more often than not- played the role of arbiter. ( see chapter 5).

<sup>8</sup> It goes without saying that these services were unsystematic, free of charge, and were carried out in my capacity as family friend.

<sup>9</sup> In November 1973 the students of Athens, occupied the building of the Polytechneio (National Technical University of Athens) for three days, while similar occupations occurred in the Universities of Thessaloniki and Patras. What began as a students’ protest was soon joined by workers, peasants and thousands of other demonstrators, who were called to action by a make-shift radio station operated by the students in the Athens Polytechneio. The junta put a brutal end to the uprising by sending units of soldiers and tanks against the unarmed students and citizens that supported them. Several people were shot dead in the dawn of the 17th of November and the following days, while hundreds were wounded and an estimated one thousand were arrested (Clogg 1986: 197). Chants and songs with a revolutionary content, the latter composed by major Greek composers such as Mikis Theodorakis, played a considerable role in the protest. When the junta collapsed in July 1974 and democracy was restored, the day of the bloodshed, 17th of November, was established as a school holiday and day of protest. Schools organize special celebrations where the songs of the uprising are sung and speeches commemorating the event are given to all school children, while a major demonstration usually takes place in the centre of Athens.

friendship as an adult without having an explicit authority role (Fine and Sandstrom 1988:17). It has been adopted both by researchers working with a notion of childhood as a subculture (e.g. Fine 1987) and by scholars approaching children as a minority group in the adult world (e.g. studies of illness, labour and child abuse).<sup>10</sup> In the second case, as attention is focused on children's perspectives of the adult world in which they participate, innovative research techniques are explored seeking to give voice to children's own perspectives (James et al. 1998:184-185). More recently participatory techniques have also been used for making children's voices heard by engaging children in the production of the research process (e.g. O'Kane 2000, Chin 2001). This research strategy is considered especially fruitful in applied research aiming to gain children's participation in decision making processes affecting their lives (e.g. Ennew 1994; Lewis and Lindsay 2000), and in interpretive approaches to social anthropology and social geography (e.g. Christensen and O'Brien 2003).

Most of the literature on research strategies discusses the problem of approaching children in *one* particular context<sup>11</sup> and in a strictly *synchronic* perspective. which was not necessarily my option, as I wished to study children in the three major social settings where play took place (the school, the home and the neighbourhood) and was furthermore interested in issues concerning social change. The following section will deal with my personal trajectory of choosing research strategies in the light of the theoretical discussions on the nature of childhood and my research questions and biases. As we shall see, these were constantly guided- and modified- by the particular field circumstances and the experience of sharing the daily lives of Phocaeen children.

### **2.3 Approaching children in Phocaea**

Throughout my fieldwork four viewpoints proved decisive in terms of choice of research strategies: my understanding of the particular positioning of children's

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<sup>10</sup> Here I disagree with Punch (2002). The adoption of a research strategy may be the product of conflicting approaches to children. Fine and Sandstrom understand children as conceptually different from adults, in terms of an autonomous subculture, while researchers employing the minority group approach conceptualize children as basically the same as adults, the differences being a matter of degree rather than of kind. This approach is described by James et al (1998: 184-185) as an "adult-child" model of childhood. Both approaches foster -for different reasons- the adoption of an adult friend role to children, albeit with a different research emphasis. E.g. the adult-child approach emphasizes participatory techniques and verbatim reports of children's views etc. ( ibid: 185-186).

<sup>11</sup> Mayall (2000: 120-135) constitutes a notable exception to this tendency . Her article is one of the very few texts that discuss research with children across different contexts.

culture, my decision to work across settings, my focus on the relationship between play, social change and globalization, and the centering of my study on the materiality of play and its settings.

My view of children's play as part of peer and adult cultures, coupled with a vision of culture as the locus of reproduction and potential change, implied the adoption of multiple roles and perspectives.<sup>12</sup> These were further defined by my research questions and my research biases. For example, my conviction that anthropology is a generalizing science and my wish to contribute to interdisciplinary questions regarding play, implied that I needed a "representative" sample of the children and that should I use some quantitative methods that would create a yardstick for cross-cultural comparison or follow up studies (e.g. survey on play preferences, see chapter 4). Moreover, my interest in the commoditization and globalization of children's culture suggested that I adopt a diachronic perspective, by examining the play of previous generations and specifically the process of introduction of commercial toys. My potential informants then stretched along several age cohorts spanning a period of 60 years and three generations of primary schoolchildren.

As far as my research biases are concerned, the most important involved the selection of the age range of the children as coinciding with the limits of primary school years (6-12). My decision to focus on the play of primary school children was heavily influenced by Piaget's theory of cognitive development.

Mainstream developmental psychology whether Piagetian or Vygotskian argues for the perceptual difference between children and adults, since development is seen as proceeding in qualitatively different cognitive stages (Duncan 1994). Piaget's theory of cognitive stages has had profound impact on play research as it correlates the development of specific play categories with the development of particular age-based competencies. I was hesitant to work with children younger than six years, feeling that I would need special training and special techniques. The 6-12 years age range was also more suitable for the study of games, as most children within this age group would be expected to play outdoors and engage in formal games. Given the critical voices against Piaget's stages that were already beginning

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<sup>12</sup> Working with a wide age-range of children also adds to the complexity of roles, as older children are more likely to set limits to the research process and define their terms (Fine and Sandstrom 1988:



to be heard,<sup>13</sup> I was expecting the possibility of having to adapt the age range of the children studied closely across all play settings, to the local reality of Phocaea. During my fieldwork the age range of the children I studied was indeed modified eventually covering children of both sexes and all basic ethnic backgrounds from 5-14 years. However the core data of my research across all settings remained within the primary school range for practical reasons (e.g. although the nursery school children were housed in the same building as primary-school children, they did not share all breaks with the latter, furthermore children who attended highschool commuted to the adjacent village of Anavyssos).

Had I started my research today – which probably would have also have somewhat modified my focus- I would have tried to overcome the practical problems posed by different time-tables and /or physical locations of the schoolchildren, or alternatively I would be faced with a smaller age range of playing children (as the toy industry reports that children outgrow their toys at an earlier age than was the norm in the 80s). Furthermore, age has been problematized since I started my research, and is now increasingly considered as a social rather than “natural” variable among children (James, Jenks and Prout 1998: 175), although we are still far from reaching a consensus among the social scientists on questions arising from cross cultural comparisons of the development of play among children (Goldman 1998: 40).

My second important bias originated from my diachronic perspective on play. In my research proposal I had planned to focus on the main ethnic group inhabiting Phocaea, the group that had founded the village in 1924, i.e. the Asia Minor Refugees (see historical background). If I was interested in comparing contemporary children’s play with the play of preceding generations, it would be reasonable to

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52-54). Fine, for instance, describes a complex friend role that also included elements of “folk roles”, such as big brother, student, journalist and protector. (ibid:52).

<sup>13</sup> Piaget’s staging of play from sensori-motor play to games with rules, via the intermediary stage of symbolic play, was one of the first notions to be questioned, initially by the work of Vygotsky (1985) and subsequently by American psychologists. Bruner and Sherwood (1985 : 277-285), argued for the development of an early rule structure in mother-infant interaction during games of Peek-a-boo. Singer and Singer (1990: 239-247) contended that pretense does not vanish with age but “goes underground” as it transforms into socio-dramatic play, theatre and day-dreaming., or becomes embedded in other games. Goldman ( 1998: 31), drawing on Fein (1981,1987 ) concluded that it is better to regard Piaget’s trajectory of superseding phases of play in terms of stages which overlap and exhibit parallel development. Sutton-Smith (1971) disputed the logocentric – and therefore ethnocentric- premises underlying Piaget’s developmental scheme from syncretic to operational thought. Walkerdine (1984) attacked the concept of linearity and the logic of staging as disciplinary discourses which transform difference into deficit. Urwin 1986:276-277) argued for the restoration of play’s common irrational denominator through the insertion of Lacanian psychoanalysis into

focus inter-generationally on the members of a major group. I modified this bias, shortly after schools started, as I discovered through looking at the school enrolment lists that there were only 3 inter-Refugee marriages among parents of contemporary schoolchildren. 56 out of 111 families with children at Phocaea's primary school had at least one parent, who belonged to one of the three initial groups that inhabited the village in 1924 (i.e. the Refugees, the "Vlachs" i.e. the Sarakatsans and the "Locals", i.e. the Albanophone Greeks from adjacent villages)<sup>14</sup>, while 32 of these families were the result of mixed marriages between Refugees (16 fathers and 16 mothers) and transmigrants from several parts of Greece. Whereas the Refugees were the best represented group among parents (21 fathers and 23 mothers), they did not form an identifiable group at the level of the children's generation. It was getting clear that not only should I include members of all initial groups in my study but also that tracing contemporary children's ethnic affiliation and then working upwards to compare how ethnic differences cross-cut intergenerational differences was becoming problematic. Children's ethnic affiliation was becoming a question rather than a variable. Moreover, in almost 50% of the families with children in primary school both parents were transmigrants from various regions of Greece who had settled in Phocaea -in the context of working contracts- in order to work at the adjacent industrial town of Lavrion. Transmigrant children could clearly not be ignored. "We- They" distinctions, as far as children were concerned, were getting more complex, flexible and context bound. The solution I opted for was also context bound.

By the time I realized that my initial plans for a systematic comparison between intergenerational differences of play were overambitious, I had already worked with adult informants for a couple of months during the summer and had a fairly clear idea of the ethnic tensions and differences in life-style and play patterns between the initial ethnic groups until the 1970s. What I did not know was whether this local cultural history had any resonance with contemporary children, or whether new distinctions were more relevant (e.g. Phocaeans vs Transmigrants).

I decided to place more emphasis on the synchronicity of play through immersing into contemporary children's daily lives, without abandoning the

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developmental psychology. James et al. (1998) pointed to the need for discarding both with notions of linearity and with biology as source of cognitive development.

<sup>14</sup> See chapter 3 for background information on ethnic groups

diachronic perspective completely (see discussion of some diachronic changes in chapter 3, chapter 6, section 3 and Appendix III). Still I could not observe all children. The problem of sampling remained and my solution was to use the play settings as a guide.

At school, where the age-grading system tended to inform play groups, I observed all children according to their age. Outside school I used residence as a criterion of selection, by deciding to focus the bulk of my outdoor observations on those children who lived and played in the main village, which included Phocaeen children of all ethnic backgrounds and some children of transmigrant families. Ethnic background and class were used for my sample of children I would observe at home, taking pains that all groups were represented in my compilation of toy “inventories”.<sup>15</sup> It was during home visits that working with parents and grandparents was important, and these occasions often involved conflicting loyalties.<sup>16</sup>

My personal approach to children can be loosely described as an attempt to adopt research strategies that sought to overcome the barriers set by my adult status and its association with power and control of children’s lives, without trying to underplay the fact that I was a grown up by trying to go native and act “childish”. This was important both for my diachronic perspective of dealing with parents’ and grandparents’ childhood memories, and for gaining parental consent for reaching children outside school e.g. at their homes in order to compile toy inventories or observe indoor play. Younger children (6-8 years) especially enjoyed less spatial autonomy and had to be reached through their mothers. As many researchers have stated in most western societies younger children have to be reached through gaining

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<sup>15</sup> The process of inventorying involved taking notes on the range of toys owned by children, on the status of ownership, on the presence of advertised toys, and on the meanings they acquired during play and beyond. Toys were photographed in the places they were kept in children’s houses..

<sup>16</sup> See Mayall (2000) for a discussion of a similar experience. In her case the coexistence of children and mothers was unproblematic, as children cooperated with mothers in answering questions, within the framework of an interview. In a research situation where the adult researcher shares daily social events and activities, questions of loyalty definition and priorities occasionally arise. Defining whose guest I was and moving between parents and children was not always easy. E.g. during lunch invitations, as an adult I could not get up immediately after I had finished eating and join the children who would go and watch TV or start to play. Having selected play -by definition a “non serious” activity (see Chapter 4)- as my topic of study, only added to my difficulties in this respect. As play is an activity that may be interrupted at an adult’s request, many mothers found it unproblematic to invite me for coffee, when they spotted me among the children during an outdoor play session. As I politely turned these invitations down, I also had to put considerable effort into convincing parents that play was work for me.

the consent of adult “gatekeepers”, i.e. parents, teachers or other caretakers. ( Fine and Sandstrom 1988). Gatekeepers have the power to restrict access to children according to local perceptions of danger and safety. My daily presence at school -albeit within the limits of the playground-<sup>17</sup> was crucial in this respect, as parents immediately classified me as something like a teacher.

Besides associating me with the teaching staff, parents also saw me as a journalist and a folklorist, and described me as “mia kefati kopella pou paizei me ta paidia” (a lady full of enthusiasm, who plays with the kids). For the children on the other hand, I was something -depending on the age group, the gender and the circumstances- of the following roles: a book writer and photographer, a playmate, a friendly adult, and family friend. The next section will deal with the implications of the adoption of these roles.

### **2.3.1 Researcher as book writer**

The project of featuring in a book about play seemed to be a key feature in gaining acceptance from and rapport with older children. In fact the same children that had turned their backs to me in the playground in the first month of my research changed attitude and became key informants on outdoor play and many aspects of boys’ culture, once my project was disclosed to them. This was achieved in July 1988 with the help of a friendly restaurant owner, whose 15 year-old son took the initiative of introducing me to the playground kids (a group of 8 boys aged 6-13 approximately, whose core was formed by a subgroup of 9-13 year-olds) by bringing the whole lot over to his father’s restaurant and presenting my project as follows:

- “ I kyria tha grapsei ena vivlio gia ta paichnidia ton paidion edo kai thelei na tin pate stis spilies pou ftiachnete ” ( the lady will write a book on the games children play around here and she wants you to show her the “caves” that you make).
- “Entaxei, alla me podilata” ( “OK, but on bikes”), retorted the boys.

Having adopted a bicycle as my main means of transport from the start of my stay in Phocaea, due to the distance of my residence from the main village, I luckily fulfilled

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<sup>17</sup> At school I was granted permission to observe the children in the playground and to remain on the premises during classes to study the school register and the enrolment books. (see Chapter 4 ). As the school archives were kept in the director’s office on the second floor I was able to observe the classroom behaviour of the 5<sup>th</sup> and the 6<sup>th</sup> grades whose classrooms faced the office. I did not however attend classes as I did not follow the bureaucratic procedure of seeking special permission required. I would definitely alter the latter choice in a new school based research.

their requirements and we all cycled to one of the “caves” (i.e. tree-house) they had built on the eucalyptus tree facing the construction site of the new community-council building. The “cave”, I was informed, was one of the hideouts the group used when they faced the boys of the Upper Neighbourhood during war games (see chapter 5). After taking photographs of the hideout, we parted by making an appointment for a tour around the church “mountain”, (a slope in adult terms), where I was to be guided to their “training camp”. The following day the group showed up at the community playground, bringing along a 12-year-old girl, the younger sister, of the group’s “leader”, who announced in a serious tone:

- “I Frosoula irthe na graftei”<sup>18</sup> ( Frosoula=diminutive of the name Froso, has come to enroll) .
- “Na graftei pou?” ( to enroll where? )Was my surprised response.
- “ Na graftei sto vivlio, de!” (To be in the book, of course!).

That was the beginning of a friendship which was based on my adult identity as researcher and book writer, a status that was not associated by the children with any threatening authority. Having been introduced to the group by one of their peers rather than their parents proved extremely helpful as it contributed towards my unambiguous classification as their “big friend” (Fine and Sandstrom 1988). While I had asked the restaurant owner to inform their parents on the purpose of my stay in Phocaea,<sup>19</sup> and had double checked that they indeed granted their permission, the process of getting to know these parents was the reverse of that of the 5-8 year-old cohort’s parents. Rather than approaching them as gate-keepers, I was introduced as their offspring’s big friend (“Einai fili mas” = she is our friend) and book writer, and was invited to their homes on the children’s initiative. During these visits, I did not need to defend the divestment of authority from my adult status. It was the children who took pains in explaining to their parents, why they did not use the polite second plural form or the standard prefixes, Kyria (= Mrs) or Theia (= aunt, a kinship term

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<sup>18</sup> The verb “grafomai” the passive form of the verb “grafo”( = to write ) has two meanings a) to be written b) to enroll. I understood the statement in its second meaning, which is why I offer this translation. In the first part of the dialogue. As my interlocutor clarified the ambiguity by declaring intent towards participation (or co-authorship?) in the book, I used in the last part of the dialogue the verb “to be”. See Sluckin (1981) for a similar experience in a British school playground, of being asked by children “to be” in his book.

<sup>19</sup> The parents of the two younger boys in the group were approached by the restaurant owner in my presence the very same afternoon that his son took he initiative of acting as go-between with the children. One of the boy’s mothers, who did part-time work in the restaurant, endorsed the project with enthusiasm, granted her permission immediately and eventually became a close friend and valuable informant.

extended to any older female adult, the extension implying respect and affection), typically used for addressing female adults in many places in Greece. I remained in close contact during the entire course of my fieldwork -and for a long time after the expire of my stay- with this group which mainly consisted of Lower neighbourhood boys ( see chapter 5). As my book writer status was also gendered, the boys situated me as observer in their single sex games, and I was only invited to participate as playmate in mixed gender play sessions. Being an observer I was permitted to take notes simultaneously, a fact which added to detail in my descriptions while expressing a high degree of inclusion to the group's secrets ( see chapter 5 on the "ten commandments" code)

### **2.3.2 Researcher as Playmate: negotiating access to play**

My big friend approach to children was undoubtedly facilitated by my status as an unmarried, childless female, which situated me ambiguously between the categories of adult and child, in the eyes of adults and children. One winter evening, when we were playing at the "ten questions" with a small group of girls aged 7-9 , one of the girls gave the following description of me:

"Einai koritsi"<sup>20</sup>, diladi den einai pandremeni, erchetai sto scholeio mas

schedon kathe mera, alla den kathetai sta mathimata. Paizei me ta paidia kai travaei photographies" ([This person] is a girl. I mean she's not married, she comes to our school almost every day<sup>21</sup> but she doesn't attend classes. She plays with the children and takes photographs).

This ambiguity enabled me both to claim friendship from children and to ask parents "naïve" questions that were accepted as a natural interest in eventually having children of my own. However, the degree of my inclusion in the interiors of the playgroups (e.g. secrets) was to be continually negotiated throughout my fieldwork, depending on the age group, the circumstances and my sensitivity to the particularity of each situation. Participating in outdoor playgroups in the community streets was

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<sup>20</sup> "Koritsi" in Greek is a term denoting "female child" and unmarried woman. This double meaning implies that adult status for females is understood to be achieved through marriage (and having children) and that females should marry young. The average marital age for mothers of the contemporary children's cohort was 21. Being unmarried in my early thirties was odd for Phocaeans parents, who were about my age, but this "deficit", was compensated for by the fact that I had worked in order to become a mature student and was also planning to get married. (I had introduced my present husband as my fiancé).

<sup>21</sup> I occasionally missed some school days either for the sake of doing museum work or for looking at the community archives.

not a problem, once my project of writing a book was accepted by the children, since my participatory strategy was justified by my willingness to learn how the games are played. Having adopted the role of a novice in play, I let the children guide my inclusion and took part in the games that I was invited to join, by paying heed to the restrictions posed by my female adult identity (e.g. I did not follow my playmates who would jump over people's fences and terraces or enter house yards during Hide and Seek), preferring the risk of being "it" to the risk of breaking the rules of expected proper adult conduct. The experiences of ethnographers, who had previously worked in other areas of Greece, including Attica, and my own experience from short term field work for the Peloponnesian Folklore Foundation had made clear the fact that an ethnographer is the object as much as the subject of observation.<sup>22</sup>

Participating in symbolic play was not always welcome, especially in the first months of my research, when children saw my attempts at inclusion in their symbolic universe as either intrusive or at odds with adult status. After experiencing several rejections of my initial awkward bids for participation in the play of younger children, I learned that I had to wait for children to guide me. Six and seven year-old boys during the first two months of my fieldwork at school systematically avoided me and told me I was too big to play in their "spacecraft". It took me a while to realize that not all play forms were equally accessible. In late November, after being invited to the house of Giasemo, who was playing in her yard with her first cousin Katina, I asked Giasemo if she agreed with the idea of the three of us initiating a play session with her pots and pans. Giasemo responded to my proposal by exclaiming in genuine surprise: "Kale Cleo koritsaki eisai kai thes na paixeis me ta kouzinika?" ( Hey Cleo! What is it with you and you want to play with pots and pans? Are you a little girl or what?) At the time Giasemo's statement seemed strange, as minutes earlier we had been playing at Drinks and Cigarettes (a chasing game, see Appendix III), which was unproblematic. Only after completing several toy inventories with different age groups, did I realize that what Giasemo and the boys were telling me,

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<sup>22</sup> See Astrinaki (2002) for a similar experience, in a Cretan village, of feeling observed at all times and its consequences for the choice of her research strategies. Also see Makrynioti's discussion of the uneasiness she felt, when she realized that she was also being observed by the children, who were the object of her ethnographic gaze during fieldwork in a Greek classroom (Makrynioti 1982: 371-372). Cf. Clifford (1998: 18-20) for a more general discussion of the ethnographer as subject and object of gaze.

was that toy play and pretend play was something you were supposed to outgrow fairly soon. By the age of ten many children had already adopted a blasé attitude towards toys, while I found out in a discussion with 11 year-old girls, where I asked for some clarifications of their answers in the survey on play preferences, that my interlocutors had censored their answers regarding doll-play, because their teacher had repeatedly told them that they were too old for that (see chapter 4).

There were more instructive instances when children made clear that my participation in their activities was not unconditional. At parties, for instance, I felt that my adult identity at times became an obstacle, especially among older children. Even though I was invited to come, which meant that at least the child giving the party wanted me around, my presence nevertheless, seemed to create problems, because of the fact that I was an adult. Would the boys dance if I were there? At an 11 year-old girl's name-day party in November I was asked by the other girls to leave the room and join the company of adults, unless I intended to dance, because they sensed that the boys would be embarrassed by my presence and would turn down their offers to dance.

This was a particular assertive set of girls, who also happened to be more forthcoming than boys of their age in flirting matters. Before my arrival at the party they had managed to get the boys on their feet and had turned the lights off. The latter move, I was informed, had not been tolerated by the host's mother who intervened by restoring the light in the room. I agreed to dance and stayed at the party, as they assigned me a partner at about my height, and we all started to do the shake. As the boys were fighting their embarrassment by hyping up their performance and having a good laugh, the dance was soon cancelled by the party girl's mother, who had a different idea of what dancing nicely meant and interfered by turning the music down and inviting everybody to eat... At the end of the party, as I was making my way to my bicycle, the boy guests commented on the spoil-sport mum by mumbling ironically, while simultaneously pretending to caress an imaginary beard,<sup>23</sup> "Orea perasame, eh?.." (Now wasn't that fun !).

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<sup>23</sup> The word "beard" (moussi) in colloquial Greek means a lie, a fabrication and is a frequent meta-communicative device among children both in language play (for the sake of the fun in exploring ambiguity in language) and as a technique of inclusion in personal communications. Typically it involves the utterance of a statement whose veracity is immediately denied by making a gesture of having a beard. The silent falsification of a statement through the gesture of caressing an imaginary beard, is often made in situations calling for appearance of conformity (what Goffman 1959, 1974, would term "front regions" of interaction) to social expectations, while the "real" meaning of the



The way children saw me was partly related to my gender, age and status as researcher -and my research strategies- and partly to their own gender, age and the cultural expectations associated with age and gender appropriate play and conduct. It also varied according to the situation and setting.

Many children- especially girls- were flattered by my interest in their peer culture. At times I sensed they put on performances they would not normally adopt if I hadn't been there. For example, they would be more aggressive and would express their conflict more openly. They were self conscious and some children avoided swearing at my presence or apologized if they did.<sup>24</sup> At other times my presence was used to reinforce a player's wish to play a particular game. "Ti tha grapsei re paidia I gynaika? Olo ta idia kai ta idia paizoume" (Hey people!<sup>25</sup> What will the woman write about? We always play the same games over and over again). This type of proposal did not add any weight to the player's particular suggestion. My own occasional proposals- if I had been told of a game but had not yet seen it performed- were also not met with any special consideration. If the children felt like playing something else, they would turn my proposal down by replying something like "Den echoume tora orexi"(we are not in the mood) or "den to paizoume tora afto" (we don't play that now), implying the possibility that this game was out of season (or alternatively using seasonality as a rejection strategy).

My relationship with younger children of both sexes improved when I started visiting their homes, either through an established relationship with older siblings with whom I played in their neighbourhoods, or through invitations of their parents. After a month or two of school attendance mothers were curious to meet the strange lady that played with and took photographs of their offspring. During these visits parents tried to stress my adult status to the children, advising them to call me "Kyria Kleio" (Mrs. Cleo) or *theia* (see above). As both *Kyria* and *theia* would permanently

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message is disclosed only to members of an in-group. In the case of the boys' statement, what was spoken out aloud conformed to expectations of proper guest behaviour ( i.e. the obligation of the guest to acknowledge the effort put by a host to organize a party, by claiming to have enjoyed oneself). At the same time, the gesture of the beard was both a negation of the previous statement and a disclosure of inclusion by virtue of having shared the same experience..

<sup>24</sup> See chapter 5 on the importance of swearing as criterion for the inclusion in or exclusion from a play group.

<sup>25</sup> I am using the word "people", rather than "kids" to gloss "paidia" (literally = children) as it seems to share with the Greek term a broad use across and within many age groups. Iona Opie mentions that British children call each other "people" (Opie 1993: 3) rather than children. In many parts of Greece, and certainly in Athens, friends of all ages, including children, call themselves "paidia".

label me as a typical adult (i.e. a potential authority figure), I refused both prefixes and insisted on being called simply by my first name.

My attempts to minimize the consequences of my adult status were eventually met with success in most cases although this should not be looked at as a process of unanimous progress with children. In the school playground for instance I was always *Kyria* for some children that I did not develop a special relationship (e.g. through visiting their house). In the informal settings of the Phocaean neighbourhoods I was always Cleo. As I gained experience in the field and established rapport with many children I noticed that their attitude gradually shifted towards my acceptance as an honorary playmate. I was expected to participate in many of their games.<sup>26</sup>

Thus by the beginning of April my arrival at the upper neighbourhood, where I regularly showed up that period for observations and toy inventories, was greeted with cries: “Den paei! Paizei kai i Cleo!” (Time out! Cleo plays too!). My participatory role had been more or less established my mid March by many children, to the point of expressing surprise if I decided to withdraw to non participant observation., This was usually the case when I visited children to compile toy inventories, or when I was invited to attend pretend play sessions. When I visited 9 year-old Stylianos and his 7 year-old brother, Nasos, to see their toys in March 1989, after showing me the places where they keep their toys and opening several drawers and lockers, the two boys started to play, while I was busy taking notes. Suddenly Stylianos realized that I wasn’t participating and asked me “Giati den paizeis?” (Why aren’t you playing?) in a half surprised half reprimanding tone, as my non participatory attitude was at odds with my usual conduct at school, where I usually participated in most of the children’s games that I was invited to, except football (see chapter 4). As my aim however, in pretend play sessions was to observe how children used their toys during play, in the most unobtrusive possible way, in situations like this, I adopted a parallel play style, that enabled me to save face, by responding to the invitation to share playtime while retaining my status as observer. So my response to Stylianos’ invitation was to pretend that I was playing rather than engage myself in the play sequence that he was enacting with his brother. This was

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Among groups of female adolescents or older female peers the term “kortisia” (plural form of the term “koritsi”, see footnote 20) may also be used.

an acceptable option, for the my co-players while it simultaneously enabled me to record the session, without making the children self-conscious. Many in depth analyses of symbolic play by social psychologists, socio-linguists and social anthropologists (e.g. Garvey 1974; Goldman 1998 ) rely on verbatim accounts of children's play sessions which were accomplished without the participants' immediate awareness of the fact that they were recorded (or videotaped).<sup>27</sup> In my case, children knew that I used a tape recorder in their play sessions. They did not know, however, when it was on. The texts that this method produced were valuable for understanding many structural features of children's pretense, such as the use of mockery and themes of symbolic inversion. (see chapter 6). My accounts of solitary play, on the other hand are closer to Goldman's circumstances of inadvertent overhearing of play, as children usually engaged in such play after lunch or shortly before bedtime. Since I was frequently invited for lunch and supper by friendly mothers, I was present during the transformations of the dining room to outer space, while nobody else except myself seemed to pay attention to their fantasy worlds. As children were used to sharing the same space with adults without being bothered by the different activities that were going on, such as, eating, TV-viewing by other

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<sup>26</sup> Corsaro and Molinari (2000: 189-194) describe this process as an evolving membership in children's groups (in their case however it was one particular age-group ).

<sup>27</sup> It is common for psychologists who observe young children's play in laboratory situations to use one-way windows or mirrors in the playrooms. This method-apart from the ethical questions increasingly raised- has obvious drawbacks, if one is interested in studying spontaneous sessions of child-structured, self-organized play of children in their natural settings, as anthropologists tend to do (see Schwartzman 1983:200-214 for a general discussion and Woodhead and Faulkner 2000 for a critical review of the ethical issues ). Schwartzman (1977), whose work relies on participant observation in a US kindergarten, chose to take notes in front of the children without being obtrusive. Children- who, it should be noted, at this age usually cannot read – seemed not to be affected by her presence after a while, even though the act of note-taking did come up as a theme in their play, a fact that Schwartzman did mention in a later article (1995:243). Corsaro (1981) employed a series of technological devices (e.g. multiple cameras, hidden and visible microphones) in the school playground, to record play in all play spaces. Goldman (1998), an anthropologist, who studied Huli children in the Southern Highlands of Papua New Guinea by adopting a socio-linguist approach to pretense as a conversational activity, was lucky to have children play systematically in an abandoned house near his hut. His main method for gaining transcripts of the play sessions, was overhearing and the use of long-range microphones to record the players' dialogues without their awareness of the fact that they were being recorded or their initial consent. Consent was sought from the children's parents but the children themselves were informed about the process after two months of recording had yielded enough data to seek their help in the transcription. Goldman draws a clear distinction between the overheard play sessions, which he terms as "natural pretense" and pretense that has been either elicited by or performed in the presence of the ethnographer, which he terms as "fabricated play" and argues that there are structural differences between the two categories of produced play episodes (1998:105). In fact Goldman (1998:104) warns strongly against taking the adult researcher's physical presence during children's play for granted, as, he claims that it is either unacceptably intrusive or, at the very least exerts an influence that should be assessed. I take his latter point on board, as I was not examining the grammatical utterances and syntactic structures of children's play.

family members, they were also used to their play passing unnoticed. Under the circumstances I did not feel comfortable to attempt either note-taking or tape recording,<sup>28</sup> so most of my descriptions of solitary play are less detailed than the verbatim accounts and tend to focus on the use of objects and features of the setting during make-believe.

### **2.3.3 Researcher as mother's friend**

Being befriended by mothers, although helpful for entering children's homes for indoor play observations and toy inventories, and gaining insight in parent's attitudes to children, sometimes confused children. This confusion was especially prominent in the case of boys, who tended to get themselves into trouble by frequently testing the boundaries of adult authority. I received evasive answers ("kati paizoume more", =oh, we're playing something), from such boys when I met them in the street and asked what they were up to, which was a normal way to socialize and certainly a question that I was asked regularly by children. At the time I experienced conversations of this kind as an unpleasant barrier, a failure in my approach. In retrospect this was partly true, for what these same boys who would invite me the following day to join them on an excursion, were protecting themselves from was a leak on their wrong-doings (which sooner or later were bound to be exposed.). Nasos and his first cousin often got themselves into trouble, by entering forbidden territories that were conceived as dangerous such as the "mountain" (see chapter 5), by (mis)using adult objects during their play, often without permission, by disregarding rules in general and occasionally by bullying other children (an accusation they always refuted). Their mothers often felt desperate as the complaints and tales about their offspring's mischief were offered by neighbours and relatives. Asking such a boy what he had been up to, in a community where all adults had a right to reprimand children and tended to operate as a powerful controlling mechanism, was obviously not the proper question, as it could be easily misinterpreted as being part of adult control.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Notes were taken immediately after.

<sup>29</sup> See Thorne (1993:17) on similar experience based on the undercurrent meanings associated with the adult use of "doing" and "behaving" in the USA to sanction children.

## 2.4 Time gap between completion of fieldwork and submission of thesis.

It so turned out that the children who had laid their trust in my research had to wait a long time to be in that book I had promised them. This brings me to the problems arising between the big time gap (14 years) between leaving the field and eventually submitting my thesis. When I returned to my project of finishing my half-written ethnography, as a mother of a ten-year-old son, I decided to include in the thesis both the perspective of a contemporary middle-class parent raising a child in an urban milieu and the knowledge I had acquired by participating in several research projects on play and toys in which I became involved by virtue of my affiliation to the Peloponnesian Folklore Foundation.<sup>30</sup> Having kept in contact with the people of Phocaea during this period I went back to the field to trace the changes in the lives of Phocaeans who were children when I did my fieldwork (and were now young adults, some of whom already had started families of their own) and refine some issues such as outgrowing play e.g. vis-à-vis finding out what the former children of my research had done with their outgrown toys. While I have hoped in adopting these choices to turn a drawback into a benefit, I have also heeded the warning of Pina-Cabral. (2000:341-348) to avoid trying too much to “push on to the present the experiences that I had lived in the past”. Phocaea today has undergone the changes that have swept through Greek society since the 1990s and life for children has concomitantly changed. Thus, rather than making claims to any “longitudinal study”, I have firmly placed the “ethnographic present” (meant as the historical conjuncture of my fieldwork)<sup>31</sup> of my study at the time of my main fieldwork in 1988-89.<sup>32</sup> The

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<sup>30</sup> The Peloponnesian Folklore Foundation, founded in Nafplion, Greece, in 1974, is a museum and research centre promoting the collection, preservation, conservation and dissemination of any material or other documents concerning folk culture, with a specific focus on costume, dance, music and children’s culture. Its definition of folk culture has been atypically broad and flexible for a museum of its kind in Greece, permitting items such as Pokemon figures to feature among its collections alongside early 20th century elaborate baptismal gowns. This broad scope has enabled me to participate, in my capacity as free lance researcher, in several research projects and international conferences on play and toys. The publications and papers that have resulted from these projects are referred to, where relevant, in chapters 6 and 7.

<sup>31</sup> In agreement with Sanjek (1991).

<sup>32</sup> Obviously questions concerning the process of reconstruction of fieldwork memories arise after such a long time. Writing, according to Plath (1993:375-379), takes the ethnographer from the context of discovery to the context of presentation but, as many ethnographers have mentioned, fieldnotes do not usually contain everything that is “discovered”. When I began to transform my fieldnotes into a fairly descriptive first draft, I still had vivid memories of the field that covered potential gaps in note-taking. This is no longer possible. My present ethnography relies on the validity of my 1500 pages of notes and transcripts of 18 weeks of daily school observations, 75 observations of play sessions in Phocaea’s neighbourhoods, 35 observations of pretend play in various contexts ( mostly in home related spaces) of a group of 45-50 children, and 34 toy “inventories”. I am also relying on visual

unsystematic and sporadic reports of changes, and the comments from the perspective of my present life-cycle status and my participation in the trajectory of anthropological knowledge that I discuss, are acknowledged in the text in the form of footnotes and are meant as considerations for further research, answering some of the questions posed by my ethnography and opening many others.

## **2.5 Research Ethics**

Researching children raises a series of ethical dilemmas originating from a basic underlying question concerning the extent to which children are regarded as similar or different from adults. Morrows and Richards (1996:96-100), in a critical review of debates on research ethics in studying children, summarize the arguments in terms of “two related descriptive perceptions that adults hold of children, that is, children as vulnerable and children as incompetent”. These conceptualizations are seen as being further reinforced by legal notions of childhood as a period of powerlessness and irresponsibility.

Most researchers in the last decade have seriously questioned the model of incompetent children, arguing rather for a differential power relationships between adults and children and different degrees of experience. The shift in the way children are perceived is reflected in the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (see Landsdown 1994: 33-44; Sinclair 1996:88) and in the Research Ethics Guidelines for studying children issued by the APA and the British Psychological Association (see Woodhead and Faulkner 2000).

Ethics are obviously related to the standpoint from which scholars study children. Researchers who foster the adult-child model of childhood, for instance, stress the need for agreeing on research standards that “enrich children’s rights to be informed and listened to in all matters affecting them and strongly advocate researchers to question the power of their own agenda-setting and to look at children’s views in terms of an alternative philosophical position” (Alderson and Goodey 1996:115).

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material (45 photographic films, 4 hours of videotaping), archival material (marriage and baptism records, school enrollment lists, material from the Toy Industry, National Statistical Service, the Centre for the Study of Refugees, a plan of the village and the school site, a survey on play preferences, children’s compositions on “My favourite game” and “My favourite TV programme”, and finally a series of toys constructed by children and reconstructed by grandparents which were donated by their creators to the Peloponnesian Folklore Foundation. Details on the use of this material are dispersed throughout the ethnography.

While most researchers would agree with Landsdown (1994: 34-35) that children are a) inherently vulnerable because of their physical weakness and their lack of knowledge and experience, which renders them dependent on the adults around them, and b) structurally vulnerable (lack of political and economic power, lack of civil rights), there is no consensus on how this vulnerability should be treated in research. General guidelines stress the need for informed consent, confidentiality, avoidance of deception and harm, and debriefing of the results of the study.

It goes without saying that all of these issues concern adults as well as children. The question of confidentiality, for instance, has puzzled anthropologists and it has become a common practice to protect the anonymity of informants and avoid the risk of identification of both children and adult participants by giving the research site a fictitious name. The way I sought to deal with issues of confidentiality and anonymity was by using pseudonyms for all informants. Counter to mainstream anthropological practice, however, I chose not to disguise the name of the community studied, having in mind that the topic of play (and my particular approach) was not “dangerous” or threatening and that it would contribute to the questions I am pursuing, if readers knew which place I am talking about (since academics are the most likely readership). Given the great degree of regional variation in Greece and the debates on kinship patterns, systems of patronage, etc. operating in different regions, I felt that the choice of revealing the real name of the community would add to the ethnographic validity of the study.<sup>33</sup> Furthermore, the children studied are now young adults, and thus the risk of recognition is further reduced.

## **Conclusions**

In this chapter I have outlined some of the problems arising from the nature of anthropological research with children, by positioning my research strategies and methods within the context of debates on children’s cognitive development and debates relevant to my research question and my nationality. I have argued on the one hand that the choice of research methods implies particular conceptions of children and childhood, which may lead to the adoption of particular researcher roles, and on other that grand theories are nevertheless (con)tested in the field, where a far greater flexibility is required. Although my approach to children’s play began

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<sup>33</sup> On ethnographic validity see Sanjek (1993a: 395-400 ).

with a strong Piagetian influence in the course of fieldwork it was modified by extending the age-range of children-participants in the research, until my Piagetian model of play gave way to a gradual adoption of Vygotsky's theory of appropriation and Corsaro's theory of play as a domain where peer and adult cultures are hierarchically linked in a process of interpretative reproduction of global and local cultures. My approach to children during the fieldwork was characterized by flexibility in that I experimented with a multiplicity of roles ranging from book-writer to children's big friend. While expecting children to have different competencies from adults, I never treated children as cultural dopes, even if could not –and still cannot– answer the question of the social or biological basis of human cognitive development and hence of the nature of the difference between adults and children. During the years that intervened between the time I left the field and the time I am finishing this text, theoretical perspectives in the social sciences shifted in favour of subjectivity and child-centered research has now become mainstream. While it is clear that most of my research questions are not on the agenda of Phocaeen children, as they are adult focused, future oriented and –etic rather than –emic, I still think, that they are worth asking, and should be seen as complementary to those exploring the particularities of children's views, if anthropology wishes to avoid marginalization in the context of more “scientific” discourses.<sup>34</sup> By choosing to foreground the material aspects of play I shall inevitably address issues related to continuity and change in a particular social context. The next chapter aims to provide this context for the reader by situating Phocaeen children within a process of historical changes that have affected everyday life in the community.

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<sup>34</sup> See for a condensed presentation of the argument James, Hockey and Dawson (1997: 4–6). On the need for generalizations and hence the combination of micro- and macro-analyses see Loizos (1999: 282–284); Qvortrup (2000: 77–97). For an early discussion see 1988 debate “Social Anthropology is a Generalizing Science or Nothing”, in Ingold (1996: 15–54).



## CHAPTER 3

### THE COMMUNITY: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

#### Introduction

In the previous chapter I explored the problems arising from research with children and I discussed my own research strategies concerning Phocaean children and their play. As children's play does not take place in a social vacuum, but is historically and culturally contingent, this chapter will focus on some aspects of the community's life and history that were relevant to children's play, with a special emphasis on the historical tensions among the ethnic groups, the demographic, and economic changes that swept the community with the opening of the coastal road, and some aspects of children's daily lives as participants in family and community life.

#### 3.1 The foundation of the village: Refugees in search of a new homeland

Palaia Phocaea, a sea-shore village located 52 km SE of Athens, was created in 1924 by Asia Minor Greeks in the context of an international programme for the relief of Greek refugees that had been uprooted from Asia Minor (today western coast of Turkey), after the military defeat of the Greek army in Turkey in 1922 (**Figures 3.1-3.3**).

The majority of settlers originated from Palaea Phocaea i.e. "Old Phocaea" (or colloquially *Palies Phoces* as it is often referred to in the plural form) a coastal Asia Minor town in the region of Smyrna, with an estimated population c.1914 of 8000 Greeks and 400 Turks (Horton, 1926:38), and an economy based on farming, salt extraction from local salt works and commerce (Papadopoulos-Kerameus 1879: 87-88). Phocaeans had experienced persecution by the Turkish State in the dawn of World War I that resulted in what is referred to by elderly informants as the "first expulsion", when the Greek population of Asia Minor was evacuated to major cities in mainland Greece (Athens and Thessaloniki) and was repatriated after the disembarkation of the Greek army in Smyrna in 1919. Many of my elderly informants were in their early childhood or were born during the "first expulsion". As the repatriated population of Asia Minor strove to reconstruct their homes in the area that was ceded to Greece by the treaty of Sevres (1920) the Greek

army began a campaign of conquest into the Asia Minor interior that resulted in the total destruction of the Greek forces in August 1922. Following the violent reprisals of the Turkish army (matching earlier atrocities by Greek soldiers) on Christian minorities a mass exodus occurred as the unprotected civilians fled to the coast and were evacuated by Greek, Italian and Armenian ships to mainland Greece and the islands, as the city of Smyrna was set ablaze by the Turkish troops (Hirschon 1989:9). Phocaeans joined the hundreds of thousands of Asia Minor refugees that were given temporary shelter in public buildings and warehouses of the major ports in Greece (Lesvos, Chios, Thessaloniki, Halkidiki, Crete) waiting for the results of the peace negotiations. The agreement signed between Greece and Turkey in 1923 ordaining the compulsory exchange of populations, (with the exception of Muslims in Thrace and Greeks of Istanbul) marked with finality the end of the Hellenic presence in Asia Minor and left a disintegrated Greek state with the huge problems involved in the provision of shelter and sustenance for several hundreds of thousands of destitute people. With the population exchange 350.000 Muslims were compelled to leave Greece while 200.000 more Greeks from the interiors of Asia Minor and Thrace were added to the existing vast number of refugees, that had reached by 1928 1.221.849 persons (Hirschon 1989:37). The emergency of providing food, shelter and minimum medical care for the refugees was initially dealt with by international relief organizations, such as the Red Cross and Save the Children Fund, while the Greek Government created for the same purpose the Refugee Relief Fund (ibid: 36). Many public buildings in Athens, Thessaloniki and Piraeus were converted into dormitories. Phocaeans that had ended their exile journey in Piraeus, found shelter in school buildings in neighbourhoods of Athens (Polygono) and Piraeus (Drapetsona, Kokkinia), where they remained until 1924<sup>1</sup>.

The sheer size of the refugees that represented approximately one quarter of the total Greek population at the time, called for the arrangement of drastic measures for their absorption. In recognition of the acute crisis in Greece the League of Nations authorized an independent international body, the Refugee Settlement Commission (RSC) to take

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<sup>1</sup> Another large group of Phocaeans who followed the 1914 itinerary from Asia Minor to Lesvos and Northern Greece, eventually settled in the peninsula of Kassandra, Chalkidiki where they founded the community of Nea Phocaea (Tsalikidis 1998: 163-182)

over from the Greek government relief organization (RRF), under whose auspices the first refugee quarters were already been established in the outskirts of the main cities. For the next six years until 1930, the RSC was responsible for the settlement of the refugees throughout the country (Pentzopoulos 1962 in Hirschon 1989:39).

Under the immediate pressures of the time there was an understandable emphasis on establishing the refugee population as self-sufficient and productive. Thus rural settlement was given priority over the provisions for refugees in the towns. This was made possible by a series of land distributions of expropriated *chiflic* and monastery lands that were allocated to the refugees during the period from 1924-1940.

Phocaeen refugees, who in the meantime had created the Union of Phocaeans (Pamphocaicos Syllogos) for the purpose of collective representation in the relief programmes were offered three options of rural settlement in the region of Attica: Voula, Vraona and Anavyssos<sup>2</sup>. Prompted by fellow-townsmen who had been offered jobs in the salt-works of Anavyssos, where the landscape reminded them of *Patrida* (a term denoting “homeland” or “hometown” referring to Phoces of Asia Minor), the Pamphocaicos Syllogos opted for Anavyssos and organized the settlement of the Phocaeans in the area. Tents provided by the Ministry of Welfare were loaded on fishing boats and by the winter of 1924 approximately 100 Phocaeen families had moved from Drapetsona to Anavyssos, where they camped for 14 months waiting for the promised land distribution. In the meantime each family was permitted to cultivate up to five *stremmata*<sup>3</sup> of land. Simultaneously to the arrival of the Phocaeans another group of refugees from Aretsou, was offered residence in the area. The Aretsotes however retreated to the hinterlands in a distance of 2 km from the coast, partly because they did not get along with the Phocaeans and partly because they originated from the hinterlands of Asia Minor and were not

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<sup>2</sup>Personal communication with Nikos Papoutsis, son of Thanasis Papoutsis, who was an active member of the Pamphocaicos Syllogos. Unfortunately none of the members of the Union is alive today, however, some accounts on the settlement of the refugees in Anavyssos, collected by researchers of the Centre for Asia Minor Studies (Kentron Micrasiaticon Spoudon) in 1962, are preserved in the file "Ionia" in the archives of the Centre.

<sup>3</sup>Personal communication with Yannis Karapiperis, whose father is said to be the first Phocaeen settler in the area where he was offered a job as a foreman in the salt-works. One *stremma* (plural: *stremmata*) = 0.2471 acres or 1000 square metres

pleased with the idea of building a village next to the sea-shore. The village founded by the Phocaeans was given the name *Palaia Phocaea* after the Asia Minor hometown, while the Aretsiotes, who were soon joined by a considerable group of compatriots that arrived after the population exchange, named their village *Anavyssos*, reviving the ancient name of the area. This ascription of the name of a district to a community has created, and still creates, confusion that is locally solved by reference to the two refugee villages as *Pano Chorio* (Upper village) for *Anavyssos* and *Kato Chorio* (Lower village) for *Phocaea*.<sup>4</sup>

The new homeland of Phocaean refugees was far from ideal. They had to strive for their livelihood clearing the stones and bushes from the fallow ground. Wells had to be opened only to obtain salty and unclear water. Food supplies were provided from Piraeus by *kaikia* (type of fishing boat) and exchanged with sand (used in construction works) and coal made locally from timber at makeshift furnaces on the beach. Women had to walk to the markets of Keratea (12 km), Kamariza (14km), or Lavrion (15 km) for daily household provisions. As jobs in the salt-works were seasonal (March-September) and the small plots of cleared land were inadequate sources of subsistence, many Phocaean men sought work in the factories of Drapetsona or were employed as labourers in the port of Piraeus commuting by sea or land to *Anavyssos* on Sundays.

In the face of the severe hardships that were aggravated by diseases (especially malaria) and natural hazards (tents were torn down by wind and flooded by rain), many families made their way back to the urban refugee settlements.<sup>5</sup> Some of these families settled permanently in *Anavyssos* after the first phase of the land distribution was effected in 1926, when the building plots were allocated to the Refugees, allowing for the creation of a village: “*Gyrisame otan pia eginē chorio*” (We returned when the village was made).

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<sup>4</sup>In the text, *Anavyssos*, refers to the area, while reference to the community will be made by the terms, “village of *Anavyssos*” or “*Pano Chorio*”.

<sup>5</sup>This constant mobility of the early refugee settlers has indeed caused problems in collecting information on the first period of settlement, as many of my elderly informants belonged to this group of discouraged families that moved back to *Drapetsona*, where they spent the winter and returned to *Anavyssos* during summer to cultivate the fields. Field cultivation was an unyielding condition for retaining the rights on the imminent land distribution and preservation of these rights after the distribution was effected in 1926. The desire to establish in *Anavyssos* despite the hardships stemmed from the fact that Phocaeans had predominantly been farmers in *Patrida*.

## The “Locals”

In addition to the unfriendly environment the first refugee settlers were confronted with hostility by the local residents of the area: the Arvanites (Albanophone Greeks) of the adjacent village of Kalyvia that cultivated the monastery and *chiftlik* land in Anavyssos and the transhumant pastoralists known as Sarakatsans or simply Vlachs -when referred to by the villagers-who grazed their flocks in Anavyssos from November until May and spent the remainder of the year in the higher slopes of Mount Parnes of Attica. The unfriendly feelings were mutual and rested upon antagonism over land cultivation and the different cultural backgrounds of the three groups. Problems seemed to be more pronounced among the Refugees and the pastoralists, as both oral accounts, literary sources<sup>6</sup> and marriage patterns of this period indicate. As some elements of this hostility still persisted in contemporary Phocaeen life despite growing numbers of intermarriages between the three groups of population and immense demographic changes in the past two decades, a brief account of the history of the area and its inhabitants before the Refugees' arrival will be necessary.

The Greek-Orthodox Albanophone residents of SE Attica have lived in the area since the late 14th to early 15th century.

They were brought by the Catalan rulers of Attica and the Athenian dukes for military and economic reasons i.e. to defend and cultivate the land that had been deserted during the Byzantine era possibly due to insecurity of the coasts that were prone to “barbaric invasions”. (Kakkavoyannis 1985:81-82; Alexakis 1988:474-475). Initially scattered in small settlements, they concentrated in larger villages such as Kalyvia and Keratea in the 17th century. During the Turkish occupation (1456-1821) the land was

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5 The antagonism between the Phocaeen refugees and the Vlachs comes out clearly in Venezis' novel *Galini* that deals with the hardships of the refugees in Anavyssos and attributes to the Vlachs a murderous attempt to wash the Refugees into the sea, by blocking the natural passages of the rain-water from the slopes to the coast and the consequential flooding of their tents (Venezis 1971). Phocaeans were informed on the contents of the book through its converted form in a TV serial, in the making of which the whole village was asked to participate. The Vlachs' assessment of Venezis was that he exaggerated the situation. (“O Venezis ta paraleei”) Refugees on the other hand oscillated between agreement with Venezis and the conviction that he really didn't write anything compared to what really happened in those days. (O Venezis den egrapse tipota). Venezis seems to present the relationships between Refugees and the Arvanites as unproblematic (cf. Stamatiou 1986:188-189) Refugees' accounts however did not agree with this view. Arvanites on the other hand confirmed that the expropriations included some of their grain fields.



distributed to Turkish officials in the form of fiefs.<sup>7</sup> During the 18th century land was in possession of Turkish landowners in the form of *chifliks* and Greek-Orthodox monasteries of Pendeli, Petraki and Kaisariani. (Alexakis 1988: 476). In the aftermath of the War of Independence from Ottoman rule and the foundation of the Greek Nation State, the *chifliks* were passed on to Athenian and Diaspora Greeks, who bought the land from the leaving Turkish landholders in 1827.

After 1870 the villagers were enabled to buy land off the landowners and the monasteries. Large landholdings (e.g. of Logothetis, Melissourgos, Dimitriades, Tzitzos, Markellos) still existed until 1925, when they were expropriated and distributed to Phocaeen refugees (F.E.K. 15.12.1925).

Livelihood of the Albanophone villagers during the period between mid 19th century and 1924 (which is the period dealt with by most bibliographical sources) depended primarily on agriculture. Grains, fruit and vegetables were grown for self-subsistence, while vineyards that proliferated in 1900 and olive trees also served needs in cash. Production was based in the case of small landholdings on family labour, exchange of labour, (*daneika*) and wages. Landowners and monasteries leased their vineyards to the farmers in return of cash or an agreed proportion of the produce. Animal husbandry was limited to household use among the Albanophones while the numerous flocks of sheep that grazed in the plains of SE Attica from Lagonisi to Sounion belonged to a distinct group of pastoralists, the Sarakatsans or Vlachs.

### **The “Vlachs”**

The Sarakatsans are Greek-speaking, shepherds who, in the past, according to the rhythm of the seasons, led their animals alternatively down to the plains or up to the mountains of continental Greece, established along the range of mountains from the north of the Peloponnese to the southern extremity of the Rhodopi mountains in Thrace. The Greek

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<sup>7</sup>Land tenure during the period of the Turkish occupation in Greece was based on the principles of the Islamic law, according to which all conquered lands came into possession of the sultan, who consecutively distributed them to his warriors and officials. [Svoronos, 1976:41] The fief-holders in exchange for military commitments enjoyed the revenue from a number of taxes including the tithe of one tenth, but the Christian cultivators possessed a right of secure tenure. From time to time, however, and by various methods, fiefs were converted into private properties, *chifliks*, on which villagers' rights of tenure became uncertain and half of the produce was conceded to the landowner (Campbell 1964: 11).

villagers generally refer and have referred in the past to the Sarakatsans simply as Vlachs, i.e. shepherds, a term originally used to specify the Koutsovlachs, an ethnic minority group speaking a language akin to Rumanian or a related group of Albanian Vlachs (Arvanitovlachoi). According to Hagimichali (1957A:56), the ethnic connotation of the word “Vlach” had already faded in the late Byzantine era, while the occupational prevailed acquiring a richer social content. Gradually the term was extended to anybody, who was occupied exclusively or on a part-time basis with pastoralism. Furthermore the word in its extensive use in contemporary Greece denotes “peasant”, “uncivilized”, and coarse. The different connotations of the term “Vlach”, has created difficulties in recording the historical presence of the Sarakatsans in Attica, as many of the 19th century travelers and even some Greek scholars failed to realize the existence of the Sarakatsans and imagined that all “nomad” shepherds were Koutsovlachs of one kind or the other (Campbell 1964:2). The confusion was indeed greater, as the Sarakatsans, more often than not referred to themselves as Vlachs, in the occupational and social connotation of the word (i.e. as a term bounding off their social group from the Refugees).<sup>8</sup> Information from genealogies of the pastoralists and contemporary written sources (Alexakis 1988: 477) suggests that Sarakatsan pastoralists were using the pastures of the Attica plain at least since mid 19th century, paying grazing leases to the landowners Logothetis, Mellisourgos etc.

### **3.2 Refugees-Locals-Vlachs: Clashing interests and lifestyles**

When the Refugees arrived in 1924 and the series of land expropriations was announced, the “local”<sup>9</sup> residents’ interests were threatened and tension was created.

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<sup>8</sup>I must admit that I was also confused by the use of the same term “Vlach”, both for self-reference by the pastoralists and for othering and exclusion by the Refugees of Phocaea. Being familiar with the pejorative meaning of the word as denoting “country-bumpkin”, commonly used in Athens to mark boundaries between “old Athenians” and post World War II rural transmigrants, I could understand the Refugees’ viewpoint. It took me more time however to grasp what the term connoted for the Vlachs themselves and whether they identified with the Sarakatsans, as a group. It was only when I was shown the bridal costumes, worn by elderly pastoralist women until 1945 approximately, that I started asking whether they acknowledged any links to the Sarakatsans.

<sup>9</sup>Refugees often use the term “local” for both the Sarakatsans and the Albanophones, even though they preferably underestimate the presence of the pastoralists in stressing the seasonal character of their residence, also pronounced by the fact that the Sarakatsans lived in huts rather than permanent constructions. “Oi

As far as the Arvanites of the village Kalyvia are concerned, who cultivated grainfields and vineyards in the area, (whether the plots actually belonged to them or the monasteries mentioned above, is a question open to dispute over *usufructu* rights), they were confronted with the probability of losing all their grain-fields. Vineyards were spared as the expropriation act predicted the exclusion of fields with perennial crops. The grain-fields then became the arena of dispute between the Arvanites and the Refugees, as they competed in clandestine planting of vineyards and subsequent titular claims. Problems with the Arvanites seem to be confined in the first period of refugee settlement and were restricted to the few (five to six families in total) cultivators of the disputed land.

When the construction of mud-brick and stone-houses began, after the allocation of Government loans in compensation to the lost properties in Asia Minor, Arvanites masons were invited to offer their experience. Furthermore a small number of arranged marriages between Kalyviotes and Refugees are encountered in the next generation. This has not been the case however with the -far more considerable in number- pastoralists where the conflict was expressed in economic and cultural terms.

What the Sarakatsan pastoralists were mainly preoccupied with was the potential loss of their grazing rights, if pastures would be transformed into a residential and agricultural area. What actually happened was a possible reducing of the number of their flocks, while grazing rights, were preserved with rent being paid to the temporary administrative body of the refugee cooperative. The Sarakatsans permanently set foot in the village in late 1930s and especially after 1938, when they were forced by the Metaxas dictatorship legislation to abandon transhumance. The law instructed on the one hand permanent registration of all semi-nomad pastoralists -that had been always considered as a source of potential disorder due to their association with bandits in late 19th and early 20th centuries- while on the other hand traditional summer grazing grounds, such as Mount Parnes of Attica, were declared national forests with the consequent banning of grazing.

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Vlachoi itan skinites otan irthame” (The Vlachs lived in tents when we arrived). From this point onwards the term shall be referred to in its encompassing sense juxtaposing the “indigenous” population to the Refugees.



As the Sarakatsans had been excluded from all land distributions prior to 1940, they settled in the village by buying fields and building plots from the Refugees. The available building plots at the time were concentrated in the “Upper Neighbourhood” and constituted the second half of the refugee allotments. Each refugee household had been allocated c. 44 *stremmata* of arable land and two building plots, each one situated respectively in the “Lower” and “Upper” Neighbourhood. Most of the Refugees had chosen to build their houses in the “Lower” Neighbourhood near the area where they had initially pitched their tents, while the second plots in the “Upper” Neighbourhood were reserved for future use (e.g. for dowries). As the “Upper” Neighbourhood plots remained unexploited due to the unfavourable economic conditions prevailing during the period before 1960, the refugee owners readily dismissed them in exchange of cash. As a result the pastoralist-refugee discord was mapped out geographically in the residential patterns of the two groups: Until the period that I conducted the main bulk my fieldwork, “Lower Neighbourhood” remained predominantly refugee oriented while the “Upper Neighbourhood” was by and large inhabited by “Vlachs” until 1960 approximately. From the Refugees’ viewpoint, the selling of their allotments was dictated by poverty. In their opinion the “Vlachs” took advantage of this fact to settle in the village. The pastoralists on the other hand felt neglected by the State legislation that -for reasons stated above- undoubtedly favoured the Refugees, and took successful steps towards compensation.

These initiatives were expressed politically in the support of a “Local” candidate (Maltezos, a landowner from Aegina, whose family had settled in the area in 1870) in the first community elections in 1948, and economically in the demand for a new land distribution that would allocate plots to the landless. Maltezos won the elections, after a clever campaign based on reconciliation of the rival groups, and two pastoralist families were granted small allotments in the following land distribution.

The antagonism between Refugees and pastoralists was exacerbated by distinct cultural boundaries between the two groups. It is precisely these cultural boundaries that had resisted -though in mitigated form- economic and demographic changes of the past two decades, while moments of crises the older dichotomies recovered their salience in

contemporary Phocaeen life.<sup>10</sup> Many parents and the vast majority of the grandparents of the children that participated in my research did not mix during their childhoods with the children of the other ethnic groups. This was corroborated by the existence of distinct games among the ethnic groups –of which the members of each group were sometimes not aware, until they were interviewed.<sup>11</sup>

What I found striking in interviews of elderly refugee informants was a sense of superiority against indigenous populations and a constant reference to the wealth they had left behind in *Patrida*, accompanied by an expressed conviction that they were aristocrats -whatever their position in the social and economical hierarchy of Phoces Asia Minor had been. This sense of superiority was a persisting theme during the childhoods of the contemporary parental generation of Phocaeans of Refugee origin and seemed to be more pronounced among girls, who were under stricter control of their socializing patterns than boys. It was the Vlachs that sought the friendship of refugee girls, aspired to intermarriage with refugee brides and asked Refugees to become sponsors of their weddings and baptisms rather than vice versa.

If the uneven economic development of the two groups corresponded to cultural relations of inequality, statements such as “we were aristocrats” could not be accounted for either by the actual economic conditions of the Asia Minor Greeks in *Patrida* or by the poverty of the first years of settlement in Phocaea. As Hirschon (1989) has demonstrated, in her account of the formation of a refugee identity in an urban environment, the conviction of a cultural superiority to indigenous Greek populations was a general characteristic of the Asia Minor Greeks and was based on their different historical experience: The Asia Minor Greeks had preserved, in a loosely structured, cosmopolitan and ethnically diverse Ottoman society, a line of continuity with the Byzantine Empire

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<sup>10</sup>In the community elections that had immediately preceded my fieldwork Phocaeans were faced with the dilemma of voting for liberal refugee candidate that had already been in office for three terms, or casting their ballot in favour of a mixed combination headed by a conservative Vlach. In this case, identity (“To Vlacho tha psifisoume?” Are we going to vote for the Vlach?) was overshadowed by political affiliations that resulted in the election of the first Vlach president in the history of the village.

<sup>11</sup> See for example Appendix III under *goutsas*, and other games marked with an asterisk. These differences were also related to the fact that not all parents and the majority of grandparents had not attended all years of compulsory education. Many grandparents had not gone beyond the first grades of primary school.

and had developed a pronounced sense of superiority in relation to other nations in the Ottoman Empire despite their subordination to an alien administration. This conviction was based structurally on an overall identification with the many influential Greeks employed in the Ottoman administration and culturally on the belief of the pre-eminence of their Christian tradition. Mainland Greeks, on the other hand, had experienced the establishment of a modern Greek state based on western European ideas and institutions that tended to revive the pre-Christian past and devalue the Byzantine heritage. While Mainland Greeks were exposed to negative comparisons with classical antiquity and controversies regarding purity of descent, Asia Minor Greeks seemed to escape the national inferiority complex which plagued modern Greece's self- image in its relationship with Western Europe for a long time (Hirschon 1989: 10-11).

In the process of settlement in the Greek state the Refugees' attitudes to life in their new homeland were bound to be influenced by their different background. From this point of view alone, a smooth process of integration between the two groups could seem unlikely. Furthermore objective differences were apparent to the newcomers. In the 1920s the Greek State could offer little in a favourable comparison with the wealth and the diversity of Asia Minor. Whereas Asia Minor towns had been major trading centres of the Eastern Mediterranean, Athens and Salonica seemed provincial when compared to the cosmopolitan and lively ports of Asia Minor. Indeed the whole country, as a result of a ten-year engagement in warfare, appeared disorganized, backward and poor. Consequently the Refugees were soon disappointed with the lack of sophistication of the Greek society (ibid: 11-12).

It was against this background then that the Phocaeans constructed their cultural boundaries by juxtaposing their cosmopolitan tradition to the "narrow minded", "primitive" culture-at least in its material aspect- and uncouth attitude of the pastoralists. The Sarakatsans on the other hand considered the Phocaeans as snobbish, frivolous and possessing loose moral standards.

### **3.3 Blurring the lines between urban and rural: Phocaea modernized**

In what degree does the Refugee-Vlach opposition mark contemporary social relations in Phocaea? An answer to this question can be given only within the context of a series of

changes that gradually transformed the rural character of Phocaea of 1988-1989, with its diversified economy and complex demographic synthesis, was difficult to fit in the rural-urban dichotomy, a fact that puzzled me a great deal during the first period of my fieldwork in summer of 1988. Phocaea did not seem village-like at all, or at least did not correspond to my urban stereotypes of a “village” from the general outlook of the architecture and landscape to the attitudes of the people. Two-storey concrete buildings and four storey blocks of flats, catering for tourist rented accommodation and local housing, were the dominant structures interspersed with an annually decreasing number of some roof tiled houses, reminders of what used to be a typical refugee settlement. Furthermore, the considerable number of shops and restaurants impressed me. Half of the restaurants are still situated along the coast on both sides of the road, with the main building located towards the village and the service area on a narrow stretch of land between the sea and the road. Waiters have to cross the road several hundreds of times per day, a fact which has caused fatal accidents.

Twenty-two restaurants, cafeterias and coffee shops in a total of 79 commercial enterprises (including the community-run hotel) corresponding to an estimated population of 1800-2000, were listed in the December 1988 census<sup>12</sup>. During my stay in the village, three more enterprises (one tavern, a “popular art” shop and a “dowry items” shop) were inaugurated. Most of the shop and restaurant owners traveled by car on a daily basis to Lavrion or Athens for supplies. Bus services to Athens were regular with buses running during summer every half hour from 5:30 a.m. to 10:30 p.m. and during winter every hour from 0600 to 19:30.

Cars were a common means of transport within the village and were often used to cover distances requiring less than a ten minutes walk. There were telephones in every house but not in rented accommodation, so I found myself in an awkward situation when I wished to arrange a meeting with adult informants, as they preferred pre-arranged contacts over the phone.

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<sup>12</sup>Source: National Statistical Service Census of industrial, mining, manufacturing and commercial enterprises and other services, 30.9.1988.

As far as the process of my own integration in the community's life is concerned, I was confronted by more surprises. There seemed to be no signs of the "traditional Greek hospitality" and in my search for a place to live I was treated yet as another tourist. Moreover my presence in the village did not raise any questions; I could have well been classified as an early holidaymaker, another Athenian mother who spent her days in the playground. It was only in the beginning of September that Phocaeans became interested in what I was doing, when they noticed that I did not leave with the rest of the tourists, in the beginning of the school term.

My non village impression was corroborated by occasional comments of my informants, who suggested that during the summer "we are not a village because with all those tourists around we scatter and have hardly time to see each other, let alone gossip about each other; our attention is distracted".

Both peoples' statements and data deriving from research in local and national archives (community records and census returns) suggest that the turning point in Phocaea's history was the opening of the Athens-Sounion coastal road in 1957-1958. As most of the changes became apparent in the early 1960s, I have adopted this date as a temporal boundary symbolizing the onset of changes in Phocaeian life.<sup>13</sup>

### **3.4 The watershed**

1960 constitutes a milestone in various aspects of Phocaeian life. It marks a gradual shift way from agriculture to wage labour, and employment in commercial enterprises and tourism as main sources of revenue. It also marks the development of a cash economy (barter transactions or credit had been dominant mode of exchange until 1962 approximately), the beginning of the demographic expansion of the community<sup>14</sup> and the adoption of a modernist ideology expressed in transformation of social and religious practices such as the abandoning of arranged marriages, changes in wedding rituals, commercialization of funerals and baptisms etc.

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<sup>13</sup> See McNeill (1978), Karapostolis (1983) for broader economic changes in Greek society, including rising standards of living, the development of tourism and changes concerning attitudes towards consumption

<sup>14</sup> In a period of 30 years the population of the village more than tripled, rising from 582 inhabitants in 1961 to 2010 inhabitants according to the population census of 1991. The demographic numbers have continued to grow since I left the field. Phocaea at present has 3123 inhabitants according to the 2001 population census.

Children's lives were dramatically affected by these changes. Before the road opening childhood, as a period of dependency, lasted until about twelve years, i.e. until the end of primary school, at which point children were expected to contribute to family income<sup>15</sup> by working at the salt pans, by doing agricultural work and by seeking jobs in the industrial sector of the adjacent town of Lavrion or among relatives in Piraeus. Childhood memories of play were circumscribed by these work patterns. Children who grew up after the road opening were expected to finish secondary education rather than enter wage labour. They were also the first generation of children who did not report escaping work or adult tasks in order to play but were rather seen as entitled to play and the burgeoning commercial culture of childhood. By the time I arrived in Phocaea, 11 shops out of 79 enterprises dealing with goods and services,<sup>16</sup> included toys in their merchandise.

With the opening of the road a number of entrepreneurs and land speculators appeared in Phocaea from various parts of Greece – mainly Athenians – who anticipated the tourist development of the area and profited from buying plots of land at extremely cheap prices. Phocaeans were at the time more than willing to sell their properties in exchange of cash that would enable them to engage in more profitable economic activities or to invest in housing for improvement of their living standards. In *a posteriori* evaluations of their decision to sell their land many of my informants commented bitterly on the small cash returns from these transactions. “If we only knew better we would be millionaires today”. As none of the villagers expected the beneficial consequences of the road opening they were eager to dispose of their unproductive land. As my informants explained, the poor quality of the arable land in the small and dispersed plots and the lack of State subsidies that would promote irrigation and mechanized cultivation gradually drove the discouraged younger generations to other occupations. Most of the plots sold were vineyards that had been destroyed by a disease in the early Sixties. Those that did not wish to abandon agriculture converted their vineyards to pistachio-and olive orchards.

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<sup>15</sup> See Friedl (1962:89) for a report of similar trends in Vasilika of Boeotia in the same period. In Friedl's example not only were children expected to contribute to the welfare of their family but they considered themselves adult after completing elementary school.

This period marked the beginning of the domination of concrete in the architectural style of the village. The first two-storey constructions were created in the Fifties by shop owners. In 1966 the first block of flats, generally referred to as THELCO (after the initials of the Athenian contractors), was erected for exploitation purposes exclusively.<sup>17</sup> The advantage of concrete structures over the roof tiled houses of the first two generations of settlers consisted in the fact that they offered vertical rather than horizontal solutions to the problem of division of paternal plots among off-spring who reached the age of marriage. In the 1940s and 1950s the matter was dealt with by extensions to the old houses or conversion of store-rooms and stables to residential space where the parental couple usually moved after the birth of their grandchildren.

Not all of the sold properties were transformed into building plots by the land speculators. One of the most successful newcomer entrepreneurs, a well established in the Athenian market, florist, by the name of Sfyrris, bought a total of 35 continuous *stremmata* of land for the cultivation of carnations. Sfyrris, and other florists who followed his example, are responsible for the arrival of the first wave of transmigrants from the impoverished highlands of Thessalia and Macedonia. Most of these villages had been devastated from the World War II and the following Civil War and most of their productive population was migrating as *Gastarbeiter* to former W. Germany. As the Phocaeans were moving away from land cultivation at the time, Sfyrris recruited his working force, mainly women, from the masses of Northern Greece migrants. Many of these women settled in Phocaea through arranged marriages with Sarakatsan men.<sup>18</sup>

In the 1970s a new wave of working class transmigrants (single men or heads of young families) from the same regions were recruited by the Karelas factory in Lavrion to cover the needs created by the expansion of the plant. Residence in 140 houses and flats in Anavyssos (which in terms of local administration boundaries covers the *Pano Chorio* settlement and part of the coast adjacent to Phocaea) and free transport were offered to the workers .

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<sup>16</sup> Source: National Statistical Service Census of industrial, mining, manufacturing and commercial enterprises and other services, 30.9.1988. See Chapter 6 for more details on outlets for commercial toys..

<sup>17</sup> I owe most of the information on the development of the village architecture to Mr. Damaskinos Kyriakopoulos, who also helped me in the acquisition and deciphering of air photographs of Phocaea.

In 1974, after the Turkish invasion in Cyprus, Karelas recruited 250 Greek Cypriot men and women, in the context of a common agreement between Cyprus and Greece for the relief of the refugees. The same facilities were offered to the Greek Cypriots and there were many intermarriages among the factory workers.

Working class transmigrants were referred to as *xenoi* (denoting not local, unfamiliar, in short, strangers) in Phocaea. They lived in blocks of flats erected after the expansion of the village on the northern side of the coast in an area that used to be a moor, and was often referred to as *Vourla* bulrushes) by elderly Phocaeans or *oi Polykatoikies* (the blocks of flats) by the under Forties. The transmigrants had not been integrated in Phocaea, in the way smaller groups of newcomers had been absorbed in the past -mainly through intermarriage- and few exceptions of Phocaeen men and women that were married to “Karelas workers” were not enough to change the prejudice against the *xenoi* that transformed the demographic picture of the village. The *Polykatoikies* were considered a dangerous area, and when friendly Phocaeen families learned that I was living on my own in a block of flats let to Karelas labourers, they frequently warned me to be careful, while children openly expressed their admiration towards what they considered as a courageous decision to live in that neighbourhood.<sup>19</sup> The concept of danger rested on stereotypical perceptions of Greek-Cypriots as quarrelsome and seeking trouble, and a xenophobic reaction to a more recent stream of strangers: 120 Egyptians who had worked in the Karelas factory since 1976.

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<sup>18</sup> See Buck-Sutton (1983: 225-252) for patterns of settlement of urban migrants in the 1960s.

<sup>19</sup> Ironically and certainly unwittingly, I contributed to the association of the area with notions of danger and disorder. During the first months of my fieldwork, I took residence in the *Polykatoikies* area, as nothing else was available at the time within the community. This was fairly unproblematic in terms of distance from the community, as I usually covered the twenty minutes (walking distance) that separated me from the heart of the community life on a bicycle, which was a child-friendly means of transport (see chapter 2). My nonchalant attitude to the warnings of the local people against staying on my own in the particular area changed dramatically, after two men tried to break into my flat at two o'clock in the morning in December 1988. Luckily the tourist period was over, so it was fairly easy to find new residence right at the heart of the village in a block of flats owned and partly inhabited by a refugee family. My decision to move house was welcomed by Phocaeans, as wise, and the whole incident unfortunately reconfirmed the bad reputation of the locality in terms of a self-fulfilled prophesy. See Hastrup (1987:98) for a similar experience among Islandic fishermen.



## **Conclusion: Shifting boundaries**

What these negative connotations suggested was that a shift in the cultural boundaries marking social groups along criteria of ethnicity seemed to have occurred, especially among the younger generations, i.e. the contemporary parents of primary school children and the children themselves. What united the younger cohorts of the population of Phocaea during the period of my research, was a common suspicious attitude against the increasing number of working class transmigrants that had settled in the village outskirts since 1970s. The Refugee-Vlach opposition seemed to be an issue concerning the age groups over 45 years old. This is not to say that the conflict belonged altogether to the past. According to the editor of the local newspaper, an engineer who participated in the road construction and subsequently settled in the village, as a construction contractor and estate agent, problems would be permanently resolved, when two generations i.e., the first settlers and their offspring -contemporary grandparents- had passed away. Despite the out-marrying practices of all groups in the 1970s and 1980s,<sup>20</sup> the Vlachs had retained their separate identity to a greater degree than Refugees and their children were more aware of their history as a group. Vlach children, for example, stressed in conversations about the history of the village that their ancestors were the first settlers of the village. “Oi prosfyges mas vrikan edo” (The Refugees found us here).

Youths in 1988-89 contended that nothing separated Vlachs and Refugees anymore and indeed their marriage practices and friendship patterns confirmed this statement. Changing attitudes towards education and the concomitant patterns of systematic school attendance throughout the stages of compulsory 9 year- education had played an important role in the gradual fading out of distinctive features in children’s cultures, that had characterized previous generations. The 6-14 year-old aged cohorts of children that participated in my research on the other hand, did not use the old ethnic criteria for selection of their playmates as ethnic group, neighbourhood and kin no longer coincided.

And yet, as I shall show in the following chapters, the undercurrent dichotomies of the past generations did come up in children’s play, sometimes by defining the spatial

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<sup>20</sup> See chapter 2 section on data from the school enrolment lists of the 1988-89 on the proportion of Phocaeen born parents of children vis-à-vis parents from other regions of Greece

boundaries of children's autonomy, sometimes in the form of a transmuted dramatic revival by the children themselves to stage their own conflictual encounters during play and more often in the form of mockery during pretense.

## CHAPTER 4

### PLAY AT SCHOOL

#### **Introduction: Schools as spatial contexts for children's play**

School playgrounds are settings for children's play that are characterized by a fundamental antinomy: while they constitute parts of educational settings, i.e., of bureaucratic institutions organized around principles of social control, at the same time, they offer the spatial context for children's free play, improvisation and a certain degree of autonomy. It is in this respect that they differ from the other two main sites of children's play, the home or the community, for the means and principles of exercising control may vary across contexts. Barrie Thorne has outlined four distinctive ways in which educational contexts of play differ from the informal contexts of households and neighbourhoods. Schools, she argues, are large, densely populated bureaucratic settings of a public nature, in which a few adults organize, monitor and evaluate the activities of big numbers of children, which are sorted according to age. Families and neighbourhoods, on the other hand, tend to be small, with a relative even ratio of adults and children (Thorne 1993:29).

One could also add to Thorne's distinctions the fact that children at school are spatially segregated from the rest of the community in a temporary enclosure often marked by the existence of railings and the regulated access to and departure from all spaces within the school compound. Thus, the space, time and equipment of play are more or less restricted by the existence of school regulations, which set the boundaries of play within the school premises. Playtime, for instance, in the state school of Phocaea- as in the rest of the state schools in Greece- is allocated to three intervals according to regulations provided by the school programme and the national curriculum<sup>1</sup>. School guidelines further limit the presence of toys, which should ideally be left at home. Regulations imposed at school are more visible and powerful than restrictions imposed at home and the neighbourhood, where children have greater

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<sup>1</sup> With the extension of the school day, that followed the introduction of the "Oloimero Scholeio" (Full day schooling programme) in 2002, a new slot for playtime (and lunch) has been allocated between the end of the main school programme at 14:00 and the beginning of the afternoon activities at 15:00.

negotiating power and can often escape the network of adults which monitors their activities (see chapter 5), simply because during street play children may be out of sight for bigger slices of time than at school.

The consequences of these differences have been recently taken into account by anthropologists interested in gender relationships and particularly in issues concerning the reproduction of asymmetrical hierarchies in the playground. James (1993) suggested that the reported gender divisions in the friendships and play of young children may be a function of the school system itself and that at home or in the street children may socialize in far more mixed age and gender groups. Thorne (1993), in her detailed account of children's acquisition of the trappings of gender through specific practices, argued for the presence of gender separation mechanisms in the schooling system per se, by virtue of their crowded nature and their organization in age based groupings. Drawing on the cross cultural research conducted by Whiting and Edwards (1988), she moreover suggested that the genders are more likely to separate from one another in same-aged rather than mixed- aged groupings and that gender separation is further reinforced by the public pressure of large numbers of children – e.g. teasing as social control for crossing boundaries becomes more visible and potentially more effective at school than in the neighbourhoods (Thorne 1993:184). Many debates on the nature of children's play have emerged within the context of school-based observations, while at the same time acknowledging the possibility of things being different in the neighbourhood contexts. Perhaps, a more fruitful approach to the issue would result from ethnographic research across different play contexts, rather than following the established academic practice of focusing on one setting.<sup>2</sup> This is exactly the line that I have followed in my research.

In this chapter, I shall take advantage of the multi-contextual focus of my research, to examine the different ways that age, gender and kinship relationships, which

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<sup>2</sup> The overriding majority of works within the anthropological literature in western and non western societies either deals with play at school (ethnographies of European and US children) or with play in the community (ethnographies of non western children). The cross-cultural studies published in Whiting (1963) and Whiting and Edwards (1988) despite the fact that they were not specifically focused on play and were based on spot observations and measurements rather than participant observation are, nevertheless, pioneering exceptions to this rule. Mayall (1994b) and Punch (2000) constitute more recent examples of ethnographic work across settings, as they both worked in two social contexts: the home and

order children's experience in non-school settings, are recast during school play, as children interact with each other within the temporal, spatial and social boundaries set by the school system. In this sense, the chapter will focus on the particular setting of Phocaea's primary school, while being comparative at the same time.

Play within the school context – as in the other contexts that will be discussed in the following chapters – will be approached in terms of Corsaro's (1997) theory of interpretive reproduction as a form of cultural appropriation in which children relate to their material environment and to each other by contributing to the production, reproduction and possible change of the social order. Such an approach involves the consideration of theoretical approaches to and debates on playgrounds as institutionalized spaces of childhood and spatial arenas for the construction, reconstruction and challenge of competing discourses of control, which mediate and are reworked through children's daily experience in the playground. The next section will deal with the content of these debates and their relevance to the play of Phocaen schoolchildren.

#### **4.1 Play and space in educational contexts - a review**

Play at school brings together a large number of interdisciplinary studies, which attempts to establish various links between play, space and formal education or informal socialization. The literature may be broadly divided in two categories: play-focused and space-focused studies. I shall first deal with the body of works that specifically focuses on various aspects of play in educational contexts.

Scholars have taken interest in play at schools in order to discuss

- a) gender relationships and gender socialization (educational psychologists, socio-linguists, anthropologists)
- b) correlation between particular play categories (e.g. pretend play) and the development of school related competencies e.g. literacy and numeracy (educational and developmental psychologists)<sup>3</sup>
- c) trends in children's culture e.g. themes of continuity and change, especially the fate

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school. Goodwin's research has also focused in both contexts but at different times (Goodwin 1985, 1990, 1995).

<sup>3</sup> See for example works in Christie and Roskos (2000).

of traditional games in contemporary playgrounds (folklore studies),<sup>4</sup>  
d) the “problem of the playgrounds” which concerns the quality of play and other  
behaviour of children (e.g. aggressive, violent or discriminatory behaviour,  
especially bullying (sociologists, social and educational psychologists, ethologists).<sup>5</sup>

Gender related studies of children’s play at schools (category a) primarily attempt to  
come to terms with questions raised by “gender segregation” (i.e., the tendency of  
schoolchildren to divide during play along gender lines) and by gender differences in  
play. The overriding majority of these studies are informed by a functionalist  
understanding of play as preparation for adult skills. This literature will be discussed  
later, as its basic tenets of gender segregation have been challenged and need separate  
treatment.

Studies of categories b, c and d are intimately linked with the curriculum design  
and are embedded in a larger context of a debate on play’s role in effective education.  
The answers given to their research questions have profound consequences on children’s  
daily school lives. The belief, for instance, that traditional games are in demise (category  
c) is often used by schoolteachers as an explanation for an apparently increasing violent  
behaviour (category d) in school playgrounds. Claims for an increase in violent  
behaviour of schoolchildren during playtime have in turn led to the development of an  
anti-recess movement and a growing tendency towards the abolishment of recess in US  
primary schools (Factor 2001:35).

Play is an ambiguous phenomenon whose ambivalent positioning between  
appearance and reality, order and disorder, calculation and indeterminism has not always  
faired well in the history of western intellectual thought (Sutton-Smith 1986:219-222,  
Spairosu 1989). In fact, it has often been treated with suspicion in the western world<sup>6</sup>, as

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<sup>4</sup>See Factor (1988, 2001) and the introduction by Bishop and Curtis to the collective volume *Play Today in the Primary School Playground* (Bishop and Curtis 2001). See reviews of the literature on change in children’s play in school playgrounds in Sutton-Smith (1990) and Zumwalt (1999).

<sup>5</sup> See for example Blatchford et al (1991) and the numerous contributions of P.K. Smith and his associates on the distinction between real aggression and playful aggression (e.g. Smith and Boulton 1990, Smith et al 1992).

<sup>6</sup> Modern Greek culture is no exception to this rule. Colloquial Greek abounds with metaphors endowing play with a negative meaning through its juxtaposition to seriousness (see Chapter 6 on the metaphor of playing at *Koumbares* and see Chapter 3 on local examples on the Vlachs’ ambivalent attitude towards play in Phocaea). Play was associated with disorder or was opposed to schoolwork in a derogatory manner by Greek educational discourses during the first fifty years of the enforcement of universal schooling from 1834 to 1880 (Solomon 2000), i.e. until Froebel’s ideas were applied in preschool education by Aikaterini

a non serious, frivolous or useless activity. It was only in an idealized form, e.g. as a metaphor for children's work and a means for educational achievement, that play became eventually accepted by educationalists in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries (Sutton-Smith and Kelly Byrne 1984).

As Sutton-Smith (1983) has long argued, however, idealization is a double-sided coin. Its positive side is represented by the romanticized readings of play found in studies promoting play at preschools. Its negative side is illustrated in the various attempts to monitor, control or curb play as part of discourses of control.

Spatially focused studies of playgrounds have been deeply informed by discourses of control. Historically, these discourses have been associated with evolutionist theories of play, especially Stanley Hall's recapitulation theory. Under the influence of Hall and his associates, play and playgrounds were understood and promoted as civilizing agents and as means to reform and educate the masses of immigrant children that swarmed the early 20th century streets of the US cities. The fixed equipment (e.g. the sand pits, swings and jungle gyms) that has become part of the definition of "traditional playgrounds" owes its existence to the reformist interventions of Stanley Hall and his successors, in what is now referred to in the history of play as the *Playground Movement* (Cavallo 1976, Mergen 1980).<sup>7</sup>

The idea that playgrounds and play equipment contribute to children's social maturation into a socially accepted state of adulthood was retained by Functionalism, although the idea of playgrounds as civilizing agents was substituted by questions concerning their socializing function. This tendency informs the overriding majority of

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Laskaridou. It was only in the first quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century that play's disorderly features began to be accepted in educational discourse concerning primary school education (Makrynioti 1986, Patsiou 1993, 2000). The orderly dimension of play on the other hand, represented in the formal, "traditional" games, was treated somewhat differently. Because of their association with the glory of Ancient Greece by Greek physical education teachers, who were influenced by German and Swedish Classicist ideas concerning young children's physical, moral and intellectual development, games were incorporated in the National Curriculum, as early as 1899 (see Koulouri 1997 and Gougoulis 1999, 2000a).

<sup>7</sup> Stanley Hall formulated an instincts theory of play based on the principle that human ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny. According to this theory, which lies at heart of many primitivist conceptions of childhood, children's play becomes a driving force in children's development to social and cognitive maturity by virtue of the fact that children instinctively repeat the stages of (western) civilization as they progressively move from lower to higher play forms. (Schwartzman 1978:46-50; Clarke 1999:74). Play equipment also evoked stages of civilization according to Hall, who put his theory in practice by heading an influential lobby group that succeeded in spreading the introduction of playgrounds in many US cities between 1895 and 1920 (Mergen 1980: 198-206).

writings focusing on spatial issues of play in school playgrounds. This body of interdisciplinary works (landscape architects, environmental psychologists, developmental psychologists) is dominated by studies examining several types of causal correlations between playground design (e.g. type of playground), and cognitive and/or social aspects of children's play behaviour. Thus, spatially oriented studies of playgrounds (especially categories b and c) share with the play-focused literature mentioned above an understanding of children's play as a means for advancing school competence. The design of space and the time that children spend in the playground between classes are crucial in this respect (e.g. Pellegrini 1995:53-85).

Early studies focused on the impact of playground design on the emergence of particular play categories or other social activities. Thus, Frost (1986 in Pellegrini 1995:26) in a comparison of preschool and primary school children's play behaviour in four types of school playgrounds (traditional, adventure, contemporary and creative) argued that traditional playgrounds (i.e., playgrounds with fixed structures on asphalt surfaces) promote functional play, while creative playgrounds encourage dramatic play (see Pellegrini 1995: 5, 8-10, 23-29 for a critical review).<sup>8</sup> Others correlated playground compartments with the development of specific activities, to argue for example that children in some UK playgrounds talk more when playing at swings than they do when they play on slides (Naylor 1985, in Pellegrini 1995: 28).

More sophisticated approaches sought to refine the simplistic determinism and unreliability of these works by applying ethological models to the observation of children's play in school playgrounds (e.g. Pellegrini 1995: 53-65; Smith and Conally 1972). Despite the merits of these studies in terms of reliable empirical material derived from detailed observations of children's play and in terms of their attention to child-centered definitions of play categories and activities (e.g. children's distinctions between

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<sup>8</sup> These play categories are based on Smilansky's hierarchical model of play forms with regard to the development of cognition. According to this model, which echoes Piaget's correlation of play stages to cognitive stages, children's play proceeds in a succession of stages from the least mature functional play (repetitive behaviour) to the more mature forms of dramatic play and games with rules (Smilansky 1968, in Rubin, Fein and Vandenberg 1983:726).



play-fighting and real fighting), they nevertheless retain a view of children's relationship to the playground in terms of unidirectional "effects".<sup>9</sup>

Recently there has been a growing uneasiness with the various strands of environmental determinism characterizing the conceptualization of spatiality in terms of 'effects'. A new wave of sociologically oriented readings of playgrounds radically departed from this tradition to consider the ideological, discursive and symbolic aspects of playground and playtime, which will be presented in the next section.

#### **4.1.1 Contesting the school playground: play, space, agency and power**

In the last decade, children's relationship with their spatial environments was reexamined within the general context of a postmodernist turn in the social sciences and the growing influence of phenomenology, social constructionism and post-structuralism in the study of children "in their places". Rather than looking at this relationship in terms of environmental determinism, a more dialectical relationship was proposed by a group of social geographers working within a framework of "new geography" or "spatial sociology" of childhood, who were interested in children's experience and use of social space (Philo 2000:253). Central to the development of this group's approach was a fundamental shift in the understanding of children as social actors which was brought about by the fruitful and long term interdisciplinary collaboration of social psychologists, social anthropologists and sociologists of childhood (e.g. Richards and Light 1986; James and Prout 1990; Qvortrup et al 1994; Corsaro and Evaldsson 1998) who claimed an epistemological break from previous studies of childhood by grouping their work together under the term "new sociology of childhood" (James and Prout 1990: 7-34; Holloway and Valentine 2000b:5). As children were defined as active participants in a world structured by and for adults, their experience of the social and physical environments was inevitably mediated by relations of power (Smith and Barker 2000a: 247). Playgrounds and playspaces within institutionalized settings were studied as arenas of struggle for the symbolic or actual redefinition and control over play activities and playspaces (Smith and Barker 2000a, 2000b).

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<sup>9</sup> Pellegrini (1995:62) does warn against attributing causality to correlational observations but his warning concerns the need for more detailed measurements rather than a theoretical questioning of the unilinear direction of subject-object relationships underlying all "effects" studies.

In their quest for defining the structural features of power relations in institutionalized settings where play occurs, researchers working within the frameworks of new geography and new sociology of childhood have heavily relied on the works of Bourdieu and Bernstein on education (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977; Bernstein 1967), and especially on Foucault's spatially oriented discussion of the workings of power and its modalities in modern societies (Foucault 1977, 1980). These works have been usually employed to discuss the limits of children's agency.

Studies of social geography, if complemented by recent developments in material culture theory, may offer a fruitful insight into children's play in school playgrounds. These studies, despite an inherent trend to prioritize one axis of children's identity by viewing children in terms of an undifferentiated minority group, for the rights of whom they stand against a rather featureless body of adult oppression,<sup>10</sup> have the merit that they foreground the multiple dimensions of children's relations to space: the physical, social and imaginative aspects of children's geographies (Philo 2000: 245). If one looks at the physical, social and imaginative aspects of children's geographies as structured resources for action (Giddens 1990), the detailed discussion of the ways each dimension is structured may be crucial for defining the limits to children's agency and for comparing structuration processes across different or similar settings.

When I returned from the field and started to look at the literature on children's play in schools, I realized that there were important differences between what I had seen in Phocaea's playground and what I read about US and UK playgrounds (from whence the bulk of the literature is derived). Most of the current ethnographies of play carried out in the US and the UK presented a strong case for the extension of the school's disciplinary order to the playgrounds in the sense that playtime and play space were restricted or even prescribed by the school structure. Access to areas in the playground was also subject to regulation in the formal segmentation of the playground according to the student's age, as was the case in the UK school studied by James (1993) and in one of the US schools studied by Thorne (1993). Further examples of school intervention on

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<sup>10</sup> This is not to underestimate the many positive aspects of the radicalism of this approach, especially as it foregrounds children's needs by designing techniques that actually give voice to children. This perspective is important for policy-oriented research (e.g. playground design, or research on child health and child labour).

playgrounds included assignment of specific playground areas to particular games (e.g. football or hopscotch), as in the British schools covered by the extended audit study of Marc Armitage (2001), or the examples reported by Van Rheenen (2001)<sup>11</sup>.

Phocaea's primary school was not governed by any regulations concerning the use of the playgrounds apart from the allocation of the time slots when the playground was actually used (shortly before lessons started in the morning and during the three daily breaks). The only other apparent restrictions on the use of the playground concerned its mandatory use during breaks (i.e., children were, in theory obliged to leave the school building and go out) and its maintenance in terms of tidiness.<sup>12</sup>

Adult surveillance was minimal and there was no special concern for the catering of younger children's needs vis-à-vis the older children's tendency to dominate the playground through their boisterous games, apart from the existence of a sandpit in the front yard. Children were supervised by the teacher on duty. Supervision consisted in providing treatment to a child hurt during play or interfering in fights. Some teachers would occasionally join games such as hopscotch or skipping rope or organize a game for the young children. Others, especially during the cold winter days, tended to remain

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<sup>11</sup> The concrete form that regulatory interventions have taken in many schools, e.g. the presence of painted Hopscotch diagrams on the playground surface of many American schools, is seen by some scholars (e.g. Van Rheenen 2001:120-121) as having contributed to the formalization of the physical and social structure of the game. The material they present, however, does not seem to sustain this argument. Van Rheenen's examples from Scottish playgrounds in the 1960s speak against his main argument. Children in the Scottish school mentioned by the author bypassed painted diagrams and preferred to draw their own, despite the risk of "getting the belt" from the headmaster. If children ignored the diagrams, I don't see how the latter had any relevance to either the formal or the social aspects of the game.

In the same way that children are not necessarily constrained by the presence or intended function of forms and features in the playground, they also seem to be relatively unconstrained by the absence of game equipment. The absence of basketball frames, for instance, in Phocaea's playground until the installation of folding frames in March 1989 did not stop children from playing basketball, a sport that at the time was gaining in popularity all over Greece. They simply used tree branches as basket rings. More on this will follow in the next sections.

<sup>12</sup> Tidiness was provided through the community clearing service that collects the village rubbish three times a week. By the end of each school day, the playgrounds did not present a very clean aspect. Most of the children did not bother walking over to the dustbin at the main school entrance to get rid of their plastic food wrappings, justifying their actions by the lack of trash baskets in the back yard. Tidiness was a frequent theme in the morning speeches of the school headmaster, following the daily prayer. Parents tended to blame the teachers for the children's indifferent attitude. In their era, the schoolmaster would arrange a roster for every class. If the children had to do the cleaning up themselves, they would think twice before littering carelessly. Teachers, on the other hand, put the blame on the community council, which in turn claimed lack of funds.

in the staff room during breaks leaving the children free of adult presence, despite the fact that they were on duty.<sup>13</sup>

Smith and Barker (2000a: 253) suggest that the power to define the use of space may itself be institutionalized. If the relative presence or absence of a coercive regulating framework may enhance or reduce children's agency in use of any space, as Sibley (1992) and Jones (2000) have further maintained, then the absence of an overt control system and of specific restrictions on play suggests that Phocaea's school playground constituted a spatial context, where children had a greater degree of autonomy, power and control over their actions than the schoolchildren described by Thorne (1993) and James (1993). Children were more or less left to their own devices to organize their play groups and play activities anywhere they wished in the playground with minimal adult interference.<sup>14</sup>

How relevant were, then, the school's organizational features as a framework for structuring the play of Phocaea's children in the school playground? In what degree did these loose patterns of control bear upon children's playful activities and how did children rework these patterns in their relationships? How relevant was the playground as a distinct social and spatial setting for children's ludic interactions?

Children's play is a transformative activity where children intensively engage in constructing their peer cultures by interacting with each other and with their socially constructed environment. As already mentioned above, this playful engagement has social, imaginative and physical dimensions. Each of these dimensions will be dealt with in the following sections, starting from the materiality of the physical aspects of play in the playground.

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<sup>13</sup> This is not to say that teachers were unaware of what was going on outside, as many tale-tellers (*martyriarides*) were eager to inform on the wrong doings of their classmates. While *martyriarides* were not popular and were often isolated or harassed by other children, teachers did take their information into consideration but they did not intervene with the on-goings in the playground unless things got rough. Teachers usually acted as arbiters in conflicts, either by attempting to settle disputes or by putting an end to the conflict generating activity altogether e.g. by taking away the ball or by banning certain play forms (e.g. chanting, as we shall see later).

<sup>14</sup> Teachers did occasionally organize children's play within the context of Physical Education classes. Two teachers, who had taught children a couple of games they had played during their childhood, were particularly influential. The games were adopted by children in their street play, after undergoing considerable transformations (e.g. see Appendix III under "Blouse").

Anyone who enters a school playground for the first time is faced by an endless hubbub, a continuous ebb and flow of boisterous, lively and chaotic mobility (Opie 1993; Thorne 1993; James 1993). From the point of view of schoolchildren, as Sutton Smith (1990) points out, the school playground may constitute a place for festive expression, a modern festival site. This view firmly locates play next to other festival forms characterized by liminality and symbolic inversion. To attempt any interpretations of the imaginary dimensions of the playground, one would have to take into account play's ambiguous position between fantasy and reality, conformity and parody. Whether children want to immerse in imaginary domains for the sake of parody, imitation or experimental transformation of the world is a matter linked to the social dimensions of play (see chapter 6), the relationship between the players, their age and gender, and the dynamics of the play event. School children's play, however, is not only about transformations. As the work of Opie and Opie (1984) has so brilliantly portrayed, it is also very much about children running, racing, chasing and escaping, climbing, hopping skipping, kicking or throwing balls in a constant interaction with the material environment, whose limits are tested, contested and, where possible, redefined. Play's physical dimensions are, therefore, linked to the physical dimensions of the playground. This relationship has been defined by contemporary material culture theory as the product of a dialectical process between human agency and the material world. Shanks and Tilley (1992) illuminate this point through the example of architecture. They argue that just "as the practice of agents is both structured and structuring, so material culture is structured by agency, and once the labour becomes objectified<sup>15</sup> in material form, it acts back to structure practices". Buildings and playgrounds in that sense, once constructed by human agency, act back to structure human practice by channeling movement, and by "both enabling certain patterns and constraining others" (Shanks and Tilley 1992:131). Physical aspects of the playground, such as size and shape, may influence the range of children's motoric play by encouraging or discouraging particular

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<sup>15</sup> The term objectification is used throughout the ethnography in the sense applied by Bourdieu (1977) and Shanks and Tilley (1992: 130-131), i.e. as "the serial transformation of matter into a cultural object", a process through which the powers involved in transformative social practice are inscribed in the form produced. For Bourdieu (1977:89) objectification is understood as a dynamic process which makes social relations appear objective and is thus crucial as a mechanism for social reproduction.

patterns of space domination.<sup>16</sup> The next section will discuss the physical dimensions of Phocaea's playground by briefly presenting its layout.

#### 4.2 The Setting: Phocaea's primary school playground

Phocaea's primary school was founded in 1933 and was housed in a small tile-roofed building on the coastal avenue in the northern outskirts of the village until 1983, when it was transferred to the contemporary modern two-storey construction near the village church. Seven *stremmata*<sup>17</sup> of communal land were conceded by the community council for this purpose.

Before 1933, Phocaeans children attended school in the adjacent towns of Anavyssos or Lavrion, while a considerable number of children of the "tent period" (cf. Chapter 3) went to schools of Athens and Pireaus and followed their parents to Phocaea for the summer holidays.

The 157 children who attended primary school during my stay in Phocaea were the first generation of schoolchildren to have spent their entire school-life in the new building. Since 1978, the school also comprises a kindergarten attended by four- and five-year olds. Twenty-two children were enrolled for the 1988-1989 school year, while ten to fifteen attended kindergarten regularly.<sup>18</sup> Kindergarten children were housed in the same building as primary school children and shared the same playgrounds.

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<sup>16</sup> Town planners and playground consultants who have studied children's use of the built environment during play (e.g. Ward 1978, Armitage 2001) have commented on the importance of the playground's shape and the existence of features that serve as boundaries or markers facilitating particular play forms. According to Armitage (2001: 42-44), playgrounds that wrap around the building and have nooks and crannies –created by the presence of outbuildings- provide a landscape that is divided in clear segments and, thus, enable the simultaneous performance of different games. By contrast, square or rectangular featureless playgrounds set away from the school buildings tend to be dominated by play activities that occupy large amounts of space, such as chasing games and football. A more detailed discussion of the issues raised by the relationship between domination in space and power will follow in the last section of this chapter.

<sup>17</sup> One *stremma* (plural *stremmata*)=0.2471 acres.

<sup>18</sup> As Kindergarten is not part of the 9 year compulsory education scheme effected in 1976 (law 309/76), and attendance is not mandatory, many Phocaeans parents did not put pressure on their children to attend preschool regularly. The age of kindergarten children ranged between 4 and 5,6 years. Children who enrolled to first grade had to be at least 5,6 years of age, so the mean age of the children attending the six grades of elementary school education was as follows: grade 1= six years, grade 2= seven years, grade 3= eight years, grade 4:= nine years, grade five= ten years and grade 6= eleven years. After 1995 the age of registration to primary school shifted to six years (law 2327/95, article 10).

The building in 1988-89 occupied approximately one eighth of the plot leaving plenty of empty space for the children's outdoor activities (Figure 4.1).<sup>19</sup> The shape of the playground – wrapping around the building- and the presence of boundaries and other distinctive features, further enabled a number of different play activities to take place simultaneously without clashing with each other (Figures 4.2 and 4.3). Most of these activities took place in the three yards surrounding the building: the paved front yard facing the school entrance, the side yard and the back yard. The front yard, which includes a sand pit, the passageways and what I have called the “lower back yard” (a larger passage way facing the back entrance) are at the ground level. Two sets of steps at the lower back yard near the rear school entrance lead to the slightly higher levels of the side- and back yard. Passageways, lower back yard and the part of the front yard facing the building were paved while the “football ground” (originally planned for basketball) in the back yard was tarred. Half of the back yard (two strips of land flanking the “football-ground” covered with wild flowers shrubs and some trees) and the entire side-yard were left unpaved and contained a number of pine, fig, and almond trees, while shrubs were planted along the railings surrounding the school and its playgrounds. No playground equipment (e.g. swings, slides or climbing frames) was provided. Concrete benches with wooden seats, a set of railings separating the two back-yard levels and a fountain for drinking water constituted the remaining facilities designed for the children’s safety, comfort and well being. As we shall see, these features acquired different properties during play.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> It should be noted that the size of the playground was not typical of many Greek primary schools. According to a report published in 1991, one third of state primary schools operated in buildings not especially designed for educational establishments (see Germanos 1993: 89). This figure is obviously biased towards inner city schooling conditions, as provincial schools- especially those located in small towns- do not face the same problems of overcrowding and thus tend to have more spacious playgrounds. The proportion of the site covered by Phocaea’s school building has changed today to 1:4 approximately, as in the early 1990s a new building was built for the Kindergarten in the back yard to cater for growing numbers of attending preschoolers, while extensions were added and modifications were made to the initial school building. The proportion of a school’s building site covered by the playground is subject to the regulations of the General Construction Code (GOK) and the Ministry of Agriculture, which are not the same all over Greece. Current regulations for the zone where Phocaea belongs permit up to 70% coverage of the building site by the school building leaving only 30% for the playground. (Communication with Town Planning Office of Markopoulo 3.6.2003).

<sup>20</sup> As already mentioned in footnote 15 the unconventional uses of playground features during play are no surprise anymore to playground designers and consultants who consider children as social actors and active participants in their peer cultures. As their point of departure is children’s needs, their methods take children’s views and their interpretations seriously into account. Such views are represented by the works

During the period of my fieldwork, children were strongly encouraged to spend breaks outdoors “to breathe some fresh air”. Most of the children would spend the breaks in the playgrounds. However, a number of activities would take place in the school corridors, as especially young boys delighted in taking advantage of the slippery floors to stage their rough-and-tumble games or jump over the mattresses stored under the stairwell.

As I was permitted free access both to the school’s interiors and its playgrounds, I was able to observe most of the children’s activities (even in classrooms just before the teachers arrived) and record fifty different games<sup>21</sup> played during a period of eighteen weeks from September 1988 to May 1989. The following section will refer to the research strategies and methods I used to approach school children at play.

#### **4.3 Approaching Children in the School playground. Research Strategies and Methods**

My daily presence at the school premises was made possible through the permission of the school headmaster. The official procedure for gaining access to a state establishment would require several weeks or months of bureaucracy, which I luckily bypassed with a reference letter by the Peloponnesian Folklore Foundation, as I was already a familiar face in the village by the time schools opened in mid September. The headmaster knew me as a client of his wife’s kiosk<sup>22</sup>, where he spent a good deal of time when he was not

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of Robin Moore (1986), Mark Armitage (2001) and as far as Greece is concerned by the works of playground specialists such as Germanos (1993) and Botsoglou (2001).

<sup>21</sup> The definition of games that I have opted for throughout the thesis is in accordance with those theorists that focus on the main characteristics of a game as a rule governed play activity (Piaget 1962; Mead 1934; Vygotsky 1985) but rather than viewing games as opposed to play, I focus both on their differences and their interconnectedness. Evaldsson (1993: 77) drawing on Vygotsky (1985: 537- 554 and Handelman 1990: 70) has formulated this relationship as follows: “ Games may be thought of as a derivative of play brought into being by the same metamessage that creates the latter- but the role of explicit rules [in games] has important implications. The game is a distinctly moral medium, one that is keyed by instructions that specify how it is to be played, and that distinguish between correct and incorrect behaviour, between right and wrong. Games are encountered in Greek Folklore literature usually as “ group games “ (*omadika paichmidia*) or “ traditional games” (*paradosiaka paichmidia*). Phocaeen children used the generic, all encompassing Modern Greek term *paichmidh*, when they introduced a game to the group or in general discussion about games, triggered by my questions. In their daily negotiations and talk about games however they simply referred to the name of a game.

<sup>22</sup> Street kiosks in Greece are small retail units, usually selling newspapers, sweets, cigarettes and non alcohol or light alcohol drinks, ice-cream and a range of varying items also found in corner shops which in the last few years include small inexpensive toys (see Petridou 2001a:154). Prior to the wide spread of mobile phones in Greece, many kiosks also had pay phones. As my house in Phocaea did not have a phone, I regularly used the kiosk for making phone calls.



teaching. In fact, the arrangements for my research at school took shape at the kiosk. Once I explained my purpose, I was not only granted permission to attend children's playtime and all activities- such as gymnastics classes- that took place in the school yards but was also offered the headmaster's office for a couple of months to work on the school's archives during classes<sup>23</sup>. The latter prerogative gave me the opportunity to observe the children's activities and the many disorderly, furtive and unruly play incidents preceding the arrival or following the departure of teachers, and to have a look at classroom arrangements (e.g. children's seating patterns in class).

During the period of my fieldwork, Phocaeen primary children spent 4.5 hours at school from 8:30 to 13:00<sup>24</sup>. The main bulk of my observations was carried out during the three daily breaks (10:05-10:30 am; 11:15-11:25 am; 12:10-12:20 pm) and during free playtime slots that were granted to children either during gym or during the last teaching period of the day between 12.20 and 13:00, which was a time occasionally reserved for teacher's meetings.

During the first couple of weeks, I concentrated on being acquainted with the children, whom I had not met over the summer, spending most of the time chatting especially with girls, who would usually surround me immediately after I had parked my bicycle near the school entrance. In these preliminary approaches, I stressed my identity as researcher in order to dissociate myself from any connection with staff or school authority. As participant observation does not offer visual clues that "research is in process", I thought that having a camera readily available would help not only towards documenting children's play but also towards clarifying my role to both children and adults, and to a certain degree it indeed did so<sup>25</sup>. Initially, this device was useful for

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<sup>23</sup> The fact that my research was restricted to children's playtime made this type of informal arrangement possible. Had I insisted in attending classes as part of my research, the long and tedious bureaucratic procedures that Makrynioti (1982) describes in her pioneering ethnography of a Greek primary school classroom would have probably been inevitable.

<sup>24</sup> This has recently changed with the introduction of English classes in grade 3 and especially with the institution of the 'Oloimero scholeio' (the "full day school") - a measure taken to adjust children's timetable to parent's working hours in the light of growing percentages of working mothers. Phocaea was included in the programme of "full day" schooling in 2002. The timetable is flexible, dividing children in those who leave school when the main teaching programme is over (i.e. at 12:40 for the younger classes and at 14:00 for the older) and those who remain at the school facilities until 16:00. The "full day" schooling programme caters for children's lunch (with food they bring from home), homework supervision and some optional extra mural activities.

<sup>25</sup> See Chapter 2 for children's portrayal of the ethnographer in the game of Ten Questions.

satisfying children's curiosity, while it also speeded up the acquaintance process, as I was approached even by children who were not especially interested in my presence (e.g. by 1st and 2nd grades who were distant in the beginning) but wished to be photographed. Once I had established a friendly relationship after the first month of my school attendance, and proceeded in observing or participating in play, I gradually reduced photography, leaving the camera in my bag in an attempt to avoid distraction from the normal course of play<sup>26</sup> and establish my identity as adult-friend and researcher-playmate. For the same reason, I soon stopped taking notes during play sessions, as many children (particularly girls) would cease playing at the sight of my notebook and would surround me trying to figure out what I was writing and asking why I was writing in English. Notes were taken between breaks when children returned to their classes.

Girls and boys reacted differently to my daily presence at school. Girls, who were generally more adult-oriented than boys, would form a circle around me asking for my attention and would offer me food as a sign of friendship. They would invite me to watch their play, take photographs and eventually join their games. It was with third-, fifth- and a peripheral group of fourth grade girls that I associated most of the time because they approached me first and quickly accepted me as their playmate. At times, I would spend the whole day playing with one group, while occasionally I would change playgroup from break to break. While on all occasions I tried to maintain a general overview of the actions in the playgrounds, my observations were affected by children's

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<sup>26</sup> Photographic documentation of my research was not only an integral part of a material culture approach to play but was also part of my obligations as recipient of a research grant from the Peloponnesian Folklore Foundation. I used one of the museum's cameras with B/W film or slides for material that would be handed over to the museum archives and a second camera that belonged to me with colour film for the photographs that children asked. In retrospect, photographs have proven extremely useful, e.g. as documentation of children's symbolic transformations of space, in the discussion of children's rooms and the use of toys beyond play, especially in the light of the time gap between fieldwork and thesis completion (see chapter 2).

During the process of play, however, the camera was not helpful, except as a reminder of what playing a game might look like to an outsider. The distracting effect of the camera was not so much due to the distance it created between observer and observed, as Dubisch (1995: 112) found in her study of Greek pilgrimage. It was rather the dissolving of the entire event altogether that the camera brought about, as children refused to be the passive objects of my photography and demanded an active participation in the process, taking poses and changing the normal course of playground actions. In the context of recent experimentation with child-centered, participatory research techniques, photographs taken by children have been employed by social scientists (e.g. social geographers) for eliciting children's views on various topics including their experience of place (see Punch 2002: 333-4; Rasmussen and Smidt 2003: 82-100).

stance towards my presence and therefore are slightly biased towards girls and mixed gender games.

Boys tended to ignore me during the breaks because they were eager to make the most out of their playtime. They would rush out of their classrooms as soon as the bell rang to start a football game. On their way to the playground, they would invite me to watch, or they would announce on their way back the football match daily results with a request to take a picture of their team. I never played football at school, as my policy was to join those games that I was invited to and those invitations usually came from girls rather than boys. While younger boys (6-7 years) gradually changed their attitude, especially after I visited their homes (see chapter 2), this was not the case with the older cohorts of boys, who had more fixed ideas about gender identity, as we shall see in the discussion of gender performance during games. As far as the boys of the older classes were concerned, my identity as adult female researcher meant that I could watch them, but they never invited me in any setting to join them in what was concerned a male activity *par excellence*, even if in practice during the term the meaning of the game shifted to an age-based competition transcending gender boundaries. As the game transformed into a major conflict between fifth and sixth grades and acquired the characteristics of a dramatic event analogous to adult professional football matches it created enormous tension and divided the school in two rival camps shouting rhythmic insults at each other. When, I was invited in November 1988 by a group of female players to either play or chant along with the fans, I strongly refused to participate, feeling that, as my project was not limited to an in depth study of one group of children, I should retain a position of neutrality. Choosing sides by joining either the players or the chanters would possibly jeopardize my goal of approaching and understanding all children. My experience from the field during the summer months before school started had taught me that most children had a sense of loyalty in their friendship patterns that increases with age. If I spent too much time with “Upper Neighbourhood” children outside school, “Lower Neighbourhood” boys would receive me with mumbles and long faces or would retaliate in school by grabbing my rucksack and running off to start a chasing game. Little girls would announce that they won’t speak to me because I “always play with the others”. Thus, in the case of football, I consciously resorted to my

adult researcher identity to avoid bias against either of the combatants, by explaining that my project involved understanding all children and the game as a totality. The children accepted my “neutral” position as researcher and offered me a special place to stand between the rival fans.

The last week before Easter holidays, I conducted a survey by asking the children of all classes to write on a piece of paper about their five favourite games at school, home and neighbourhood, including where and when they play, who they play with usually and why they prefer these games. In addition, I required a full description of at least one game, hoping to get some contextual information on children’s preferred ways of playing (e.g. favourite places, playmates etc.) from the children themselves. The results were rather poor in the latter respect, as I discovered that most Phocaeen children were not very keen on writing, unless they really had to. Counter to my expectations that I would get the most detailed answers from the older classes, it was mainly the 3<sup>rd</sup> grades who gave me the most descriptions of games. This was mainly due to the pressure exercised by their teacher who, in contrast to other teachers, remained in the classroom during the survey and urged the children to follow all guidelines.

In addition to the older children's reluctance to write, which was increased by the conditions under which the survey took place (5th grade children regrettably missed their Gym hour to answer my questions), problems were complicated by a number of first grades’ inability to write. I partly overcame this difficulty by interviewing children in groups and by using a tape recorder.<sup>27</sup> First grades thought that my incentive for conducting the survey was to find out about their toy preferences in order to offer them appropriate gifts, so I had to make clear that I was not playing Santa Claus.

I received 137 answers (from 70 girls and 67 boys) listing in most of the cases five favourite games<sup>28</sup> played in the three designated areas (cf. tables 4.1, 4.1.1, 4.1.2 ; 5.1, 5.1. 1-2 and 6.1, 6.1. 1-2 in Appendix I). Children’s declared preferences did not radically differ from my own observations, although there were some interesting

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<sup>27</sup> See James, Jenks and Prout (1998:190) on the benefits of group interviews. According to the authors, group interviews reduce distance and unequal positioning between researcher and researched by offering children the support of their peers.

<sup>28</sup> See introduction, on definitional problems related to the distinction between play-non play and play versus games.

exceptions.<sup>29</sup> Age and gender distribution of children's play preferences are displayed in tables 4.1.1 and 4.1.2. The games in the tables are listed under English translations- wherever possible- of the original names that children mentioned. Each game is described in detail in Appendix III, where I have also included a discussion of my classification strategies. For the purposes of this chapter, suffice to say that I have used the fairly descriptive, activity-based categories of Opie and Opie (1984) and Bishop and Curtis (2001) to facilitate comparison with games reported in the literature on school play in non-Greek contexts.

Surveys on children's play preferences have been used in the scholarly literature on play to discuss social and cultural aspects of children's school play, e.g. trends in children's culture with regard to themes of continuity and change and with regard to gender differences in children's play behaviour in school playgrounds.<sup>30</sup> As the

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<sup>29</sup> It is interesting to see how children responded to the task I assigned to them, as their answers indicated a wider range of activities than their self-organized games. E.g. some games and athletic events (volleyball, long-jump, shot-put) that were taught by teachers and performed only during gym, were listed among children's preferences although they never took place during the breaks. Some children referred to less than five games and a small number of children referred to more than five. As a general policy, I included all games even if their number exceeded the limit of five. I also discovered that children did not only refer to games but also to pastimes (like fishing) or a broad range of activities that could fall in the category of leisure but are not usually thought of as play, such as reading, writing, drawing, walking and talking with friends. In fact, some 10- and 11-year-old girls rarely played at all, preferring to wander about in the playground chatting with their friends and declaring: "We don't play anymore. We're not babies! We walk around ("Den eimaste mora, kanoume voltes").

All reported activities were included in the survey. Some games that I had often seen the children play earlier in the year but were not "in season" (i.e. in fashion) at the time I conducted the survey, were either omitted or were listed in the lowest rank order, thus confirming the here-and-now quality of children's culture. This was the case for "Poison", which was not mentioned at all among boys and girls' school preferences (see table 4.1), although I had seen girls playing at it. Among neighbourhood games, "Kamini" (=Furnace), which had gone out of fashion; after a period of considerable popularity, received only one entry, while the boys' summer and autumn crazes Tzanes (a tossing game) and marbles were not mentioned at all (see chapter 5, and Appendix I, tables 5.1 and 6.1. Also, see Appendix III for description of games). Curtis (2001:66), in a comparative approach to nine Yorkshire school game repertoires, reported a similar tendency among British children to talk about what was important to them at the time, rather than refer to what they were playing at six months or even two weeks prior to his research. Not all children distinguished between home and neighbourhood in their answers, a fact which could be attributed to the predominant outdoor orientation of children's play during their leisure time (see next chapter) or to the prevalence of the distinction between school /non-school. For most children to play "at home" meant to play out of doors even in the case of toy play and board games. For this reason, I created a merged category of home/neighbourhood following children's merging of the space categories (tables 6.1 and 6.1.1). Play preferences explicitly mentioned as being carried out in the neighbourhoods of Phocaea are listed in tables 5.1 and 5.1.1.

<sup>30</sup> My own rationale for doing the survey was initially linked to my questions concerning the commoditization of children's play. I was interested in exploring the extent to which commercial playthings would dominate children's play preferences. I was also interested in the fate of traditional games vis-à-vis formal sports and in the degree in which play choices differed in the three settings.

inferences drawn from this quantitative material have been refuted by anthropologists on the basis of qualitative data yielded by intensive fieldwork. I thought that a balanced view of both quantitative and qualitative methods, would contribute more fruitfully to the debates, especially as both my quantitative material and my observations included information of children's play activities beyond school.<sup>31</sup> Overall children mentioned a bigger variety of games in the home and neighbourhood contexts (table 6.1) than at school. More active games, however, were chosen at school.<sup>32</sup> In the answers regarding Home/Neighbourhood preferences there was a prevalence of symbolic play, board games and other quieter activities among girls' answers. Of the 22 games and pastimes ranking from first to the tenth position of girl's most common play preferences at home/neighbourhood, four choices were related to symbolic play, while doll-play was the first common choice. Play at school involves a smaller range of games - which is understandable in the light of the restriction of toys and board games in the playground. The influence of school, as a diffusion mechanism of formal sports, is illustrated in the high popularity of team sports at school among both genders<sup>33</sup> and the choice of athletic events taught during gym (long-jump, races shot put and discus throw<sup>34</sup>) by girls and

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<sup>31</sup>The theme of continuity and change with regard to the debate on the demise of traditional games in contemporary children's local cultures will be discussed in the last chapter of the thesis.

<sup>32</sup> Blatchford et al (1991) and Blatchford (1998) had similar findings from research on British school playgrounds, which were dominated by active games, especially ball games and football. Speed is the most commonly reported characteristic of modern western playgrounds (Sutton-Smith 1990; James 1993; Opie 1993). This has not been always the case, however, as Sutton-Smith's historical study of New Zealander children's play suggests (Sutton-Smith 1982). Speed may be a function of the playground culture which has been historically influenced by the systematic encouragement of formal games by the educational authorities and the school curricula (e.g. Physical Education). Phocaeen children's variation on preferences in the school and home/neighbourhood contexts seems to corroborate his findings.

<sup>33</sup> E.g. football appeared in the list of five favourite games of 79% of boys and 43,3% of girls. Basketball was mentioned by 43,8% of boys and 8,9% of girls. Long-jump was preferred by 22,4% of girls and 22,8% of boys. Races appeared among the answers of 16,4% of girls and 7% of boys. Shot-put seemed to impress more girls (6%) than boys (1,7%). See Appendix I, table 4.1.

<sup>34</sup> What was taught in school was at times incorporated in children's play (e.g. see chapter 6 for mock versions of classes during performances of "School" or "Teachers"). Some games taught in school (like *Gyro-Gyro Oloi*) were only played by youngsters. During term time two teachers introduced new games to children inspired by respective chapters in the primer of grade four and grade one: Fivestones and a symbolic play theme based on the popular folktale collected by the Grimm brothers, "The musicians of Bremen". Their performance did not last more than a week. By contrast, some games and athletic events that were taught in the context of gymnastics were taken up and were incorporated in the Phocaeen children's game repertoire with some modifications. One notable example was that of Blouse, a very popular game among nine- to eleven-year-old children. Blouse had been initiated by older children some years ago who had learnt it during their gym hours from a popular school teacher. Although its original version was played with a handkerchief, children quickly modified it -as handkerchiefs are not in use anymore- and substituted the kerchief with a blouse. As the blouse fulfilled the speed and tension required

boys. Girls tended to report in all contexts a broader range of activities than boys. The margin was smaller at school, where girls mentioned 49 games against 46 reported by boys.

The following section will deal with the importance of age and gender in children's culture within and beyond the school playground and with the ways gender and age identities are constituted and reworked at school through particular performances and children's meaningful interactions with each other and their material environment.

#### **4.4 Boys and Girls in the playground: Play, Age and Gender**

One of the recurrent questions in play literature concerns the contribution of play to children's socialization into dominant values, beliefs and skills that each society considers necessary for full adult membership. As socialization processes and outcomes have been found to vary for males and females, scholarly interest has included play's contribution to the reproduction of gender asymmetrical relations.

The most influential arguments in the debate on children's gender socialization have been associated with the work of Janet Lever (1976) who conducted extensive research in US schools. Lever claimed that girls and boys exhibit distinctive trends in their play which have clear consequences in their later development. As cultural differences in the 1970s and early 1980s were often interpreted in terms of deficits, Lever's basic arguments went as follows: girls and boys played in single sexed groups and chose different games. Boys played in larger groups, at games exhibiting a higher degree of complexity in terms of content, structure and role allocation. Boys' games required more space, were performed predominantly outdoors and involved a high degree of conflict and clear outcomes. Girls used less space, they played in smaller

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by contemporary children in their play, it was easily incorporated. Fivestones, a static game of skill that had been introduced to children through the medium of a primer rather than an influential teacher or peer was quickly abandoned on the other hand. Children's literature has been reported as a source for the construction of children's imaginary domains during pretense (see chapter 6). It cannot however provide the venue for dispersal of a game involving bodily movement and skills. Learning bodily skills is a process of acquiring practical knowledge (Bourdieu 1977), which can only be accomplished through the routes of apprenticeship, i.e. by watching, participating and rehearsing. See James (1993) and Curtis (2001) for "learning to play" in British school contexts and Lancy (1996) for a non-Western context of "apprenticeship" in games. Also see Henze (1992) on similar patterns of apprenticeship in other cultural practices such as dance, cooking, healing etc. in a community in Thessaly, Greece.

groups, at turn taking and quieter, less complex, cooperative games with well-defined stages, indirect conflict and competition among individuals rather than groups (Sutton-Smith 1979:242-243). Lever (1976) concluded that the fact that girl's games lacked the high level of complexity, degree of organization and opportunity for conflict resolution and formation of group alliances present in boys' formal team games, might account for women's failure to achieve managerial jobs. Girl's games trained them for nurturance rather than for managerial roles.

In the 1980s and 1990s, a series of anthropological research conducted in school playgrounds and neighbourhoods seriously questioned Lever's arguments on the perceived deficits of girls' games. Anthropologists argued that Lever's views were erroneous because they relied on games as static prestructured formal texts. If games were seen as performances, however, the picture radically changed. Goodwin (1985, 1990, 1995) contested the lack of conflict and complexity in girls' games by presenting detailed ethnographic examples of Afro-American and Latino girls' rule negotiation and handling of disputes in skipping games. Evaldsson (1993) revealed a very complex process of gender control and manipulation in Swedish girls' Skipping Rope divination rhymes and Hughes (1989, 1991, 1999) illustrated the intricacies of rule negotiation present during American girl's ball games, a process which she termed "gaming". Evaldsson's work was also unique in presenting a mixed gendered playground, which nevertheless involved children in after-school daycare settings. In the rest of the literature, the predominant view of children's play is of two separate cultures developing in the playground and leading to different socialization patterns.

The first author to undermine the view of separate playground cultures was Thorne (1993), as she seriously questioned the received wisdom of gender segregation in the playground, by looking closer at girls' and boys' daily interactions and reworking of boundaries. Claims that boys and girls have different cultures seemed, according to Thorne, to refer not to externally observable behaviour but to the symbolic dimension of experience, i.e. stereotypes about gender behaviour (Thorne 1993:102-3). Thorne argued that it is wrong to see differences as dichotomous and that the separate-worlds dichotomies gloss the fact that interaction varies by activity and context.



Phocaea's playground was not characterized by anything close to gender segregation, either in terms of gender differentiation in game choices or in terms of the formation of *parees*.<sup>35</sup> An indication of the absence of a rigid gender separation may already be found in the list of children's play preferences at school (see Appendix I, table 4.1): girls' and boys' choices of games do not differ dramatically. Among the ten most common games choices of girls and boys, only two games were mentioned exclusively by girls (Elastics and 1-2-3- Stop) and only one game (War) was mentioned exclusively by boys. The games that were single gender choices were the least frequently reported. It should be noted, however, that preferences, do not describe the details of daily life in the playground. As Thorne (1993), has shown, quantitative studies are useful for portraying very general trends but there is always the risk of over-generalizing, when children's relationships are more complex and in a constant flux.

When I first entered the playground after having spent the summer in the village neighbourhoods<sup>36</sup>, I wrote in my notebook that "children tended to play with same gendered classmates". Indeed, children's first choice of playmates seemed to include classmates of their own gender, who were also most likely to be close friends. As I became more familiar with all of the children and started to look at the process of initiating a game and moving on to new games, the picture became more complex.

When the bell rang for break-time, most children left their classrooms in dyads or groups, sometimes having already decided what they were going to play. This particularly applied for games that required equipment brought from home, such as football, basketball, skipping rope, elastics and some symbolic play themes that were elaborated for a lengthier period of time than one break or one day. Some children- notably boys of the older classes, who were on the first floor- slid down the banister with style, already starting their play on their way out. Others made their way to the

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<sup>35</sup> *Parea* (plural *parees*) is a group of people that socialize together. In children's culture, a *parea* includes regular playmates and friends, two categories that do not necessarily coincide (see chapter 5). I have glossed the term *parea* with the term play group, which is commonly employed by psychological studies of children's play, to describe the groupings formed by children for the sake of engaging playful action.

<sup>36</sup> Another cleavage, which I have not followed consistently in my research, concerned transmigrant children who lived in the outskirts of the village. Some of these children -girls more often than boys- tended not to integrate well with the Phocaeen children, largely due to their different cultural backgrounds (see chapter 5). These girls formed a mixed age group that played with other transmigrant children who were also their neighbourhood mates. During the course of the year, however, they gradually started to mix with Phocaeen children.

playground, money or food in hand. Half of the first and a small amount of the second break was devoted by most children- except the football fanatics of all classes- in consuming and sharing food with friends or alone, or fetching snacks from the adjacent dairy shop (see Figure 4.1) as there was no canteen at school.<sup>37</sup>

Iona Opie (1993:4) has commented on the remarkable number of games that can be fitted in the fifteen minutes of break-time in British schools. Within twenty-five minutes, which was the duration of the “big break” (“to megalō dialeimma”) in Phocaea, a sequence of two or three games often took place in the various play spots surrounding the school building, which easily invited a growing number of children. Thus, groupings that might have started as single-gendered or same-aged did not necessarily remain so throughout break-time.

It should be noted that most schoolchildren already had experience -varying with age- of socializing with peers in their immediate house environs or the village streets. As these peers – who were also often first cousins – attended the same school, friendships that developed in the neighbourhoods carried on at school. Boys and girls often played together at school as they did in their neighbourhoods. It was not through gender separation that girls and boys worked through the local gender norms in their peer cultures. In the Phocaeen school playground as in the neighbourhoods, conformity to a particular gender ideology was based -among other things- on knowing in *which* games to participate with children of the opposite gender and *how*. If play’s contribution to children’s gender socialization is seen in terms of a process of appropriation of cultural resources (Corsaro and Evaldsson 1998:380), an interpretive reproduction of gender norms, this process has a conservative and innovative potential. The innovative

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<sup>37</sup> The fact that gates unlocked during the two first breaks and children left the school premises, crossed the road and went unescorted to the dairy shop puzzled some of the younger children’s parents. Walking to and from school was fairly unproblematic for the overriding majority of primary schoolchildren, although it also involved crossing streets, whereas for transmigrant children it meant walking along the coastal avenue. At school, however, where teachers rather than families were responsible for the physical integrity of children, parents were more apprehensive and demanding concerning safety measures (see Herzfeld 1991 on Greeks’ attitudes towards State institutions and on double standards). During the school year, the headmaster took several measures to limit the children’s mobility during break-time; However, regulations in Greek state institutions tend to have relatively short lives. As three of the six teachers - including the headmaster- were locals, they shared the beliefs about primary school children’s spatial autonomy. Also, as there was usually no traffic on the street, the teachers frequently gave in to children’s pressure to go out to buy their snacks. As a result, the measures oscillated between periods of stricter and periods of looser enforcement, during which the gates would lock and unlock.

contributions of children to gender relationships will be discussed in the section on football. Here, I shall focus on the ways Phocaen children reproduce gender boundaries by controlling deviant behaviour..

Children were critical of those girls and boys that failed to conform to gender appropriate behaviour. Those who crossed the line of the opposite gender were referred to by the same term: “agorokoritsa” indicating both sissies and tomboys. Three girls (aged six, seven and ten years) and one eleven-year-old boy failed to conform to gender norms and were isolated by the children of their own gender. Koula, a ten-year-old girl, who was a regular member of 5<sup>th</sup> grade’s football team, invited the least favourable comments by both girls and boys of her age.

During a conversation with boys of the fifth grade, I expressed my admiration towards the way Koula played football, by saying that she is a jolly good player (*paiktara*). I was immediately corrected by my interlocutors. “You mean a jolly good tomboy” (“agorokoritsara”).

- Cleo: Why is Koula a tomboy?

- Nasos: Because she only wants to play with us, she never plays with girls, she never wears skirts except on parades or in church and doesn’t have any girlfriends.

Girls’ critical comments included similar definitional features. When, on another occasion, I asked an older girl, Mika, why she thought Koula was a tomboy, she mentioned first the fact that Koula played with boys. As I was taken aback by this comment, since most girls played with boys, I asked:

- Cleo: Don’t you and your friends ever play with boys?

- Mika: Yes, of course we do but like girls (*san koritsia*).

Koula did not play like a girl, she behaved like a boy: she swore and spat on the ground, as boys of her age often did in public displays of toughness (e.g. after performing a particular stunt). Her general comportment was judged “boylike” (*echei agoristikous tropous*). Koula sat with other girls in the classroom but she did not socialize with

them.<sup>38</sup> In the gender ethos of Phocaeen children it was all right to mix with boys, but the style of mixing made the difference.

In the case of boys, on the other hand, the term *agorokoritso* seemed to be applied to those who systematically played with girls. I had witnessed such labellings during the summer when Lower neighbourhood boys accused a friend of theirs of being an *agorokoritso*, because he had temporarily abandoned his *parea* to play with his female cousins from Athens. Elias, an eleven-year-old boy who was in the process of outgrowing childhood games, enjoyed the company of two girls of his class and did not particularly like football. Nine-year-old Takis commented:

- Takis: He always sticks around with girls (olo me koritisia kanei pareia) and plays with them.
- Cleo: Don't you lot ever play with girls?
- Takis: We do, but we play games like Hide and Seek or Kitty-Kitty that are played by *all* children.

Performing gender in accordance to the peer norms meant different things then for girls and boys. For boys, it meant watching out for improper games and choosing the “right” games, which were the “democratic”, all inclusive central person games structured around the basic cross-cultural themes of approach versus avoidance, chase versus escape, order versus disorder (e.g. different versions of chasing and racing games).<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Although there were no separate rows for girls and boys in classrooms, as was the case before the Socialist Government introduced a series of measures promoting gender equality at all educational levels, girls did not sit with boys in class.

<sup>39</sup> James (1993:173) argues that the difference between inclusive and exclusive games in the playground is more related to the ways they are played out, i.e. to children's relationships, rather than to structural features of the games *per se*. While this maybe true, the structure of the games does seem to encourage or discourage exclusion strategies. Central person games often deal with the tenuous line between order and disorder, a theme that seems to attract young children in many cultures (see for example Raum 1940; Sutton-Smith 1972b; and review by Schwartzman 1978; also Lancy 1996; Corsaro 1997). As the main attraction of these games lies in their disorderly features (e.g. the breaking down of the central person's authority or the general burlesque ensuing the initiation of the chase, whose starting moment was unknown to players), they were enjoyed when more children participated. These were the games where different age groups in Phocaea mixed more often.

Other games, however, where the number of players was not unlimited or where players did not wish to share their activity with more children, demanded access rituals and strategies right from the beginning. If, for instance, a group of close friends had started a mixed gender game of commandos it was difficult for anybody else to join. If a group or a powerful player -girls more often than boys- did not wish to expand, several excuses were sought, such as nominating a game as owned by their class only, or claiming that they had already finished counting out. In some cases such as toy play, authority of exclusion-inclusion was practiced by the child who owned the most toys.

Girls felt freer to improvise with boys' games, without putting their gender identity at risk, as what seemed to matter was style rather than choice.<sup>40</sup>

For boys – as Takis' comment implied- there were games where it was all right to mix and games that were not that fit for gender mixture. This knowledge took time to acquire, a fact which explains why skipping rope, which is a game heavily associated with girls scored so high (second most common choice, see table 4.1.2) among seven-year-old boys.

As apprentices in the culture of childhood, this age group delighted in learning new games and rhymes.<sup>41</sup> When a new game was initiated in the playground –usually by the older cohorts of children- they were quick to pick it up and could play it for weeks. At the time I conducted the survey, the new craze for seven-year-olds was “Apples”, a ballgame similar to Dodgeball (see Appendix III). Apples were listed second in the rank of their preferences next to Skipping Rope, which was also a fairly new game in their age group.

During the winter eight- and nine-year-old girls had been playing at *Kamara*, (Arc) a skipping game whose name describes the curve formed by the turning rope. *Kamara* requires skill in managing to get under the rope while it is still high and then performing a jump without getting tangled. This technique required some time of on-looker before it was mastered and a lot of practice. *Fidaki* (little snake) and *Varkoula* (little boat) were simple skipping patterns that were practiced by seven-year-old girls, who brought their own skipping ropes at school in March. The boys of their class soon joined them and their enthusiasm was also reflected in their answers to my survey.

Older boys avoided participating in Skipping Rope, and those that did – a small group of non-football players- would never initiate a game themselves.<sup>42</sup> Games that were deemed girlish by the majority of boys, such as *Kamara*, and singing games, were

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<sup>40</sup>Younger girls seemed to be more hesitant in gender crossing.

<sup>41</sup> Language games were popular among six- and seven-year-old children. They especially enjoyed themselves with incongruity, bodily functions, and playing with sounds. Starting a game for this age group often became a game in itself as they laughed their hearts out by reciting a counting out rhyme that had a funny ending. See Appendix III, note 4.

<sup>42</sup> The strategy adopted was to volunteer for disliked roles (e.g. rope turner, or “it” figure). During the course of the year, these boys eventually developed jump rope skills and abandoned the rope turning position.

often the object of what Thorne terms “borderwork”.<sup>43</sup> Boys’ invasions of girl’s games was one of the forms that borderwork play took in Phocaea. Football players enjoyed invading *Kamara* games, at the risk of being harassed by the girls who often outnumbered them. What this ‘borderwork’ probably did was that it asserted the power of boys to disrupt girls games and control play by changing a game from skipping to tug-of war or tag. It also seemed to constitute a kind of gender control addressed to the regular male participants of girls’ games, as the latter allied with the invaders. I never saw girls invading boys’ games, they did however tease boys.<sup>44</sup>

Games that were usually associated with boys were football, basketball and war. The latter was not a game that girls would choose to participate in either context, as it was clearly marked as a competition between boys’ play groups (see next chapter).<sup>45</sup> As football constituted the central game event in the playground which transcended traditional gender boundaries, it requires separate treatment and will be discussed in the last section of this chapter.

Basketball was the second most popular ballgame (chosen by 43,8% of boys) and the third most popular play activity among boys. Among girls it seemed to enjoy the same popularity as “Apples” (8,9%), both ball games appearing in the tenth position in the list of common preferences.<sup>46</sup> Basketball was played by a far smaller number of players (usually three in each team) than football and never reached its popularity. Basketball was just another game which took place in the north side of the football ground whenever there was no football match (basketball players were also members of football teams). No rivalry between different grades was involved, the teams being usually composed of fifth grades with occasional participation of sixth grade boys.

Children’s predilection to the sport was a rather recent phenomenon, which was linked to the sport’s unprecedented popularity after a Greek team won the European Cup in 1987. Basketball reached football’s popularity in 1987, when the Greek basketball

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<sup>43</sup> “Borderwork”, according to Thorne (1993), is an umbrella term for various forms of cross-gender play, where girls and boys are pitted against each other. Borderwork reinforces existing gender boundaries. .

<sup>44</sup> See, for example, the session of “Sucker” described in chapter 5, where a group of Lower Neighbourhood girls, ganged against the only boy participant by initiating a power game at his expense.

<sup>45</sup> Only two girls participated in War in the neighbourhood context. A four-year-old girl, who was minded by her twelve-year-old brother while their parents were absent on fishing journeys, and ten-year-old Koula who was labelled as a tomboy.

team “Aris” won the European Cup. Almost every Greek household watched the finals and there were massive rallies in Athens of people holding Greek flags and chanting in celebration of what was experienced and celebrated as a “national victory”. Feelings of national pride were soon objectified in the issuing of a special stamp collection portraying the players of Aris, and the promotion of basketball magazines and portable basket rings in the Greek market. The expression of feelings of national pride through the basketball mania was successfully depicted in a satirical song composed by a popular Greek Rock group. Children participated in the new fad by organizing basketball games with or without the necessary equipment. When rubber basketballs, wooden basketball rings and albums of basketball players appeared in the market, children were ready to consume. Before the basketball rings were displayed at the local shops in Phocaea, children had already been using tree-branches.

It was the fact that basketball was played under trees both at school and the village square that made me attentive to the children’s appropriation of the natural or built environment for the performance of their age and gender concerns. Trees, for instance, were used both for gender display (as in the performance of various stunts like climbing and jumping off high branches) and for measuring age-based competence in basketball according to the height of the branches. Whereas fig-trees were for the youngsters, almond trees were the real challenge for nine- and ten-year-olds. The following section will deal with the various meanings that the playground acquired for girls and boys of different age groups.

### **Appropriating the playground: transformations and performances**

School play rarely leaves its traces on the environment, as children’s constructions are fluid, transient, temporary and at the service of play bricoleurs. Children in the playground are not allowed to leave their marks on the environment as they would in the open spaces in the neighbourhoods, or their homes (see chapters 5,6). Their constructions are either symbolic or temporary.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Girls only played basketball during the gym hour. They did not usually join the boys, as the basketball groups were gender exclusive groups of boys, who did not usually play with girls.

<sup>47</sup> The only play construction that left its material marks on the playground was the *Triliza* diagram, which was carved by players on the brick frame of the garden patch dividing the lower from the upper back yard

Using the playground involved different sets of meanings for girls and boys of different age groups. Although the school regulations did not allocate playground segments to particular age groups, Phocaean children of different age groups did show some predilections towards particular areas but there was no sense of owning a place and mobility in the playground was also dependent on the use of specific playground features. Younger children tended to play closer to the building occupying marginal positions, interstices, corridors and stair wells. They also played at the sandpit. As the year progressed and their experience and confidence increased they gradually moved their sandpit- play to the back yard, where they could also have a view of the main football match. Children of the three older classes often occupied larger segments of the playground during their play.

Some features of the playground were constantly used for displaying gender stereotypes concerning body performance. A recurrent stereotype in Phocaean children's gender cultures was the opposition between toughness (typically associated with boys) and graceful suppleness, which was associated with femininity. In the playground, this opposition had spatial materializations. Girls performed handstands against the building's walls and hung from railings that separated the two yard levels in the back (Figure 4.4). Toughness was displayed through tree climbing and jumping off branches by younger boys (Figure 4.5).

Tree branches converted to imaginary doors in a session of house play of eight-year-old girls were used for swinging by six-year-old boys. In the beginning of my observations, I had classified the little boys' actions under rubrics such as "climbing trees". However, I soon realized that hanging from branches often involved identification with film characters such as Superman, where the little boys would tie their anoraks around their necks shouting: "I am Superman!" (Figure 4.6)

Hide and Seek is a good example of age differences in the appropriation of the playground. Initially I was surprised to see children playing Hide and Seek in broad daylight and in an environment that had few hiding places to offer. The performance of Hide and Seek in a school environment constitutes striking evidence against the

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(Figures 11 and 12). Hopscotch diagrams were carved on the ground of the unpaved part of the back yard.



environmental determinism of certain studies mentioned in the previous sections, as it clearly illustrates how children manipulate the environment according to their desires. The desire to play a game is defined by the degree of fun derived from it, while pleasure rationales often differ according to the age and gender of players. Corsaro and Evaldsson (1998:388) have commented on the different ways in which children derive fun in games at different ages, arguing that the variance in children's predilections and behaviours do not necessarily need to be interpreted as developmental tendencies but rather as different acts of appropriation. The fact, for example, that younger children – especially preschoolers – add elements of fantasy play in games with rules should not be accounted for as children's inability to understand the rules but as an act of appropriation of an activity into their shared peer culture. Because young children's peer play is based on shared fantasy and improvisation, the many and specific rules of games are seen as taking the fun out of play by imposing restrictions on the improvisational features that characterize the shared fantasy worlds of children.<sup>48</sup>

What is challenging in a game, according to many theorists, may also be related to experience and mastery over a situation (Erikson 1977, 1987) or the challenge of novelty (Berlyne 1960) problem solving and adaptive potentiation (Sutton-Smith 1974), or adaptive variability (Fagen 1981; Sutton Smith 1997: 24, 221-231). In the case of Hide and Seek, older children associated the game with exploring the environment and engaging in risky activities, preferably carried out in the dark and out of adults' sight, such as jumping over walls and fences or hiding in neighbours' yards.<sup>49</sup> As these conditions were not met by school restrictions, children over nine years of age rarely played at Hide and Seek even though they listed it among their preferences. Younger children, however, who did not enjoy the same freedom of space outside school, attributed less importance to environmental restrictions than the act of hiding for its own sake.

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<sup>48</sup> Singer and Singer (1990) provide further examples of younger children's tendency to transform board games into pretense. My own observations in Phocaea corroborate their findings, as I happened to be present at some six- and seven-year-old boy's solitary or interactive pretense over a chess board. The rationale for children's fascination with make-believe in this line of argument should also be interpreted in terms of an act of appropriation of the adult world.

<sup>49</sup> These predilections – especially the association of Hide and Seek with exploration and a sense of adventure—are also explicitly stated in some children's answers in the survey.

Adding fantasy to a game was not only the youngsters' prerogative in Phocaea. Commandos was an example of a game that shared Hide and Seek's basic structure that was enriched by the warfare symbolism, enjoyed by all age groups of boys until the age of 14 approximately. Commandos figured as the 7<sup>th</sup> most common choice of all boys' play preferences but was the first choice among ten-year-old boys. Girls also played at Commandos, although this was not reflected in their preferences, where the game ranked in the 14<sup>th</sup> position of girl's common choices.

Tag and Hide and Seek, which were played around the school building, also involved transformations, as hall entrances, staircases and benches were alternatively used as hideouts, "homes" or "prisons". During other chasing and racing games, such as "Poison", "Little Girl", "Drinks or Cigarettes" and "Kitty-Kitty", ample use was made of structural features of the building such as the entrance side wall (see figure, 4.1). "Kitty-Kitty" was always played near the school entrance that provided the wall for the "it" figure (= Kitty) <sup>50</sup> (Figures 4.7 and 4.8).

Many recent approaches to children's play stress its transformative characteristics (Schwartzman 1978; James 1993). Whether engaged with the conformities and regulations of the world of make-believe or with the imaginary situations simulated by games with rules, children experiment with imaginary or literal transformations of their bodies, their relationships and their material environment, and in doing so they comment on, reproduce and contribute to changes in their own and the adult, local and global cultures.

Younger children were often engaged in pretend play sessions during the breaks. In fact, symbolic play ("Shop") was the most common choice of eight-year-old girls (3rd grade), while symbolic play themes ("Space-crafts", "Shop", "Spies") figured as the third and fourth most frequent choices among boys of the same age group and among six-year-old boys of the first grade (Star Fighters, Mike Knight). Seven-year-old girls did not mention symbolic play in their answers, although I had seen them play at "train" and I had been given descriptions of "School" and "Doctors" as games played at school. "Doctors" were played out of the sight of adults and of uninitiated schoolmates, as the play session involved undressing and body exploration. Consequently, I never had the

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<sup>50</sup> For a description of these games cf. Appendix III.

chance to witness the event per se. Nevertheless, I was given versions of the game both by its participants, when I visited their homes, and by girls who disliked the game and would temporarily withdraw their friendship from the “bad” girls. As far as “School” is concerned, I had witnessed numerous versions of the game in the village but failed to observe a play session at the school playgrounds. In fact, I was surprised to learn that the girls would re-enact a class situation in the school premises.

The favourite themes in the symbolic play of 3rd grade girls were “Shop” and “Sisters” or “House”. “Shop”, which was the most preferred game in the survey, was played in the front playground at a bench near the school entrance. All the girls of a class would participate in the game, while occasionally a boy would join in. The girls would divide into shop owners and clients, simply by announcing their roles, while the boy would choose the role of a dog that would walk in the shop standing on his two legs only to play mischief and pretend to urinate on the floor. The shop-owners, after declaring their profession (baker, butcher, green-grocer), would stand or kneel behind the bench using its wooden flat seat as a table or a counter, while the gap between the wooden seat and the concrete base was employed as a drawer or shelf for storage of the goods. There could be one to three adjacent “shops” at a time, which the “clients” would visit consecutively. This arrangement gave more girls the opportunity to become a shop-owner, which was a coveted role, as it had a more transformative scope.<sup>51</sup> Symbolic meanings attributed to the same playground features fluctuated according to the requirements of the game, the age and gender of players and the duration of a play theme, if symbolic play was at stake. As play themes developed in consecutive play sessions covering an entire week of successive enactments or scenes from the same play theme, e.g. “Shop” or “Sisters”, play tended to become more elaborate – children planned their symbolic transformations and brought material from home or the classroom – This was a tendency that did not only characterize girls’ play – where the *stolisma* (decoration) theme was prevalent but also boys’ play in a different context. Preparing

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<sup>51</sup> Girls disliked the roles of customer or visitor (*mousafiraios*) in many pretend themes, as they were deemed passive. Being allocated such a role without volunteering caused considerable conflict and put the entire play event into jeopardy.

the setting and play props and a relative preoccupation with realistic representations of referents tended to grow with the age of players.<sup>52</sup>

Thus, after consecutive sessions of “Sisters”, the girls constructed a “house” with cement blocks lying near their regular playing bench. The “house” had one room, a dining room with a “table”(another block of concrete) in the centre, covered with a duster (table cloth), an empty carton-box (food container) and a flat, rectangular “Lego” piece (tray). Roles allocated the previous day remained but were played in the context of a “house”. Two days later more utensils were brought from the girls’ homes to decorate their dining table (aluminum foil containers, tupperware bowls) and receive the food (chewing gum, sweets and crisps bought at the corner-shop adjacent to the school) to be offered to the guests.

What struck me in the game of “Sisters” was first of all the fact that it was only played in school. When girls of this age group played at home or in their neighbourhood with their real sisters and friends, they would prefer “mother and child” roles or fictive kinship roles (*Koumbares*).<sup>53</sup> In “Sisters”, however, probably because of the fact that participants were of the same age, there was no explicit mother figure. “Sisters” seemed to be a celebration and re-working of the age-based collective identity promoted by the school system. In the two sessions of sister play that I attended there were three roles of sisters (oldest, middle and youngest), an aunt, two cousins (one of them played by myself) and a Godmother. The game revolved around the youngest sister, who would be mockingly scolded and smacked by her older sisters or carried on their back. It was the youngest sister who was then the actual protagonist, her role being strongly claimed by many members of the group, as she could be naughty and imitate baby talk.

As the equipment offered by a school playground is not limitless, the same materials were used for various ends by different playgroups. Occasionally, this trend acquired the trappings of a fashion. Concrete blocks were particularly in fashion for symbolic play among 6-8 year-olds for about two week. The concrete blocks that were

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<sup>52</sup> See traps in war play of Lower neighbourhood boys in the next chapter and scavenging for play materials. The tendency towards elaboration also characterizes popular games with rules. According to Opie and Opie (1984:8-9), a “game enjoying absolute favour fatally attracts additional rules and formalities; the sport becomes progressively more elaborate, the playing of it demands further finesse, and the length of time required for its completion markedly increased”.

<sup>53</sup> See chapter 6.

used by the girls for their "house" play were transformed a few days later into a television set by two seven-year-old boys. After accomplishing their construction, the youngsters sat on the bench with their arms crossed on their chest and pretended, wearing serious face expressions, to watch a programme. Coincidentally, on the same day, another set of blocks was transformed into driver's seats by four six-year-old-boys, who played at driving cars, tanks and space-crafts consecutively. Each boy was sitting on a block placed in front of a bench pretending to drive an imaginary steering wheel emerging from the bench's wooden seat. With the shift in content, new sets of meaning were added to the same objects (imaginary brakes would grow out of the concrete blocks while laser beams would be released from the wooden seats) with a respective change in special sound effects.

Sand, water and dirt were the favourite playground materials for five- and six-year-old boys and girls who constructed mud houses, castles and garages at the sand pit. Construction was almost immediately followed by destruction either by the creator of the building or by another child, whose action would signal the beginning of a rough-and-tumble play in the sand. Playing with mud fascinated six-year-old boys who often emptied crisp bags full of water on the dirt for the fun of exploring the transformations that took place. "We like making the dirt soft and then we make a river and watch the water flow" was Dimitri's comment in a group interview of six-year-olds about their play preferences (Figures 4.9 and 4.10). Playing with dirt was also the main object of toy play among children of the same age-group in the school premises.

#### **Age, gender and power: The case of football**

Football in Phocaea, as in the rest of Greece, is considered by all age groups a male game par excellence. The popularity of the game historically has been such that the word *balla* (ball) metonymically refers to football in the Greek language. *Balla* or *Podosfairo* (football) was indeed the favourite game of all Phocaeen primary school boys from second to sixth grade (ages seven to eleven).

Football has traditionally been -and to a certain extent still remains- a male domain. It was the men that gathered every Saturday evening in the PRO-PO (National Lottery) shop of Phocaea to fill in the forecast forms and discuss about the teams' potentials. Women would be asked at home to help fill in lottery forms randomly, but it

was the men who kept in touch with football information through athletic newspapers and periodicals. Furthermore, women's participation in football issues would be restricted to the discursive level. There are no female professional football teams and women usually show interest in the sport when it becomes a major national issue. The transition of a sport from the stadium to the centre of the socio-political scene is not a uniquely Greek phenomenon. In the history of the western world, sports and politics have been inextricably linked and have often been mutually interdependent (Walvin: 1986:104). Archetti (1994:226) has shown how Argentinian football, a typical and exclusively male sport in that country, helped to construct a gendered rhetoric of nationalism, as it was through football that Argentina became an important world actor in the modern history of sports. In Greece, sports have been systematically encouraged and manipulated for political ends. During the years of the military dictatorship (1967-1974), the junta organized International Athletic Meetings and openly supported and capitalized on the international success of Panathinaikos, one of the national football teams, in an attempt break the regime's international isolation and distract the Greeks from political and economic problems. Football's popularity, however, continued after restoration of Democracy in 1974, and after the professionalization of the teams in 1978, football matches started to attract more young people and women to the stadiums. In the 1980s, football teams became a major source of national revenue and individual profit, while tycoons and politicians became involved with their ownership and management sometimes with disastrous outcomes for the Political party in power. Shortly after I finished my fieldwork in 1989, PASOK lost the national elections mainly because of the party's relations with a Greek tycoon and team-owner, who was convicted for fraud and had used one of the most popular football teams as a money-laundering apparatus (Panourgia 1995:50-51).

It was football's association with national interests that attracted Phocaeen women and girls' attraction to the sport. Girls became interested in football through their brothers, who apart from playing the game, collected stickers portraying football players and read football comics and magazines. Boys of different age-groups often wore football gear during their outings to play, while youngsters tended to dress up in the colours of the three major professional football teams (green, red and yellow). Most

children of both sexes had definite preferences towards one of the professional teams. Indeed, team preference was one of the first questions children asked each other when getting acquainted, while the same attitude was followed by adults who wished to show younger children their friendliness. Girls would occasionally participate in football games in their neighbourhood or the community recreation ground but would rarely start such a game themselves. The only place where girls systematically participated in football matches was the school playground.

Scholarly works on football in European school playgrounds systematically report its colonizing effect with respect to other players and other games. James (1993) argues that as football players occupy the playground's centre pushing the girls to the edges, traditional male-female asymmetrical hierarchies are reproduced. Asymmetry in occupation of play space reproduces asymmetry in gender relationships. This is a common finding in the literature on gender separation in school playgrounds (Blatchford 1998, Armitage 2001, Jarett et al. 2001). Makrynioti's ethnography of an Athenian classroom (1982) corroborates the spatial marginalization of girls in the playground and argues for the reproduction of asymmetrical gender relationships on the basis of Diane Lever's (1976) deficit type of argument of gender differences in play that had been in vogue in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

The situation in Phocaea, however, was somewhat different. For six- and seven-year-old girls, football constituted a distinctive feature of male or tomboy conduct. Girls of their age who play football and associate with boys are *agorokoritsa* (tomboys) or even worse *agoria* (boys). Despite the dominant association of the game with masculinity manifest in the expressed dislike of younger girls towards *Podosfairo*, girls of the three older classes not only played football with the boys but also ranked it high among their play preferences in the survey (table 4.1.1). What is more, girls also contributed to the transformation of football into an important dramatic event involving the entire school.

Football was played at school nearly every day with three different meetings taking place often simultaneously but in distinct areas. While the match between grades five and six took place in the main football ground in the rear playground, grades three and four played in the side yard. Finally, a mixed team of second and a few first grades

always played in the lower rear playground. There seemed to be a silent agreement on the choice of these spots, for I never witnessed a dispute over playing areas in football. The same space regularity was often displayed in other games, where play spaces were chosen according to environmental suitability and appropriated by the group that arrived first on the spot. Different playgroups could share the same space for different games, conflict usually arising from boys, who enjoined spoiling or adding mischievous varieties to girl's games. The spheres designated for football, however, were beyond dispute. Other games could take place in those areas only when they were not used for football.

When the grand match took place it usually continued during the second and third break and occasionally during gym hours -providing that the teachers granted their permission. The final score was then calculated by the aggregate of goals scored during the various play sessions. This was not always the case with the younger football players, who could take on a new game in the following breaks. Rule observance did not dramatically differ among the football groups. Fouls, penalties, corners and outs were more or less followed without appointing a referee, while off-sides were only mentioned by younger goalkeepers, their protest being usually ignored.

Football was indeed the dominant game in school not only due to the actual space it occupied (which, as we have seen, was not a problem in the Phocaeen school context), or its high frequency (chasing games that occupied much playground space were almost as frequent) but also because it involved more children than the actual players. The grand match between grades five and six involved a higher degree of organization compared to other games (including younger boys' football games). It was regarded as part of a series of meetings leading to the year's cup and championship where the losers would buy a bottle of coke for each member of the regular players. The final matches took place in the community's football ground. Some of the boys were members of the youth division in the local football team "Proteas" and trained regularly in the community's football ground. Football was often antagonistic to other games as the non-playing classmates of the participant teams organized chanting groups to boost the moral of the players. The boys' term for the chanters was *kerkides* (stands), while the girls often referred to their action as "shouting during ball games" (Na fonazo sti balla). The



“stands” consisted exclusively of girls while the players were often mixed. Female players in the beginning of the season did not play in the regular team but played as “substitutes”, i.e. they were on call and joined the game when the team captains decided that more players were needed. This changed during the course of the year. As the match gained increasing importance and popularity, a bigger number of girls joined both teams as regulars. Grade five's team had a permanent female member, Koula, who was regarded as a tomboy. Boys were not very happy with the fact that Koula belonged to the regulars but they accepted her because “she played good ball”. The number of players was flexible and, in some occasions (when more girls participated), there would be more players in one of the teams.

What marked football's centrality in the school playgrounds was not so much its players as its supporters. The rival fans created a turmoil that attracted the attention of younger children who quickly took sides and joined in. Occasionally, a group of third grade boys would play at journalists commenting at an imaginary microphone and taking interviews of players before penalties.

What actually triggered my interest in the game – despite my personal antipathy to the sport – was the chanting. When I realized the game's growing popularity among the children, who increasingly abandoned their other games to watch, or join the chanters, I revised my initial indifferent attitude and took a closer view of the event. Chanting was a novelty of this generation of primary schoolchildren, unknown, in this form at least, to previous generations. Its content was often obscene and created so much tension that the teachers confiscated the ball in March 1989 and banned the game for a couple of weeks (Figures 13-16). Slogans and songs were revised versions of well-known adult originals chanted during local and national football matches. Most of the chants glorified one team and jeered the rival<sup>54</sup>.

1. “Pempti (or Ecti) simainei tsichla patimeni” (5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup><sup>55</sup> means

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<sup>54</sup> Stylianoudi (1996:388-389) and Papageorgiou (1998: 88-89) have grouped adult hooligan chants into categories according to their main theme. Love, sex and feminization of the opponent, death and life constitute the major thematic groupings in Stylianoudi's taxonomy. Papageorgiou's categories refer to the themes of devotedness to team, reference to locality, aggression and violence and humour. Phocaena children's chants are closer to Papageorgiou's categorization, drawing on themes of glorification of own team and derision of the opponent. The style of chants blends hooligan and children's culture by reference to bodily excrement, animals (chants 1,5,6), challenge and triumph (chants 4,7) threat, (chants 2,4,9,10) and the *trela* (madness) idiom of devotion to one's team widely in use among hooligans.(chants 11,12).

crushed chewing gum).

Where upon the rival fans might answer:

Ecti/pempti simainei gida gastromeni, (6th/5th means pregnant goat),

which would receive the prompt counter chant:

Pempti/Ecti simainei, podia katourimeni! (5th/6th means pissed apron).

Most of the chants were usually directed against or in favour of the two major rivals, namely the two older classes. However, as fourth grades often reinforced the sixth grade team, they would receive their lot from the chanting groups. I only witnessed one version of such chants:

Tetarti thimisou (4th grade remember)

tin catastrophhi sou (your catastrophe)

The chanters immediately returned the challenge by adapting a common hooligan insulting strategy of feminizing the opponent by attributing homosexual practices to the members of the team. This particular style of sexual innuendo was not common however.

Pempti tin pairneis (5<sup>th</sup> you are fucked)

apo kei pou gerneis (from the side that you bend)

The rest of the chants were closer to children's culture.

**2. Pempti megalo to onoma sou (5th/6th your name might be grand)**

ma otan vlepεις ecti (but at the sight of 5th/6th grades)

fonazeis ti mama sou (you start crying for your mama)

Mama, mama! Me kanane kima (Mama, mama, I've been slain)

Poios paidi mou, poios? (By whom, my child, by whom?)

I ecti, o Theos! (By 6th/5th grade, the God!)

**3. Peinane, peinane (They're hungry, they're hungry!)**

Doste tous na fane (Let them eat!)

Anti gia fasolakia (Don't give them green beans)

Doste tous golakia! (Give them some goals!)

**4. Stis endeka i ora meta tin andilia (At eleven o'clock, around the {time of} glare)**

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<sup>55</sup> In all chants the abbreviated forms "5<sup>th</sup>" and "6<sup>th</sup>" refer to the respective football teams formed by children of grades five and six.

katevike o Dounas (Dounas<sup>56</sup> marched in)  
 me endeka paidia (with eleven lads)  
 tin balla tin petaei (he sends the ball)  
 sto exo aristera (to the left goal post)  
 Tin planei o Michalis (Michalis<sup>57</sup> catches it)  
 sta dichtia tin peta (he throws it in the net.)  
 kai skizondai ta dichtia (and the net is torn)  
 kai peftei i dokos (and the goal post collapses)  
 kai leei o Michalis (and Michalis shouts)  
 “Mannoula mou, seismos” (Mama {help me, it’s} an earthquake!)  
 5. Anoichte tis pyles (Open the gates)  
 Na figoun oi xeftiles (and let them go in shame).  
 6. Anoichte tis portes (Open the doors)  
 Na figoune oi kotes (and let the hens go)<sup>58</sup>  
 7. Den echoume omada (We haven’t got a team)  
 Den echoume lao (We haven’t got {the} people)  
 Esis pou ta’chete ola (You’ve got both)  
 Koitachte to tablo (So, have a look at the {score} board!).  
 8. Edo tha ginei o tafos sas! (This is where your tomb shall be)  
 Gi’afto, anoixte to lakko sas! (So start digging your grave).  
 9. Pempti/ecti s’agapo (5th/ 6th I love you)  
 Pempti/ecti ise mia (5th/ 6th you are unique)  
 Ena apo ti Larisa (Here’s a {goal} from Larisa)  
 Ki ena ap’ti Lamia (and another one from Lamia).<sup>59</sup>

The last two verses can be replaced creating a new version either chanted by the same group subsequently or taken up as a counter-chant by the rival group of chanters. Both

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<sup>56</sup> Last name of the sixth grade’s captain. Boys with common first names, like Costas or Nikos, were often called by their last name in order to be distinguished from other children in their class bearing the same name.

<sup>57</sup> Michalis was the goalkeeper of grade five’s team.

<sup>58</sup> “Kota” = hen is a derogatory term for a woman, who exhibits what is considered as negatives aspects of female behaviour (e.g. tendency towards gossip, excessive attention on appearance, and cowardice). Children use it as synonymous to coward and cheater.

<sup>59</sup> Larisa and Lamia are first division teams participating in the annual National Championship.

versions are sung to the melody of a Greek popular song “San ton Karaghiozi”,<sup>60</sup> composed by Dionysis Savopoulos .

Pempti/ecti s’agapo (5th/ 6th I love you)  
Pempti/ecti ise mia (5th/ 6th you are unique)  
Ecti/Pempti eisaii thea (5th/6th you are the goddess)  
ston cosmo alli kammia (the only one on earth).  
10. Kapote itane polles oi omades (Once there were many teams)  
Ki epese enas keravnos (and {then} a thunder stroke)  
Ki emeine mono mia omada (So only one team was left)  
I ecti/pempti, o Theos! (6th/5th, the God! ).

This chant was sung to the melody of a well known Yanca tune.

The following chant was a creative reproduction of the “trela” (=madness) idiom, which typically describes the relationship of a football fan to his team according to Papageorgiou (1998).

11. Den eimaste kala (We’re not feeling good)

Den echoume myalo (We are out of our minds)  
Eimaste arrostoi (and we are mad about)  
Me tin ecti/pempti, to Theo! (6th/5th grade, the God).

Chant number 11 was also composed as a dialogue between a leading girl and the choir of chanters:

Girl: “Imaste kala?” (Are we feeling good?)  
Chorus: “Ooochi!” (Nooo!)  
Girl: “Echoume myalo?” (Is our mind in place?)  
Chorus: “Ooochi” (Nooo!).  
All: Tha ginoume kala (We’re gonna feel good)  
Tha valoume myalo (and we will think twice)  
Kai tha vgaloume (So, we will choose)  
tin ectara gia archigo (the great 6th as our leader).

Chant no 12 was my unknowing contribution to the children’s repertoire<sup>61</sup>.

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<sup>60</sup> Karaghiozis is a traditional shadow puppet theatre comic hero, see chapter 6.

<sup>61</sup> During a discussion on football teams, which had taken place in the summer, I had been prompted by some children to recite any chant I knew. I happened to know a chant sung by supporters of Panathinaikos and sung it for them. Children are quick to pick up new tunes. At the time I did not realize that I was contributing to the local football culture by responding to children’s request, so I was surprised to hear the revised version in the school playground

12. I Pempti/ecti paei sto giatro (5th/6th grade went to the doctor)

Gia na ton erotisei (to ask him)

ean yparchei farmaco (if there is any medicine)

Tin ecti/pempti na nikisei (to beat 6th/5th grade)

Kai o giatros tis apanda: (and the doctor replied)

Ti les, sympatrioti? ("What do you mean, compatriot?")

I ecti/pempti ine anikiti (6th/5th is invincible)

se oli tin Evropi (All over Europe!)"

During the school match, each rival groups of supporters would customarily choose one of the adjacent benches on the north side of the football ground and would stand on the backless seats while shouting. The most imaginative group was definitely the sixth grades (11-year-olds), who occasionally attended the local team's matches on Sundays.

Sixth grade fans were more effective in recruiting supporters from the younger classes. Alliances were based on several criteria, kinship being the strongest among the chanters but not necessarily among the players, who often faced their siblings or neighbourhood playmates as rivals in the school match. Sixth grade's team was often reinforced by competent fourth grade players, in which case fifth grades summoned their female substitutes or, less frequently, 3rd grade boys. Towards the end of the second term, however, two cases of "treason" occurred, when a fourth grade and a fifth grade boy swapped teams in their attempt to impress girls of respective classes that they fancied. In most games played at school, loyalty to age-group underlay bonds of friendship and selection of playmates. The twin sister of the fourth grade boy accused her brother of being bribed (*poulimenos*) and denounced him as disgraceful (*xeftilas*). Younger fans whose classmates or kin were not immediately involved in the "grand match" were divided in their choices according to their perception of the age difference with the older classes. Thus, a third grade girl justified her support for sixth grade by stating that "we always like sixth", while a second grade-girl chose the fifth grade because "sixth grade children are too old".<sup>62</sup>

Chanting per se did not take place in children's football games at the community's back streets and wastelands, or in the analogous to the school grand match confrontation

of the two village neighbourhoods. The chanting idiom could be used however, in situations where power display was required. During summer holidays, the community recreation ground was “taken over” by Athenian children who played under their mothers’ supervision. Local boys’ reaction to the appropriation of their territory consisted in storming the playground, preferably on bikes, launching a set of dangerous games while chanting football songs. Celebration of the group’s victory over their rivals in “traditional” competitive games such as “Ta Menta-Menta” (analogous to “Rover, Rover come over”) could also be expressed in football vocabulary. Children would often exclaim *Ole* instead of *zito* (long live) after they had succeeded in gaining a captive from the competing team.<sup>63</sup>

Fans are by definition Janus-headed groupings where in-group friendship is linked to hostility with others (Armstrong 1994:322). Hooligan chanting is part of a social grammar whose main purpose is to challenge similar groups (Armstrong 1994:300). Chanting is a contrived theatre of hostility, a form of ritual competition analogous to other male verbal contests performed in festive occasions in Greece. Herzfeld (1985) and Kavouras (1992) have referred to a festive Greek male tradition of competitive exchange of metrical improvisation in the form of *mandinathes* (=metrical dialogues). Women in Phocaea, as in most reported ethnographic examples of metrical verbal contest in Greece, did not have an analogous competitive tradition<sup>64</sup>. Girls on the other hand, in their capacity as fans, appropriated a male idiom of contest to express an age-based solidarity that had its roots in the age-sorting principle of schooling. Far from being symbolically and literally squeezed to the edges of the playground, as commonly is the case in playgrounds where gender separation is practiced, Phocaen girls actively participated in the constitution of football into an activity transcending gender

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<sup>62</sup> Eleven year-olds of the sixth would rarely be involved in the same game with the two younger classes. In fact they showed their surprise and disapproval when they spotted me playing with the youngsters: "Oh, come on Cleo not with the babies!"

<sup>63</sup> The term "ole" is understood in the Greek context as a stereotypical Spanish exclamation used during bull fights to praise the matador. During the past decades, however it has developed into a typical cry in the football grounds, shouted immediately after the name of the supported team (e.g. P.A.O ole! ole, ole,ole!).

<sup>64</sup> Herzfeld (1985:144-146) mentions that women in Glendi of Crete 'may occasionally engage in what he terms as "the performance of manhood" but their doing so is conventionally treated by the men as anomalous. Reizakis (2001) reports one example of women in the matrilinear and matrilocal society of Pyrgi on Chios, who not only actively participate in metric verbal contests but initiate them.

asymmetries to stress solidarity of the age group. As in the cases reported by ethnographies on British and North American playgrounds, football dominated conceptually and spatially the Phocaean playground. What it mapped out in the case of Phocaea however, was not a reproduction of traditional gender hierarchies but their challenging. My material in this sense is closer to Grugeon's recent findings of female empowerment practices present in some British playgrounds (Grugeon 2001: 98-114).

Contestive forms of play are often treated in the play literature as safety valves for tension (functionalism) or fairly inconsequential simulations of contradictions, social commentaries or texts with interpretative value (Geertz 1993: 412-453). These views underestimate the dynamics of context in tilting the tension between real conflict and ludic conflict on one side or the other.<sup>65</sup> The exchange of verbal insults between Phocaean children as fans of their age-based teams remained in a ritual form of inconsequential reciprocity as long as it was removed from children's actual conflicts. During real fights the frame "this is only play" (Bateson 1985) was dissolved both for players and for chanters, as children confronted each other in genuine animosity and extended the verbal conflict to a physical fight.

During a football game between third and fourth grades that was carried out in an atmosphere of rivalry similar to that of the grand match, a fight broke out between the players as the fourth grades decided to pick on a player of the rival team, an Egyptian third grade boy (the only non Greek student, belonging to a working class family) by changing his name from Bas to "Basketa" (= Basketball Frame).<sup>66</sup> As tension broke out between the players, and Bas started to fight with a fourth grade boy, the third grade girls immediately formed "stands" and started chanting:

"Tetarti bourdela, Skoupidia tou Karela"<sup>67</sup> (4<sup>th</sup> grades {you are})

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<sup>65</sup> Processual approaches drawing on Turner (1974). See for example Cohen's approach to Carnival (1980). This issue is developed in detail in Chapter 6.

<sup>66</sup> Inventing nicknames and paraphrasing names, e.g. Sakis → Sakatis (=crippled) was a common form of verbal play and joking among children. Whether the recipient would be insulted or not largely depended on the framing of the activity (Bateson: 1985; Goffman:1974), i.e. the serious or playful intentions of the initiator of the joking frame and the hierarchical relationship between the players (see chapter 6, on children's humour in symbolic play). The particular context left no doubt about the insulting intentions, so Bas was rightly offended.

<sup>67</sup> Karelas is the owner of the cotton factory "Aegeon" situated in the adjacent industrial centre of Lavrion. The factory, which occupies most of Phocaea's transmigrants and Egyptian "Gastarbeiter", is usually referred to by the name of its owner.

brothels and Karela's rubbish).

The fourth grades reacted to the chant with insulting characterizations mixed with several swearwords without recourse to the metric idiom of chanting. As more children from other classes joined the scene and the situation was verging on the border of generalized chaos, the third grade teacher who was on duty interfered by confiscating the ball and banning football for a week.

The episode clearly illustrates the double sided nature of "empowerment" in disorderly performances and the need to be cautious of overemphasizing subaltern creativity (e.g. in girls resisting stereotypes of femininity by appropriating male practices) at the risk of overlooking the oppressive and discriminatory character that some of these practices might have. In practice, these episodes were rare in the Phocaeen playground.

### **Conclusions**

In this chapter, I have drawn on approaches to space developed within social geography and material culture studies in an attempt to define children's relation to their material environment and to each other.

As all forms of material culture may both "provide a medium of social domination as an expression of power and ideology" and "provide a medium of symbolic significance in a structure of difference and signification" (Shanks and Tilley 1992:131), I have sought to explore the different ways that Phocaea's school playground was differentiated by other socially constructed settings for children's play within the community, the home and the neighbourhood and the ways that this particular school setting was different from other school settings studied in the literature on school playgrounds.

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The chant addressed to the fourth years contains both a sexual and a class based verbal abuse, as working class jobs were not valued by Phocaeans –adults or children. Class did come up in disputes over taste and consumption of cultural goods, such as extra murals. It was the second part of the chant that was particularly received as an insult - the term 'rubbish' of Karela. "Rubbish" is a pejorative characteristic that may be metaphorically ascribed to persons or things. As a person-related metaphor, it is frequently used in the Greek language to indicate a process of verbal humiliation. To "be turned into rubbish" (me ekane skoupidi) is a metaphor alluding to the reception of a humiliating critique or a series of insults. Although it was not clear whether the metaphoric equation of the rival team members to "rubbish" was a literal parallel to the factory's junk or the people working in the factory (i.e. the transmigrant population of Phocaea), either interpretation as literal junk of a non prestigious place or non prestigious people was insulting.



Comparing the school and neighbourhood contexts, the school playground presented different potentialities for action in that it formed an integral part of a modern bureaucratic institution, designed to organize and control the lives of its inhabitants. Rather than being an inert medium, all social space must be understood in an intense and complex matrix together with identity, difference and differentiation (Christensen, James and Jenks 2000: 139)

One of the fundamental elements of the nature and impact of modern institutions, according to Giddens (1991: 18) is the disembedding or “lifting out” of social relations from local contexts and their re-articulation across indefinite tracts of time and space.

This feature of modernity may lie at heart of all reported differences between the institutions of school and neighbourhoods as contexts for children’s play. Gender and age relations in a school setting may become disembedded from those prevailing in out of school contexts (community contexts). This means that children across settings – or within the same setting- may be faced with competing gender and age ideologies/discourses, which they rework, reproduce and transform during play.<sup>68</sup> The framing of this process may not be the same in all school settings. Thorne and Evaldsson, who worked in more than one institutional setting observed that organizational features and adult practices had an impact on children’s way of handling disputes (Evaldsson 1993) and on children’s gender relationships. Adult presence and gender-mixing intervention in children’s playground activities undermined children’s tendency towards gender separation in Thorne’s report.<sup>69</sup> (Thorne 1993).

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<sup>68</sup> It should be noted that in the mid 1980s a series of reformatory measures were taken which aimed at reducing gender asymmetry in Greek Educational Institutions. Many aspects of hidden curricula reproducing gender asymmetry were re-examined, e.g. school uniforms, which were worn by girls only, were abolished, teachers received special training and books were re-examined for sexist messages. See volume edited by Papageorgiou (1995).

<sup>69</sup> As already mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, there are many scholars who associate children’s gender separation patterns with age sorting processes. Thorne (1993: 51-52) has drawn on this literature to attempt an explanatory model for gender separation that relies on age, along other dimensions. According to this line of argument, although age, as a primary principle of sorting, has the effect of mixing boys and girls, the genders are more likely to separate from one another in same-aged rather than mixed-aged contexts. This tendency is accounted for both in terms of hidden curricula of gender separation (e.g. patterns of sitting in classrooms or lining up between classes, competitions along girls versus boys lines), that counteract adult practices of gender-mixing, and in terms of children’s tendency to seek homogeneity along gender based common interests and behavioural styles. She concludes: “Whatever the reasons, where age separation is present, gender separation is more likely to occur. By institutionalizing age divisions, schools both draw girls and boys together *and* (emphasis in original) structurally enhance the conditions for gender separation”.

In Phocaea, on the other hand, gender separation was not a permanent characteristic of children's games. The case of football suggests that the process of gendering was open to dispute and redefinition, and that it was closely linked to children's strategies. This is not to say that children were free-floating agents in the playground, but rather that the weaker framing of children's activities by the school as mechanism of control permitted children to develop a sense of belonging by making innovative combinations of modernist and traditional discourses on age and gender.

The age classifying principle, which lies at heart of the school's organization, did shape children's experience of the playground at a symbolic level. Children did reproduce in their play the fundamental principle encoded in the school structures, namely division by age. They did so by appropriating and transforming football, an activity associated with male idioms of contest to a mixed gender contest between age groups. Girls were the protagonists of this process, as they successfully manipulated and changed the meaning of football by actively participating in the game as players and chanters. They were successful in this empowering strategy, because their actions were based on the powerful overarching idea of age solidarity promoted by the school context. As the underlying line of contest in school football was based on a competition between age grades, when the central match gained public importance, the girls' participation could not be disputed by the boys, who controlled the game as long as it remained an informal competition involving only the players. Phocaen schoolgirls took advantage of the school ethos to enter a traditional male turf in a process that reworked gender, kinship and age relationships to produce novel outcomes, a covert form of "girl power" which was cast in terms of mixed gender solidarity. Girls used the school playground as an empowering resource to change traditional gender ideologies, whose constraining force appeared to be more effective in the home and neighbourhood contexts of play, which will be the subject of the following chapters. The next chapter will deal with the importance of Phocaea's public space as a frame and resource for children's playful interactions with their peer and the adult cultures.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **PLAY IN THE VILLAGE NEIGHBOURHOODS: POWER RELATIONSHIPS AND BOUNDARIES OF PLAY**

#### **Introduction**

Recent developments in social geography emphasize the importance of spaces and places to the establishment of individual or group identities. Places according to Tilley (1994:18) are centres for action, intention and meaningful concern. Places in non-western or small scale, “traditional” societies, are perhaps best understood in terms of “locales” and their relationship to wider contexts (cultural and natural landscapes). Locales are understood as “places created and known through common experiences, symbols and meanings” (Tilley 1994: 18) which offer a distinct quality of being inside or part of the place.

As settings for social interaction locales acquire importance in Giddens’ structuration theory (Giddens 1990:206-8). They play an important role in the process of social production and reproduction because all action is spatially and temporally situated. Action affects structure by virtue of its temporal and spatial specificity. Actors draw on their settings and the manner in which they do so depends upon the specificity of their relationships to place. In this sense locales may be defined in terms of “a presencing of potentialities on which actors draw in the daily conduct of their activities” (Giddens 1990 in Tilley 1994:19). Neighbourhoods as locales are also embedded in systems of domination.

An important dimension of peoples’ relationship to locales and landscapes is their perspectival effect (Tilley 1994: 26). If space is ordered along the axes of age and gender and kin, spatial definitions are bound to vary according to one’s experience and according to the social context. In other words the experience of these places is unlikely to be shared and experienced by all as the understanding and use of space is embedded in systems of domination and power (Bender 2001: 5). Phenomenological approaches focus on a being-in the world attachment to place and landscape (Tilley 1994; Ingold 1993). By moving along familiar paths, winding memories and stories about places, people create a sense of self and belonging.

For children access to space is crucial for their definition and sense of neighbourhood. Neighbourhoods for children are more often than not referred to as person centered contexts: “sti geitonia tis Mersinas”, (in Mersina’s neighbourhood) “sti geitonia tis giagias mou” (in my grandma’s neighbourhood). The experience of space however, as Tilley has shown, always has temporal dimensions, for “spaces are always created, reproduced and transformed in relation to previously constructed spaces provided and established from the past” (Tilley 1994:11) . In Phocaea there was another sense of neighbourhood, superimposed on the family-centered, home centered and friend centered sense, which also made its presence in children’s play. This was a broader definition of neighbourhood, whose boundaries had mapped the ethnic tension which marked the daily experience of the founding populations of the village until the 1970s. This partition of the village into two moieties, the Upper and Lower Neighbourhoods used to roughly correspond to the settlement patterns of the Refugees and the Vlachs.

### **5.1 Play and the politics of spatiality: Shifting boundaries-**

“Over the last two decades social and cultural geography have cast new light on social space. This has changed our understanding of space from being either a neutral setting for social action or a determined outcome of material conditions awaiting cartography, to a more deeply political conception of social space”, e.g. as crucial in social reproduction (Christensen, James and Jenks: 139). The relation of space to social reproduction was a central concern for Structuralism and Structuralist Marxism. Space was explored as the medium for symbolic representation of fundamental cultural polarities (e.g. culture vs nature, male vs female) or contradictions (class relations-hierarchical power relations). Space in both approaches was regarded as fixed and resisting change. The configurations of space that pertain in social relations were considered as “embodiments of this stasis ensuring stable cultural reproduction” (Jenks 1993 in Christensen, James and Jenks 2000:139). A number of works by anthropologists have examined the ways in which relations of power are mapped out in space<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Several polarities of domination have been examined e.g. class or gender relations. The exploration of the correspondence of spatial and social hierarchies and divisions such as the public- private dichotomy

Discussion of the politics of space have also included children's positioning in global processes (E.g. Katz 1998) and more generally children's differential access to power and autonomy vis-à-vis adult institutions and caretakers. As childhood in contemporary western societies is a period in the life-course characterized- among other features- by varying degrees of social dependency and a gradual movement towards autonomy, (Ennew, 1986, Qvortrup et al 1994) the discussion of the boundaries which circumscribe children's daily experience becomes an important issue (James, Jenks and Prout 1998:38). Where children play, for example is related to children's independent spatial mobility, a prerogative that is regulated by physical, social, ideological and moral boundaries.

Under the influence of structuration theory and the theory of practice the relationship of space to social reproduction was re-examined. Actors were not seen as overwhelmed by spatial configuration. Bourdieu's (1977) notion of strategy, and Giddens's (1990) notion of discursive consciousness<sup>2</sup> pointed to the possibility of overcoming the constraining power of structured space by highlighting the existence of competing strategies, which may reproduce, challenge and transform existing relations of power.

This chapter will examine how children's play in the community public space is shaped by spatial, temporal and social boundaries and how in turn these boundaries are negotiated, reproduced and transformed during children's interactions with their peers, their parents and other adults of the community.

## **5.2 The Concept of Neighbourhood**

As already mentioned in chapter 3, Phocaea is broadly divided in two Neighbourhoods (Upper and Lower) that by and large overlapped over a long period of time (1940-1974 approximately) with the residential patterns of the two main ethnic groups constituting the village population i.e. the Refugees and the Vlachs. The borderline between the two

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has a prominent position in the anthropological literature dealing with gender relations, including the anthropology of Greece (e.g. Dubisch 1986; Herzfeld 1985; Madianou 2003).

<sup>2</sup> Discursive consciousness is a notion akin to Bourdieu's theoretical modes of knowledge (Bourdieu 1990:25). In Giddens (1990:5) it is defined as "knowledge which actors are able to express on the level of discourse". Discursive consciousness is distinguished from *practical consciousness*, -a concept similar to Bourdieu's practical knowledge- i.e. tacit forms of knowledge which actors draw upon in the constitution of social activity (Giddens: *ibid*).

Neighbourhoods is loosely defined by the *Paidiki Chara*, i.e. the Community Playground (Figure 5.1).

In the majority of my informants' accounts the village section south of the Playground is referred to as "Upper" Neighbourhood (*Pano Geitonia*, Figure 2) while the northern section is mentioned as "Lower" Neighbourhood (*Kato Geitonia*). This is the version I have also opted for throughout this work. *Pano Geitonia* is referred to by some of my female informants, as "*Kato*", in the sense of "other" Neighbourhood (i.e. other than the one they live in) or the Neighbourhood "beyond" their own (*Pera Geitonia*). During the first months of my stay in Phocaea this occasional interchangeability in the neighbourhood terms of reference surprised me but still I assumed that spatial boundaries and concepts would be shared by all members of the community. It was in casual conversations with children that I began to realize that what constituted a neighbourhood might differ according to the context of reference and the gender and age of the term's user: During a memorial service which was accidentally<sup>3</sup> attended by children who had arrived in church for their Sunday school classes, eleven-year-old Voula declared that when her grandmother had died, her family had distributed *kollyva*<sup>4</sup> to the entire village. "They didn't give us any!" protested ten-year-old Lambrini upon which I intervened suggesting that maybe Voula's family had not prepared enough *kollyva* to cover both neighbourhoods. "But our village doesn't have just two neighbourhoods, it has many!" replied Lambrini to my astonishment. Under the circumstances I had to respond to the behaviour patterns expected from an adult attending a death ritual by remaining silent, and I did not ask any further questions. Lambrini's remark illustrated that "neighbourhood" is a conceptual construct with shifting boundaries. These boundaries may vary according to gender, age, class,

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<sup>3</sup> Children are usually excluded from death rituals unless the deceased is a member of their family.

<sup>4</sup> *Kollyva* is ritual food prepared for memorial services by the female members of the deceased person's family. The basic ingredients of *kollyva* are boiled wheat, mixed with pomegranate seeds, parsley leaves, sugar, flour, spices, dried fruit and sugar-coated almonds. *Kollyva* are offered: a) to the neighbours and friends of the family as an invitation to the memorial service  
b) to the deceased (symbolical offering of a dish with *kollyva* that is blessed by the priest in church and the graveyard)  
c) to the guests at a reception taking place after the memorial service in a coffee shop. All offerings aim to ensure forgiveness of the sins of the deceased.

occupation, social networks, the physical character of a locality and operating systems of power (Tilley 1994:26; Bender 1995:2).

Zatz (1983), in her attempt to define the geographical boundaries of Exarchia, a locality in Central Athens, reported the discrepancy between broader definitions provided by the Church, the State and the narrow and person-based conceptualizations of the locality by its residents. Exarchia from the point of view of the Exarchiotes was the area encompassing activities that fell within walking distance from one's residence.

If definitions of neighbourhood are context bound, interchangeability in terms such as Kato/Pano Geitonia for reference to the broad sense of Phocaean neighbourhoods should not be surprising. When children referred to neighbourhood, they tended to refer to an activity centered or person-centred concept. Boys, however, also employed the extended version of “neighbourhood” in highly organized play situations such as football meetings and war games that involved the direct confrontation of larger playgroups. As discussed in the previous chapter, football is a powerful medium for ideals of masculinity as well as for cultural notions of conflict, community rivalry and the construction of the “other”. In encounters outside school the major criterion for the formation of alliances was residence rather than age. In the village square and on the “mountain” of Saint Eirini (i.e. the church hill, see **Figure 1**) Phocaean boys confronted each other as divided into “Upper” vs “Lower” Neighbourhood teams (**Figures 5.10 – 5.13**). In this case however “Upper”-“Lower” distinctions did not stand for the Refugee-Vlach controversy. After the demographic transformation of the village due to the influx of transmigrants (cf. chapter 3) and the change of marriage strategies of Phocaean men and women during the 1960s and 1970s (preference towards non villagers) very few contemporary children could clearly identify with either of the original ethnic groups. Moreover, despite the fact that some of the “Lower” Neighbourhood team members were offspring of Karela factory workers, who are perceived as “xeni” (outsiders, non-locals, strangers), the adult distinctions of local vs non local did not appear in the children’s confrontations as different Neighbourhood members<sup>5</sup>. The boundaries used were geographically and nominally the

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<sup>5</sup> The majority of transmigrant children lived at the border of Phocaea's northern boundaries with Anavyssos, in the “polykatoikies” area, a name deriving from the predominant architectural style (blocks

same, but their content had lost its ethnic connotations. Children appropriated these historical boundaries and reworked them to express their own conflicts which were centered around issues of male rhetorics of contest. Boys' play in Greece has been traditionally associated with the exhibiting of physical skills associated with aggressive masculinity.<sup>6</sup> Boys' culture in the community was full of public display of stunts, endurance to pain, group loyalty and sharp we-they distinctions. Inner group- outer group distinctions are often expressed in terms ludic rivalry. War games and football games of Phocaeen children vs Anavyssos children, and between the major *parees*<sup>7</sup> of the Upper and Lower Neighbourhood were a public display of all stereotypical features of boyhood/ manhood. Some Lower Neighbourhood boys had developed a strong notion of territoriality, illustrated in their self definition as a sub-group within their neighbourhood and defined by a decalogue circumscribing the boundaries of their playgroup. The *parea* was seen as a closed system operating on the base of "ten commandments" (*deka endoles*). Interestingly enough, commandment number one ordained that the village was divided in two neighbourhoods, whereby their *parea* was defined as belonging to the "Lower" Neighbourhood. I shall come back to the "commandments" in the section on play groups.

The next sections will examine the ways in which adult regulated spatial and temporal boundaries circumscribed children's access to play spaces and playmates.

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of flats) that developed in the 1970s. Administratively the area belongs to the community of Anavyssos, its official name being "Paralia Anavyssou" (Anavyssos coast). The "polykatoikies" children played locally and commuted to the village for school and extra murals. Apart from educational occasions, they rarely mixed with Phocaeen children, unless they had relatives in the village or their parents worked in local shops.

<sup>6</sup> Numerous folklore sources refer to the existence of hierarchical groups of boys competing with each other in violent games of skill and various warfare simulations (e.g. stone-wars or forfeit games, see Gougoulis 1986). Male adults in Phocaea were also full stories of physical fights and games of conflict which they in retrospect condemned in their capacity as parents. See Appendix III under stone war.

<sup>7</sup> The term *parea* (plural *parees*) in Greek is not limited to play. It refers to a group of people (adults or children) that socialize together. As I am mostly concerned with the fact that a *parea* of children not only hangs around together but what is more, plays together, I have used the English terms play groupings and play groups to stress the emphasis on play as the focus of the gathering. See Chapter 4, footnote 35.



## **5.3 Regimes of control:**

### **5.3.1 Children's independent spatial mobility**

Control of children's spatial autonomy is one of the manifestations of adult authority and power over children in modern western societies. As the extent of children's wanderings is circumscribed by physical, conceptual and moral boundaries, control of children's spatiality arises as a venue to explore adult- children power relationships (James, Jenks and Prout 1998:37-40). The main thrust of research on children's spatial mobility deals with parental fears in urban areas, O'Brien et al (2000) and Valentine (1997) have reported on the different ways parental fears structure girls' and boys' mobility in British cities. Recently, attention has been turned to the possibility that rural children's whereabouts may also be subjected to restrictions (e.g. Nairne et al 2003). Phocaean children are a case in point<sup>8</sup>.

Youngsters (under- eights) in both neighbourhoods of Phocaea usually played in smaller groups in the street front of their houses, and parents' shops or within the boundaries of the family plot e.g. at doorsteps or in yards, i.e. within the range of their mothers' supervision (Figures 5.3 and 5.4). Children of this age group were under stricter parental control, their time-table and spatial freedom determined by adults. In fact, their time-table was often a subservient part of the adult time-table as they frequently accompanied their mothers during afternoon visits of relatives and friends for coffee. They were subject to stronger spatial limitations than older children and needed parental consent for the slightest absence from the permitted area. Parental fears underlying space restrictions were the same for boys and girls: danger of car accidents, mistrust of strangers, possibility of child abduction, fear of drugs, whose use by some teenagers had come to the fore after a police invasion at a local discothèque. As put by a mother who rarely permitted her young daughter to leave the house premises unaccompanied: "The village is not what it used to be; there are so many foreigners nowadays, blacks, whites, you name it; you can't take the risk of leaving a child alone in the streets." In addition to these fears, however, spatial control exerted on girls derived

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<sup>8</sup> Whether Phocaea can neatly fit into the category of rural is questionable. One of the consequences of the road opening and the influx of new residents and vacationers in the area, has been the blurring of the conceptual boundaries between urban and rural. See chapter 3.

from traditional perceptions of proper gender behaviour which ideally dictated girls' confinement within the house limits. "Little girls shouldn't play in the streets. Do you think you are a boy or something?" was the typical answer to Giasemo's request to play in the village square with her friends. This is not to say that children were passive recipients of adult restrictions. Giasemo negotiated her spatial freedom within the limits set by her parents, and was frequently granted permission to go as far as the "cleaner's square"(see fig.1), if other girls were of her neighbourhood were out playing as well. Rules could also be overlooked, especially by older boys, but their transgressions were often reported (by siblings or adult relatives) and punished. Children had their own fears of places. The graveyard at the east side of the church, was a fearful place at night and teenagers took special pleasure in intimidating younger children, by telling them stories about skeletons skulls.

### **5.3.2 Restrictions to autonomy: dangerous places**

#### **Reading wilderness: the "mountain" for locals and transmigrants**

Older children were also subject to space limitations. Boys and girls over nine years of age were free to roam about in the village and to cross the coastal avenue unaccompanied but were advised to keep away from "dangerous areas", the concept of danger varying among parents. Thus some parents did not trust their children wandering about on the "mountain" especially near the community water-tank area for fear of accidents. Moreover, the mountain was considered a wild area, a view that children also shared basically because of the existence of stray dogs and snakes, but the very wilderness that frightened them also provided a good reason for wanting to explore its secrets. For transmigrant children Phocaea's mountain was unproblematic. In the mountain villages of their origin, where they spend part of Easter or Summer holidays, nature was far more exciting. "There is no proper wilderness around here" was the complaint of 10-year-old Dinos and thirteen-year-old Sotiris, who originated from the mountains of Thesprotia and currently lived in Phocaea's Lower Neighbourhood. "In our village we know all the plants and the trees by name and we can tell which snakes aren't poisonous. "Far from being frightened by snakes these children claimed that they

caught water snakes (non-poisonous) by the tail and brought them home to scare their mothers.

### **Morally hazardous places**

If there was little to be feared of Phocaea's natural environment, transmigrant children shared with local children parental prohibitions concerning access to socially and morally dangerous areas. Such labels were attributed to the so called "U.F.O" or "Electronica", two local leisure shops, located in the Lower Neighbourhood and containing electronic games, billiard tables, and card tables. Electronica were male domains mainly providing for the recreation needs of the unmarried youth (18-30 years), who regularly spend their free time playing billiards or cards and chatting over coffee and refreshments. Younger boys, however, who enjoyed playing or watching older youths play electronic games were often added to the shops' clientele. One of the reasons parents disliked these shops was because they were afraid their offspring would adopt gambling habits (*koumari*). Another reason was possibly based on some of the clientele's moral qualities. As put by two Lower Neighbourhood boys: "Ta Electronika ine gia tous alites" (Electronic shops are for hobos) implying that some of the youths frequenting in the leisure spots were burdened with yet impending charges for burglaries committed in the village during the previous year.

### **Political nuances- ambiguous places**

Local politics, expressed in a moralist rhetoric, also contributed to the enforcement of temporary spatial restrictions on places beyond parental control. In August 1988 the community council inaugurated a Youth centre in the abandoned old primary school building. This was a joint project supported financially by the community and by contributions of individual villagers and a great deal of personal work by the members of the "Exoraistikos Syllogos Phocaeas" (literally: Beautifying society of Phocaea, i.e a society for the promotion of cultural and environmental ends). What the Exoraisticos members had in mind by creating the Youth centre was to offer a superior recreation alternative to the ones offered by the electronic shops, discotheques and cafeterias. Ping-pong tables, board game equipment for chess, chequers and back-gammon, organization of several workshops and a loan operating library, would provide for the cultural

enhancement of the local children and adolescents. For the first couple of months the project was supported by parents, while many children seemed to enjoy the novel recreation opportunity and actively participated in discussions over the improvement of the offered facilities. In October, however, the community dropped its support for the Youth centre, partly because the majority felt that the situation was getting beyond their control. This decision was based on gossip about the potential candidacy for the imminent local elections of an Exoraisticos member, politically allied to the Opposition. Coincidentally, during the same period some dancing parties had been organized by high-school children at the Youth centre in an attempt to create a more informal atmosphere and possibly to control a space designed for their needs. This was not to be tolerated by the community council and allied parents. "How do we know what is going on over there?" was the argument presented in the local coffee shops. As the Youth centre became the battleground for the dispute over local politics and the moral control of Phocaea's children, parents supporting the council's majority decided to impose a temporary ban on their children's access to the Centre.

The ban was lifted after the councils' regain of control over the centre by the intervention of higher administrative bodies, (*Nomarchia*) who offered free adult education seminars run by tutors appointed by the state. Final reconciliation was achieved during the Saint Irini festival, in May 1989, when a dance performance was collectively organized by the Parents association, the Exoraisticos members and the community, a performance where political and ethnic unity was symbolically reconstructed in the children's costumes and the contributors' speeches.

### **Restriction as punishment – disciplinary method**

Occasional spatial restrictions could be used by parents as a means of discipline. As children liked to play outdoors, temporary bans on favorite outdoor pastimes, playgrounds, or outdoor play altogether, were frequent parental methods of punishment. Thus, young Antonis was not allowed access to the community playground for a week, because he had used swearwords in a quarrel with his teen-aged sister. Similarly, Nasos was not allowed to go out fishing with his cousin and sisters for a while, because he had been careless with his fishing hook, thus unwillingly causing an accident.

## **5.4 Playgroups and playgrounds**

### **5.4.1 Play spaces**

As a rule, all village children played within the boundaries of their neighbourhood (in the broad sense), and within the limits of parental permission (with occasional transgressions especially in cases of unruly play) using all possible spaces according to their imagination, game requirements and playgroup conventions. Some locations were shared by children of both neighbourhoods, while others were also shared by other age - groups. Thus children of both neighbourhoods used the community playground (known among children as “the swings” (*oi kounies*)). Similarly, both neighbourhoods used the church hill, for war games and explorations, but the different playgroups did not share the same spots unless a confrontation had been decided. In other occasions, children chose those sides of the hill that were closest to their homes and usual playgrounds.

### **5.4.2 Outdoor play: parents and children’s perspectives**

As term was about to begin in September of 1988 a mother of a nine -year-old, extremely playful boy expressed her deep concern about the future awaiting her. “How am I going to harness him?” (*Pos tha ton mazepso?*) Boys’ temperament was considered as very close to uncontrollable. A mother of two boys aged four and eight, compared her children’s behaviour, when they were forced by bad weather conditions to remain in the house, to that of wild animals enclosed in cages (“*Trigymane san ta thiria sta klouvia*”). It was this combination of the perception of boys’ uncontrollability with the belief that girls’ natural position is at home that underlay parental relative tolerance to boys’ reluctance to comply with space and time restrictions. Boys made the most of their spatial freedom and were more keen on outdoor play than girls. For a boy the statement “I am going to play” usually meant “I am going outdoors”. This is not to say that girls did not enjoy outdoor play. Given the fine weather conditions during nine out of twelve months in a year most of Phocaeen children’s play activity (including toy play) took place outdoors. On a February afternoon I was stood up by ten year-old Melina, who had invited me over to her place to show me her toys. Her mother, who was busy supervising Melina's older brother at his homework, explained that a little girl had come to pick her up. When I finally discovered Melina and the other girl, she apologised for having

forgotten our appointment. As it was a rather cold day, I asked them how it was that they had not chosen to play at home. Melina's answer was clear: "We are bored of playing indoors" ("Variomaste na paizoume mesa"). This predilection towards outdoor play was representative of many girls' play orientation. When seven-year-old Anna was informed by her mother that the Easter holidays were imminent, she exclaimed with enthusiasm: "Great! [I'll be] out all day long!" (Goustaro! Oli mera exo!) Children's holiday and Summer time-table was close to Anna's expectations.

As put by a mother of three primary school children: "They interrupt their play only for meals and sleep." As children during summer often stayed up until midnight (whereas in term-time they were in bed by 9:30 pm) their daily outdoor playtime reached an average of five hours (excluding swimming and beach play).

#### **5.4.3 Child-adult antagonism over public space**

Restrictions on playtime during summer were mainly defined by the two hour mid-day siesta, which was observed by practically all families in the village and by territorial clashes with adults. Throughout the year, Phocaean children of both neighbourhoods were often chased out of their street playgrounds by adults who would not tolerate noisy play sessions, or who thought that ball games constituted an imminent threat to their parked cars<sup>9</sup>. In fact cars were more hazardous for children than vice versa. During summer 1988 two children were taken to hospital for the treatment of injuries caused by a car accident. Older children in playgroups were constantly alert and instantly reacted to an approaching vehicle with a danger signal expressed in the cry "Syrma" (literally: wire, a term metaphorically used for "danger"). Clashes with adults deteriorated over the summer period as a result of the outdoor orientation of the whole community and the arrival of holiday visitors. Phocaea's main bulk of holiday visitors consisted of lower middle class Athenian families of young children and adolescents many of which originated from the village. Another group consisted of white collar pensioners, who wished to spend a peaceful summer in the proximity of the refreshing sea. It was with

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<sup>9</sup> When I went back to the field in June 2001, I discovered that the main arena of ludic rivalry the village square, had been allocated to a coffee shop. A sign reading 'no ball games' had been erected by the community authorities, after the owner of the coffee shop had repeatedly complained about broken coffee cups and the overall disturbance brought about by football. The square was transformed into a mixed age leisure area shared by parents and preschool children who played within their parents eye-range.

this group that the children were particularly antagonistic. Conflict was worst at evenings, as children's playtime coincided with the time adults chose to relax in their porches and balconies. Vacationers, whose wish to escape from the city frenzy was costing them an average of 300.000 DRS per year<sup>10</sup>, felt that their right to tranquility was violated by children's noisy street play. Middle-aged or elderly vacationers whose children were well beyond the age for play were extremely intolerant of Phocaeen youngsters. In their opinion, play constituted "noise pollution" (*ichorypansi*) and should be restricted to football grounds. Children were full of stories about how they were chased away by indignant adults brandishing broomsticks, when nocturnal play exceeded the 11p.m. time limit for permitted noise.<sup>11</sup> Children's reactions to adult interventions oscillated between submission and defiance. When a group of fifteen Upper Neighbourhood children, who were in the process of teaching me the game *Kamini*,<sup>12</sup> was requested by a vacationer to play elsewhere (preferably in the community playground), they complied, by moving to the next street corner and by continuing their play with more sedentary and "quiet" games. If the request, however, was considered unreasonable, they would protest and hold to their position by stretching the limits of adult tolerance as far as possible: "Would you let your daughter play in the wasteland in the dark? So there, our parents won't let us either!" Retaliations against fussy adults were not infrequent. When a woman in the Lower Neighbourhood, who was reported by the local group of boys as "always complaining about her car," pruned a eucalyptus tree (which coincidentally was one of the group's favorite hide outs) to prevent further soiling of her vehicle, the *parea*<sup>13</sup> considered the act as an offense calling for revenge. Thus, for a series of days, they disposed of their fruit kernels or water-melon peels by tossing them on the woman's car or by leaving them in the middle of the street.

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<sup>10</sup> This amount covered the rent of a one bedroom flat for the summer season (May to October) and constituted 30% of a low- scale, salary- based annual income in 1988-89. Salaries in Greece are regulated through an annual agreement between the government and the Trade Unions of the white-and blue collar sector. One sterling in summer 1988 was exchanged to 250 Drs approximately.

<sup>11</sup> Time spans between 2:30 -5:00 p.m. and 11 p.m. to 7 a.m. are officially referred to all over Greece as the "hours of common peace". Violation of "common peace" calls for payment of a fine imposed by the Police.

<sup>12</sup> For a description of the game cf. Appendix.III.

<sup>13</sup> See footnote 7.

Yet there were some adults who appreciated children's street play and even occasionally joined group games such as hide and seek, while more often than not young mothers would take advantage of an evening play session to feed their infants in the street.

#### **5.4.4 The Parees**

Phocaea had many playgroups, their size, composition and location within the village depending on kinship, friendship and residential patterns, gender and age of the players and the consequent choice of games, with variations during term-time and holidays. During the summer holidays play groups broke down with the arrival of more playmates, i.e. Athenian vacationers, and the addition of more playgrounds as a result of the reorientation of the community's daily routine towards outdoor patterns (daily visits to the beach, frequent family outings to local cafes, restaurants and the local outdoor cinema, and the enrichment of children's activities with seasonal pastimes, such as, fishing). Thus, the structural features of play groups that will be presented subsequently, characterize children's life during term-time, while summer holiday patterns are discussed separately in each section. Furthermore the discussion will focus on the village children-with whom I spent most of my fieldwork- rather than the transmigrants of the *polykatoikies*.

In both neighbourhoods, kinship was a major factor in the constitution of play groups. Playgroups consisted of siblings, first cousins, children who live on the same street (which often is the case for first cousins due to the inheritance system, which provides for an equal share on the parental property) and friends. Lower Neighbourhood playgroups were more gender oriented, while Upper Neighbourhood playgroups were more kin oriented, a fact partly due to family composition, patterns of residence and parental restrictions to freedom of space. As most of the boys of the "ten commandments" group did not have sisters or female cousins of their age (older sisters were beyond play age and younger sisters were rarely allowed to play in the streets) gender criteria were stressed in their selection of playmates. In the Upper Neighbourhood, on the other hand, where families had children of both sexes with little age difference, kinship seemed to dominate over gender. This is not to say that gender criteria were played down. Girls and boys might belong to the same play group (in the



sense that they often played together) but whether they mixed or played separately depended on the nature of the game (e.g football and war were dominated by boys, see Chapter 4), the time of the day and the availability of same gender children to share the activity.

The age-span of the regular participants in both neighbourhoods' major play groups comprised eight-year-old to fifteen year-old children. This, was the case for the largest Upper Neighbourhood *parea* that consisted of fifteen to twenty children usually playing at the cross-road near Bambi's restaurant (see Figure 5.1) or at the wasteland southeast of the church hill. Lower Neighbourhood consisted of mainly two large playgroups: a *parea* of 8-12 girls aged ten to fourteen located around the English Institute and a *parea* of 10-12 boys, (the "ten commandments" boys constituting the group's kernel) aged nine to fourteen, playing around the cleaner's square and the village square. The structure of the Upper Neighbourhood play group and the Lower Neighbourhood *parea* of girls was loose, in the sense that these children usually played together, (because they were friends, kin, or neighbours) but did not have institutionalized rules of conduct and explicit boundaries of exclusion. I only encountered such conventions among the "ten commandments" group of boys.

Residence- as we have seen above- was one of the criteria chosen by some Lower Neighbourhood boys to circumscribe the boundaries of their play group. The decalogue which prescribed group membership and group conduct, had further discriminatory features, based on gender. While the first commandment prescribed the territory of the group as that of the Lower Neighbourhood, in the second "commandment", the concept of neighbourhood was narrowed by a criterion of gender: The *parea* would consist exclusively by boys who lived or played around the "cleaners' square" (a total of seven boys). Girls were, as a matter of principle, excluded from their group. Whether they complied with their gender expectations or exhibited characteristics of male behaviour, standing in-between gender categories, as tomboys, (*agorokoritsa* = literally "boy-girls")<sup>14</sup> was irrelevant. They were simply not to be trusted. This belief was justified on the base of previous experience. In the past the boys had experimented with accepting

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<sup>14</sup> See chapter 4 for a more detailed discussion of children's definitions of *agorokoritsa*, as applied for girls and boys.

Koula, an *agorokoritso* in their *parea* only to be bitterly disappointed. In fact, it was due to Koula's "traitorous" attitude that they decided to protect the secrets of the *parea* by introducing membership rules. Koula's crime consisted of quitting the *parea*, after she had been confided in the secrets of the group: special hideouts (Figure 5.7), prearranged manipulations of game rules at the expense of outsiders, cheating in counting out procedures etc. Such information was considered as a valuable resource for the prestige of the group, as it ensured a favourable outcome in games. After Koula's withdrawal, the *parea* decided to protect the group's unity by imposing a ban on female membership and by introducing initiation oaths and penalties for male deserters. Group loyalty, accountability, and reliability (in the sense of keeping one's word) were understood as male properties. If boys failed to stand up to any of these virtues their behaviour would be stigmatized as "womanlike": After an Upper-Lower Neighbourhood match, where the losers were customarily expected to buy a large bottle of Coca-Cola for the winning team, the defeated Upper Neighbourhood boys failed to keep their promise and were automatically ridiculed as *gynaikoules* (derogatory term for women, literally meaning little or poor women).

#### **5.4.5 Children's power relationships: Age hierarchies and teasing**

Parental control over childrens' spatial movement could be mediated by the allocation of the responsibility of youngsters' caretaking to older siblings (Figure 5.8). In such occasions gender and age barriers applying for space appropriateness and participation in rough games were lifted. Thus, four-year-old Angela, whose parents were often absent on fishing trips, and was entrusted to her 13-year-old brother's care, was a frequent participant in war games, involving dangerous tasks, such as hiding on high terraces. More often than not, youngsters rather shared the same space, with the older children, playing their own interpretation of the game, or engaging in other activities. Once accepted in a game, they would rarely participate on an equal footing with older playmates. Younger playmates were treated ambiguously. Their lack of experience and dexterity and most of all, their desire to join older children's playgroups at all costs could be received by older playmates alternatively as a nuisance, or a source of amusement, according to the youngsters' willingness to conform to the low hierarchical status reserved for their age group. Six -year-old Thanassakis often followed his older

cousin at war game training sessions on the church hill. Training for war involved spying on the opponents' movements, setting traps (Figure 5.9), constructing hideouts and physical exercise. It was in the context of the latter that the participation of a youngster in the group was considered as an opportunity to have a good laugh. Physical exercise was carried out in a drill fashion whereby older boys took turns in giving and receiving commands. Thanassakis, being the youngest was restricted to executing orders. In fact he took up his role with such enthusiasm that his "officers" entertained themselves by testing his docility and strength limits: Arriving late at an appointment for a war training session on the church hill, I found my "warriors" hiding behind a bush trying to stifle their giggles. They pointed to an opening a few metres ahead, where young Thanassakis was industriously jogging on the spot. After issuing the order the "warriors" had decided to play a trick on Thanassakis vanishing discretely. When they returned after a couple of minutes, while still remaining under cover to secretly check on their apprentice's reaction, they were delighted to discover that young Thanassakis was continuing his task. Having been successful in their trick they were careful not to exceed the limits of their apprentice's tolerance and released him from duty after a short while.

Age based relations of inequality were employed, with slight differences, as sources of amusement by children of both sexes.<sup>15</sup> Thus, boys enjoyed playing tricks on youngsters, while girls resorted to teasing: During a play session of a lower neighbourhood *parea* of girls (aged ten to fourteen) who were playing volleyball in front of the English Institute, I applied simultaneously with nine-year-old Nasos for inclusion in the game. We were both accepted and played unproblematically for a while. As the version of volleyball they were playing did not provide for winners and losers, the girls decided to add some excitement by playing the game *Koroido*.<sup>16</sup> Nasos being the

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<sup>15</sup>The tendency of many Greek families to treat children as sources of amusement or even as toys has been reported by Hirschon (1992) and Henze (1992). Preschoolers or six-year-olds in Phocaea were often asked to recite poems or sing songs in family and friendly gatherings, and were praised for their performances. Being at the centre of the attention however was risky for the youngsters, as they could also be teased.

<sup>16</sup> *Koroido* (=Sucker) is a ball game, based on the unequal encounter of one central person against the rest of the players. A minimum of three children is required to get the game started, whereby the two players facing each other at a reasonable distance exchange passes, while the *Koroido*, stands in the middle trying to catch the ball. Should the *Koroido* succeed in getting hold of the ball, (s)he assumes the role of the ball thrower, while his/her role is taken up by the child who touched the ball last. When more than three

youngest was offered to occupy the disadvantaged position in the middle of the circle. At his refusal, the girls next picked on me (“it has to be Cleo then because she is the oldest”) and the game started with myself at the *koroido* role. Nevertheless, I was soon to be substituted by Nasos, who did not avoid the *koroido* role after all, as he was the first to make a mistake. When Nasos took my place in the middle of the circle, he immediately became a teasing target. The ball was tossed higher than he could reach and his complaints were met with remarks such as: “It’s not our fault, if you were born short!” After remaining at the *koroido* role for quite awhile, Nasos declared that he was tired, and suggested that they play another game. His wish was granted, as the girls did not have the intention of stretching the teasing too far, (after all to some of them Nasos was a first cousin) and the play session ended with Hide and Seek.

Avgitidou (1995), in a comparative study between English and Greek preschools found that the fact that Greek school children played with their peers in their neighbourhoods in mixed age groupings contributed to a development of a sense of empathy with younger children (they exhibited protective attitudes) that was absent among English preschoolers who did not play in the streets (at least at this age) but at homes with the intermediary arrangement of mothers. In Phocaea this attitude was more frequent among girls than among boys but it was also accompanied by teasing. Anthropologists who have worked in urban and rural areas of Greece in the 1960s and 1970s have explored teasing relationships pertaining between adults and children as part of a socialization process which reproduces age-based hierarchies (Hirschon 1992) and trains children for the vicissitudes of life (Friedl 1962:78-81)<sup>17</sup>. The above examples show how children reproduce these hierarchies among themselves.

As a rule, girls were more protective towards youngsters than boys, though this was not always the case. A two-year-old brother of a Lower neighbourhood boy often appeared in playgrounds of both neighbourhoods, proudly paraded in his push-chair by

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players are involved, as in the case of the Lower Neighbourhood girls, they form a circle around the *Koroido*. See Appendix III. *Koroido* roles are frequently assigned to the youngest playmates.

<sup>17</sup> The forms that adult-child teasing took in Phocaea of the late 1980s had no comparison to the blatant lying or teasing without framing the activity as a joke, that Hirschon reports as being in vogue in the 1970s among the refugees of Kokkinia, Piraeus. Vlachs tended to tease children more than the Refugess, but children – at least those within primary school age range- were not impressed. On her way to school 10-year-old Matina was teased by a Vlach, as she passed in front of the tavern where he was drinking his

his eleven-year-old godmother and her friends. When he was brought to the community football ground during the final game played between grades five and six for the annual championship, girl spectators immediately engaged in cuddling behaviour, while boys amused themselves by racing his push-chair around the playground pretending to participate in a motorcycle tournament.

In other cases the *parea* felt collectively responsible for the well-being and safety of a younger play-mate: During an excursion organized by Upper Neighbourhood children all members of their *parea* took turns in preventing six-year-old Christos from dangerous acts, such as climbing on steep rocks.

Protectiveness, however could be claimed by older children as a reason for the exclusion of younger potential play participants. Six-year-old Panos' request to play *Tzanes*<sup>18</sup> with a group of Lower Neighbourhood boys was turned down, first on the ground of his inadequate knowledge of the technique and rules and the lack of equipment. As Panos attempted once more to apply for inclusion, by returning to the playground with the necessary equipment (a rounded stone and some stickers for exchange) there was momentary hesitation among the *Tzanes* players: "Oh alright, let him play!" On second thought, however, the request was finally rejected. "What if a stone hits him on the head? He might get hurt and we'll get the blame!"

#### **5.4.6 Resort to adults and the reproduction of social order**

Teasing attitudes and prank playing could be stretched to intentional challenging of youngsters. Furthermore, younger children did not necessarily conform with their received docile image. They could return the challenge or even provoke first.

Youngsters' rebellions were usually not tolerated. Fights would break out, which were often brought to an end by adult interference. Children were not consistent in their

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coffee. Matina refused the frame altogether by sending the man to hell. The family who told me the story praised Matina for her repartee and for "putting the man in his place".

<sup>18</sup> *Tzanes* is a boys' game, usually played with stones, whereby each player aims to hit with his stone, the stones of the other players. Each time a stone is struck, the owner is obliged to give the successful stone-thrower a sticker (literally "chartaki" = piece of paper). All Phocaeen children collect series of stickers portraying favorite actors, football players, cartoon characters etc, which are sold together with a "free" album at local retail shops and kiosks of Phocaea. The stickers are placed in appropriate pages of the album, the aim being to fill the entire book. In their effort to complete the album, girls usually swap their double stickers, while boys also gamble them in the game of *Tzanes*. *Tzanes* can be played with stickers only.

attitude towards parental involvement in their affairs. Parents encouraged their children to inform on their siblings' deeds as a further means of control of their offsprings' conduct. Tale telling in a domestic context was adopted by children as a legitimate practice, providing for the maintenance or inversion of power relationships between siblings. Parental interference could also be employed as a means of getting rid of a sibling who refused to conform to the group's conventions and exhibited spoilsport behaviour. During an interview with Iro, mother of eight-year-old Panos and four-year-old Lakis, Panos, who was playing with his friends a few yards away, appeared suddenly to report that Lakis was hitting them with sticks and was spoiling their game. Iro, approving of her eldest son's behaviour, advised him to refrain from hitting back. She would deal with the naughty youngster. Lakis was asked to leave the group and play in his front yard alone.

What was not to be accepted, however, was the employment of parental authority as a weapon against the group. During a nocturnal masqueraded procession that customarily took place on Carnival weekends, Upper Neighbourhood children were confronted by an angry parent who came to the defense of his ten-year-old daughter. Armed with light-weight plastic batons the group had approached Liana, who reacted against being picked as the target of the customary, carnivalesque baton strikes, got herself into a fight with one of the masqueraded children and was consequently beaten up. Liana then resorted to the aid of her father, who mounted his bike, caught up with the children and started lecturing them. When he finally left, only one member of the group thought that they should have apologized. The majority of the children put the blame on the girl. "She's always like that", implying that Liana, who was indeed an adult-oriented child, exhibited the same behaviour at school. Rather than taking refuge in parental authority some boys of the same group finding themselves in a similar position to Liana's, during a fight with two high-school boys, threatened their older and stronger opponents that they would call the Police.

#### **5.4.7 Friends and playmates**

Playgroup participation did not necessarily imply bonds of friendship among participants. Siblings and cousins were expected and encouraged by parents to play together and be friends. Children's choices conformed to this pattern as far as playmates

were concerned but friendships were also formed, reinforced or dissolved at school. Friendship was a dyadic or triadic relationship between children of the same sex and more or less the same age, expressed in the notions of mutual understanding and sharing of activities: toy sharing, exchange of home visits for indoor play sessions or common watching of TV programmes, exchange of secrets, and going for walks together. Within a game, alliances were based on friendship rather than on kinship criteria (if friends and kin did not coincide). Siblings could confront each other as members of a different team, while friends were usually game allies. School was important in the creation of friendship bonds among children, while friendship networks of parents suggested that some of these friendships could last through adulthood. Some girls added scholastic success to their criteria of friend preference. School friends would often cross neighbourhood borders (depending on the limits of their spatial freedom) and would be included in the playgroups by virtue of their friendly relationship to certain members of the *parea*.

#### **5.4.8 Friendship -Kinship**

Children's friendship patterns were often influenced by relationships between their parents. Many children whom I asked how they became friends replied that their mothers were friends as well, or that their fathers had worked together. Working relationships, when not already based on kinship would often be consolidated by bonds of spiritual kinship, in which case children would be spiritually related to each other and therefore encouraged to associate. It was maternal rather than paternal friendship networks that were more influential in the formation of friendship bonds between children of similar age. This was due to the partaking of children in their mother's timetable and visiting patterns. Fathers' leisure activities, which were associated with public space (restaurants, local branches of political parties and coffee-shops) would rarely include children. More often than not fathers would meet their friends in coffee-shops, which in Phocaea as in other rural communities of Greece, are adult male domains (cf. Herzfeld 1985; Friedl 1986; Papataxiarchis 1991).<sup>19</sup> Women and children would not

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<sup>19</sup> With the tourist development of the area, some coffee shops ("kafenias") were beginning to change into cafeterias, which in the summer served pizza and toasts, thus-in line with the out-door orientation of the village life- providing for the needs of a mixed clientele comprising both sexes of all age-groups. During

sit in coffee-shops or restaurants unless in the context of a family outing or work. Mothers' leisure activities were more domestic oriented and either included children or were adjusted to the children's time-table (school or extra murals). As a rule mothers, even if they were engaged in wage labour, spend more time with their children than fathers. Fathers usually joined their family once or twice a day, depending on their work schedule, to consume common meals and discuss family matters. In addition to that, many fathers dedicated some of their free time to play with their children or help them with homework difficulties. If homework problems were often resolved with paternal aid, it was the mothers' task to check that homework was done at all. Indeed mothers had the biggest share in the child-rearing process in the sense that they were constantly and actively involved in and accountable for the outcome of this process. While fathers played a decisive role in the joint project of drawing the guidelines on which child-rearing was based, their actual realization was left to the mothers. It was mothers' task to know where their children were and whom they associated with. Control of children's socializing patterns was a constant theme in children's lives until they reached adulthood via marriage in the case of girls or army service in the case of boys.

#### **5.4.9 Choosing Friends**

Children's choice of friends was founded mostly on moral criteria. In this respect parental viewpoints were critical. Friendship was both desired and feared for its potential bad influences. Children's misbehaviour would be often attributed to the detrimental influence of friends.

Parental disapproval of friend choice reflected more on girls' than on boys' expression of dislikes. Seven-year-old Nina, who was not allowed to play outdoors, declared that Anna was not her friend because she "runs in the streets like a gypsy-kid" ("Gyrmaei stous dromous san gyftaki"). Moral judgments governing friend choice would often take into consideration the child's family background and the behaviour of siblings. Thus, eleven-year-old Mania rejected her classmate Lia, because she disobeyed her parents and because her thirteen year-old sister had dyed her hair red, an act

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winter, however coffee-shops retained their traditional male character. In their traditional form coffee-shops are meeting places for the majority of married men (with occasional participations of unmarried



considered precocious and defiant against mainstream village ethics. “Edo den eimaste Athina. Eimaste chorio kai prepei na prosarmosomaste” (This is not Athens. This is a village and we must adapt), concluded Mania, reciting a phrase I had often heard from her mother.

Moral evaluations concerning quality of character were common among children of both sexes, one of the cornerstones for positive or negative character judgement being attitude towards swearing. Parents and children were explicit in their condemnation of swearing. Ideally children should not use swear-words, and would be punished for employment of improper language. Swearing, however, was a common practice both among children and among many adults. From the children’s point of view it was not so much the practice per se as the context of swearing that seemed to matter. Age and gender were relevant in defining the context in which use of “bad words” would be justified or condemned. Six-and seven-year-old children were playful with language, one of their sources of amusement being the invention of new words usually associated with underwear, concealed parts of the body and bodily functions. While details of the anatomy of the body was of equal interest among girls and boys, as their engagement in the game “doctors” suggests<sup>20</sup>, girls were not always happy when this special interest was put into words. Thus seven-year-old Eleni, who was playing “Broken Telephone”<sup>21</sup> with her two male cousins and her eight-year-old sister, protested vehemently at the expression “shitted knickers” (*Skatomena vrakia*) used by one of her cousins during the game, and decided to stop playing “because they were saying bad words” (“Den paizo, giati lete kaka logia”). Moderate use of “bad words” in the context of a game requiring linguistic inventiveness would also amuse older age -groups. Excessive or irrelevant use of such language, however, was unacceptable. Thus nine-year-old Elias, who during

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youth over twenty) who spent most of their leisure time playing cards or backgammon or discussing business, football and politics over coffee and ouzo (or beer).

<sup>20</sup> For a description of the game cf. chapters 4 (Play at school) and 6 (Play at home).

<sup>21</sup> Broken telephone (*Chalasmeno Tilefono*), is a sedentary game similar to “Chinese Whispers”. Four to five children sit in a row. The first child thinks of word, which is consecutively whispered by each player to the next playmate in the line. The last player is obliged to spell out loudly the received message. If the communication line has worked smoothly the initial word arrives undistorted to the last player, in which case he/she takes the place of the message -giver. More often than not the message arrives at the last player in a distorted or non-sensical form. It is both the process of distorting a word and the choice of funny words that constitute the fun element in the game.

“Poison”<sup>22</sup> insisted in mentioning drinks associated with body excretions was reprimanded by his eight-year-old, male playmates: “Tha leme kanonika pota kai ochi vlakeies” (We’ll mention normal drinks not silly ones).

Swearing appeared more frequently in the language used by children from nine years onwards during quarrels and was often used as a means of power display. (cf. the content of chants in the football matches at school). Parents often raised their hands in despair at children’s swearing practice. “We never exchanged “heavy” words when we were at their age. We didn’t even know their meaning. “In effect parents’ attitude towards swearing, was as context bound as their children’s. While use of swear words was deemed a male practice, women could also swear in private (e.g. in a company of female friends and relatives). The only public occasion, to my knowledge, allowing for women’s linguistic license was the *Klidonas*<sup>23</sup> rite during which groups of adults, consisting mostly of married couples, amused themselves by exchanging satirical verses of sexual innuendo. Gender bias towards use of language reflected on parental attitudes towards their offspring’s conduct. If it came to their knowledge that their sons swore they might choose to turn a deaf ear. Girls’ language on the other hand, was carefully conditioned. This policy had detrimental consequences on children’s popularity at school. Children’s behaviour at school was often rough and involved physical and verbal aggression. Dutiful daughters, who got involved in quarrels were confronted with conflicting loyalties. If they chose to adhere to the swearing taboo, they could only get even by resorting to the authority of teachers, thus committing the crime of tale-telling. From the children’s viewpoint tale-telling was far more serious a flaw than swearing. We have already seen the repercussions of school behaviour on children’s encounters outside school. A systematic tale-teller would be labelled *vlammeno* (brain-damaged, stupid) and *mamothrefto* (coddled) and would find few friends. Indeed some mothers, who were faced with the dilemma of their daughters’ isolation or the relaxing of the taboo on returning aggression opted for the second choice.

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<sup>22</sup> Poison (*Dilitirio*) is a chasing game, where the beginning of the chase is signaled by the chaser through the unexpected mentioning of the word poison, among a series of drinks. Phocaeen children’s version of the game is identical to the one described by Opie and Opie (1984: 99). Poison was more popular among girls and was more frequently played at school rather than in the village streets.

#### **5.4.10 Difficulties on forming friendships: Stigmatized children**

It was through discussions with mothers about “isolated” children that I began to realize that still more issues were involved in children's explicit judgements upon other children. Anna, a Greek Cypriot mother of nine-year-old Efi and wife of a transmigrant factory worker from Epirus, confided that her daughter had faced serious problems in her school life during the previous year, as she was either harassed or avoided by her classmates. Indeed Efi had often expressed her disillusionment by refusing to attend school. According to Anna the reasons for Efi's mistreatment lay in her seven-year-old sister, who was paralyzed as a result of contracting meningitis during her infancy. Children avoided Efi because they considered her sister's state as contagious. Anna decided to have a word with Efi's teacher and thereafter the situation improved. Problems continued however during the current school year. While Efi managed to make some friends, derogatory remarks were often aimed at her by local children in discussions of pastimes outside school. “Did you see that film? Oh you don't have a video”. “We are rich, and you are workers”. “We attend English classes and gymnastics and we take swimming lessons. What do you do”? From her classmates' point of view, Efi was simply rejected on the ground of her tale-telling habit. While I could not confirm the exchange of these dialogues, I had frequently witnessed similar discussions focusing on distinction through consumption or father's occupation. Furthermore children were conscious about income differences and were knowledgeable on landownership patterns. During an excursion with upper neighbourhood children I was informed on whom the fields we were walking by belonged to.

Affluence was admired. The same group later on in the day expressed deep admiration towards a new girl, who had joined their class at the English institute. This girl seemed to possess the finest qualities: she was a good student, had good manners and was rich enough to live in a villa with a nice garden, which was tended by one of the boys' fathers.

Besides the moral properties listed above, behaviour during games and the possession or lack of a sense of humour were mentioned amongst children's criteria for

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<sup>23</sup> Klidonas is a divinatory ritual practice which takes place on the 24<sup>th</sup> of June, on the celebration of the birth of St John the Baptist. See Megas (1982) and Hart (1992).

their choice of friends and friendship maintenance. Friendship could be re-examined and temporary or permanent withdrawals were not infrequent. Finally children's friendships tended to stabilize with age.

## **5.5 Playtime and Play Patterns**

### **5.5.1 The temporal boundaries of play**

What children play, and when they play, depends partly on the age and gender of players and partly on the season of the year. During term time (September to June) children's outdoor play was restricted by weather conditions, homework and their engagement in extra mural activities. Most of Phocaean children of both sexes from eight years onwards attended English classes at the local English Institute three times a week. In addition to English, some children took private lessons offered by local tutors in French and German. There were yet more options for organized extra school activities open to the children of the community. Thus, ten to fifteen boys who were members of the Youth division of the local football team "Proteas" trained three times a week at the community football ground, while six boys attended Karate lessons at the adjacent settlement of "Vlachika" (administratively belonging to the community of Anavyssos). A total of seventy children aged from eight to fifteen (sixty girls and ten boys) were members of the folk dance group set up by the Parents Association and rehearsed once a week at the school premises, while five or six girls had gymnastics twice a week at Anavyssos. Church-going was part of a few children's Sunday morning routine (mostly offspring of families strongly connected with the local church). Phocaeans' church going frequency was low, mainly concentrating on the religious holidays (approximately 25 - 30 days a year), while Sunday masses were usually attended by a congregation of 15-20 people, (mostly women) some of who were vacationers. Thirty children of both sexes, however, participated in Sunday school classes, given after mass by the local priest. Besides educational and recreational activities children occasionally helped their mothers at house work, carried out chores connected with family enterprises, while two boys (the eleven-year son of the Lower Neighbourhood baker and the ten year-old son of the lottery-tickets vendor) regularly helped their fathers at work during week-ends and holidays. Despite their heavy time-table most children did find time for at least an hour

of outdoor play on a daily basis, but the streets were emptier on schooldays, as the timing of the playmates' extra-murals did not always coincide. While school duties and extra-murals tended to augment with age, not all children undertook their educational obligations with the same zeal. Girls were far more diligent than boys and were more willing to sacrifice their playtime to finish due homework. Thus the English Institute *parea* of Lower Neighbourhood girls, who were overburdened with school work and extras, rarely appeared in the streets on school-days, while one eleven year-old girl never played outdoors, as she undertook in addition to foreign language and folk dance classes preparatory tuition for high-school during week-ends. Boys were more prepared to take to the streets regardless of school duties and were considered in that respect more problematic than girls.

Many theories of play are based on a definition of play as an activity that is conceptually and physically separated from "serious" activities – especially work – in time and space. (e.g. Huizinga 1980; Caillois's 1961). Bateson's communication theory and Csikszentmihalyi's notion of play as flow, challenged its separateness (Bateson 1985; Csikszentmihalyi 1975).<sup>24</sup> The shift of the analytical focus from the play activity to the disposition (Bateson) or the experience (Csikszentmihalyi) of the players in such definitions of play permitted the exploration of a number of playful activities performed in non play situations and often in spite of them. Thus Mergen (1977) presented examples of adult play during work in American shipyards, Klöni (2000) described children's experience of play as daydreaming during work in a Greek rural community and Zinsler (1987) focused on children's play during parents' shopping trips to Manhattan department stores.

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<sup>24</sup>Bateson examines play in terms of the framing of communicative events, in an attempt to achieve a broad definition which encompasses the play of humans and animals. The message "this is play" distinguishes play from reality rather than from work or seriousness. Play is seen in terms of the intentions and moods of the players rather than as an activity performed in separate time and place. Csikszentmihalyi's theory of flow explores why actors are motivated by their experience of personal enjoyment derived from such diverse activities as work, play, the arts and leisure. Flow is described as an autotelic peak experience characterized – among other things – by a merging of action and awareness, loss of self-consciousness and a sense of control, (Sutton-Smith 1997: 184-185). As a theory that links play to self-identity and self-actualization, it has been very influential in the last twenty years. It has recently been criticized by power theories of play as glossing over the dark sides of peak experiences (e.g. Sutton-Smith 1983).

Phocaeen children also expanded their play activities beyond approved time-slots and spaces in order to add enjoyment to a task which they considered as either too serious or too boring: On the way up to the hill of Prophet Elias, to attend a special church service on the day preceding Prophet Elias' festival (20<sup>th</sup> of July), nine-year-old Nasos and his sister Lambrini were throwing huge stones off the cliffs. As their mother reprimanded them and told them to stop, lest a stone would land on other pilgrims' heads Nasos retorted: "Look, we said we would come along but we want to have some fun too- Alright?" ("Theloume kai na diaskedasoume ligo entaxei?") Nasos turned to me next to explain that they were playing at war. The stones were hand grenades and the siblings took delight in simulating the sound effects of imaginary explosions.

Church services were frequent occasions where children tried to escape the constraints of silence or seriousness by engaging in clandestine forms of play or by blurring the lines between fun and seriousness, work and play. During the holy week children helped in numerous ways at the preparation and performance of the various rituals of the Greek Orthodox Calendar especially the decoration and the procession of the Epitaph. They also accompanied their parents to the long church services, where they had to stand for quite long and behave decently, i.e. remain silent. Youngsters usually played with their candles, on such occasions, or imitated the monotonous voice of the priest. The most striking example of such "back stage play" (Goffman 1959, 1974) was provided on Good Friday. One of the tasks that boys had at church, was to ring the bells according to the appropriate sound code of solemnity vs celebration. Good Friday is a day when Christ's death is mourned, so the bell must be tolled mournfully. What the Lower Neighbourhood boys did, in order to enjoy their task, while keeping the appearance of conformity to normative standards of mourning, was to occasionally add some *trilies*<sup>25</sup> to the mournful sound of the bell (Figure 5.16).

### **5.5.2 Playtime: Seasons, fashions, and play-crazes**

The beginning of an evening play session in both neighbourhoods all the year round, would be signaled by a visit to the local kiosk, haberdashers or news agencies for the purchase of an afternoon snack: crisps, sweets or ice cream and refreshments. Parents

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<sup>25</sup> A *trilia* is a melodic technique often used with the bouzouki- Alteration of the melody is achieved by striking the same cord several times in short intervals.

did not mind children's consumption of junk food as long as they ate their proper meals. As children were regular customers of their shops, most retailers were very tolerant with them granting permission for browsing through magazines, and patiently responding to questions. Children would visit the shops individually or with their friends and having made their purchases would head towards the playground of their choice. Where the play spot would be depended upon the age and gender of the children present, the number of children present and the consequent choice of game. Playgroups were small in number, dispersed and gender oriented in the beginning of a play session<sup>26</sup>. With the arrival of more children in the streets as time progressed, more collective games would be chosen while, by night time usually playgroups would unite in mixed group games (Figures 5.14 and 5.15).

By and large, neighbourhood games of Phocaeen children, displayed greater seasonal variability than their play at school. This was due to the fact, that play in the neighbourhood carried on through the summer. Furthermore some seasonal games were associated with environmental requirements (e.g. beach play) school could not provide and with play equipment that could not be found in or brought to school (e.g. hoops). Seasonal variation of games partly accounts for the discrepancy between my neighbourhood observations and children's statements on their play preferences in the survey I conducted in April 1989. (cf. chapter 4 and Appendix I, tables 5.1, 5.1.1-2, 6.1, 6.1.1-2). Games and pastimes that were out of season such as fishing, hoola- hoop play and some group games such as *Kamini* were hardly mentioned, while *Tzanes* (cf. footnote 18) and marbles were altogether omitted.

Some seasonal games were associated with the arrival of the vacationer's children (e.g. beach tennis, which was also played in the streets and courtship games, such as

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<sup>26</sup> As far as morning play sessions are concerned my participant observations are biased towards term-time (on week-ends, and festive days). Having started my fieldwork in the beginning of the tourist season it took me quite a while to establish the proper connections in children's *parees* (The ice began to break in mid July for Lower Neighbourhood and mid August for Upper Neighbourhood). Thus, my data on this initial period are based on observations of children at a distance (and discussions in retrospect) rather than participant observation.

Play groupings during observed morning play sessions tended to be as dispersed and gender oriented as in the beginning of an evening play session. It was mostly for nocturnal play that children tended to unite in large, mixed gender play groups.

“Spin the bottle”)<sup>27</sup>. Athenian vacationers had traditionally been a source of novelties for Phocaean children as they often introduced new toys, songs, counting out rhymes and games. Some of these games were added to the repertoire of a *parea* and were passed on to other children through school play.

Seasonal predilection towards particular games was often attributed to weather conditions. During an evening play session with upper neighbourhood children in March 1989, as the *parea* was pooling ideas on what to play next, I proposed to carry on with either of two games (“Tiles” and *Kamini*) that were both rejected on the ground of their seasonal inappropriateness: As “Tiles” and *Kamini* did not involve much running, they were played during summer “because it’s too hot and we can’t run that much”. While other reasons underlay the rejection of “Tiles”, which was played by other *parees* during that period (a child had been recently hurt during the course of the game), my observations confirmed the children’s statement as far as *Kamini* was concerned. Seasonal games were often anchored on certain dates of children’s school-life and the religious calendar. Thus, end of the school year was signaled by water-wars, whereas kite-flying inaugurated the first day of Lent. Some seasonal pastimes were associated with the growth of flora (use of daisy and poppy petals for fortune-telling, employment of olives as missiles).

The play season of a particular game could also be arbitrary, following the dynamics of a *parea*, the older children of both sexes usually being the decision makers. Marbles constituted a typical example of an arbitrary seasonal choice taken in the beginning of the summer by 13-and 14-year-old boys.<sup>28</sup> Marble games could last through an entire summer, the end of the season usually being marked by the concentration of all marbles in the hands of one or two expert—often coinciding with the oldest- players in the group. However, some decisions on seasonal appropriateness of a particular game were not as arbitrary as they seemed. Having noticed that by November 1988 all *parees* of Phocaean boys had given up on the game of *Tzanes*, I asked the

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<sup>27</sup> Where descriptions of games are not given in the text or in footnotes cf. Appendix III.

<sup>28</sup> Before the road opening in 1958 Phocaean boys depended on the summer drought to construct their clay marbles using soil from an adjacent to the old primary school area, which today is covered by the coastal avenue. It might be the case that the game’s seasonal character was transmitted along with the



children why they had decided to abandon the game. Shrugging their shoulders, younger players remarked: “The others don’t want to play anymore”. The mystery was solved a month later, when I was initiated by the leader of the “ten commandments” group of boys to the content of their secret decalogue. Resolutions on the timing of a seasonal game would be taken collectively by the group. As *Tzanes* was inextricably linked with the exchange of stickers (*chartakia*), its seasonal limits depended on the existence of “good *chartakia*” (e.g. stickers illustrating football or basketball players). In effect, it was the market that regulated the season of *Tzanes* playing. Sticker-books’ publishers usually launched football stickers towards the end of the football season (May or June), which coincided with the beginning of the *Tzanes* season. Football stickers were exchanged in *Tzanes* through the summer. With the beginning of school term, a new album, dedicated to one of Phocaeen boys’ favorite heroes, Sylvester Stallone, as Rocky, appeared in local retail shops, thus offering *Tzanes* players a further incentive for an extension of the game's season. During this period, paper-money cards and stickers portraying Olympic Games events, were also exchanged. By December, most of the Phocaeen boys had either completed the entire album, or had covered the pages necessary for the obtaining of a Rocky poster, and their interest in exchange of stickers began to drop. The next series of albums launched in the market addressed younger children and girls (cartoon figures, Barbie dolls etc). Until I left the field in May 1989, no series of stickers (including the Bold and the Beautiful, which was snubbed by many boys) was found satisfactory enough to inaugurate a new *Tzanes* season.

### **Conclusions**

This chapter has been concerned with the boundaries that define play within Phocaea’s neighbourhoods. In a broad sense these could be said to be about power, but what emerges through the details provided by this chapter is the way power is diffused through a wide variety of social, normative and contextual factors and the way these are configured. Play has to take place within a wide range of temporal and spatial boundaries, which sometimes appear to determine, sometimes to suggest and sometimes merely to be convenient markers for defining particular forms of play. Examples include

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rules to the next generations of players, who were able to purchase ready-made, commercial glass marbles from the local *bakalika* (=grocery stores).

seasons, the definition of safe or unsafe spaces and the re-thinking of the possibilities of neighbourhood itself.

Much the same applies to the social relationships involved in play. The development of friendships and groups sometimes appeared to be determined by the facts of age, gender or kinship, sometimes to be pragmatic and often of course also include more ad hoc aspects of friendship, such as who gets on well with whom. But what social orders as well as temporal and spatial orders have in common, is the way they are permeated by looser normative considerations that can, however, in the end be decisive. So parents' idea of who is a good person to play with, or what is unwelcome noise, or where is an unsafe place, is sometimes rejected as an unwarranted interference in children's autonomy, sometimes merely accepted as the boundaries of what is possible, but also often reproduced to become the children's own judgement as to what is proper in terms of space, time and friendship.

The end result of this interplay between the material dimensions of play, the actual spatial and temporal setting, the social dimensions, such as kinship, gender and age and the normative setting as to what is deemed appropriate or inappropriate, still leaves considerable space for creative work by the children themselves, both singularly and in groups to come up with variations of these possibilities or to test their limits sometimes changing the previous consensus. Children contest and manipulate some boundaries (as the examples of clashes with adults over use of space- and the example of church play suggest), while they seem to reproduce others (e.g. moral boundaries or age hierarchies manifest in teasing relationships).

As such they once again appear to be active agents and participants in the construction and reconstruction of the very boundaries that at another level seem to constrain or determine what they do.

## CHAPTER 6

### PLAY AT HOME: SYMBOLIC REALMS AND THE COMMODITIZATION OF CHILDREN'S CULTURE

#### Introduction

Having discussed how the school playground and the community's neighbourhoods constitute media for children's negotiation of power and identity cross-cut by age, gender and kinship, this chapter will deal with the means by which play at home and the home environs is constructed: i.e. the role of children's toys and the use of objects in their play.

In the discussion of school and neighbourhood focus has been laid on those games that have overt rule structure and covert pretense, as those confrontations involve larger groups of children, than the more "private" worlds of pretense. While pretend play<sup>1</sup> takes place in all settings, the home is the principal site where children construct their make-believe worlds. The home is also the place where children's playthings are kept, it is the site for consumption, maintenance and use of toys as means for children's symbolic reconstructions and as means for working through social relationships

As children's toys during the period of my research were commercial products, increasingly linked with global processes of production and distribution, this chapter will also discuss children's ludic pretense in the light of recent debates on the commoditization of children's play. As in the case of play spaces, playthings will be regarded as structured resources for playful action, as means for cultural appropriation and interpretive reproduction. The following questions will be asked. Which are the dominant imaginative domains in the play of Phocaeen children and where are these themes drawn from? What is the relevance of age and gender to the selection and enactment of

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<sup>1</sup> Children's imaginative play behaviour is encountered in anthropological and psychological literature under various rubriques, which often appear interchangeably: "symbolic play" (Piaget 1962, Bretherton 1984, Eifermann 1971.), "pretend or make-believe play" (Schwartzman, 1978, Singer, 1973, Sutton-Smith 1986; Goldman 1998), "fantasy play", (Levine and Levine 1963, Yawkey, 1984, "socio-dramatic play" (Fein 1981; Smilansky 1968). Fein (1981) distinguishes between "symbolic" and "socio-dramatic" play, the first category referring primarily to solitary imaginative play, while the second comprises pretense that is shared or coordinated with a partner. Similar distinctions are adopted especially by Piagetian developmental psychologists (e.g. Garvey 1974) who divide children's pretend play according to the social skills involved in the players' interaction. (e.g. social vs non-social play). As I have adopted a Vygotskian perspective to play, as social from its outset, I do not draw these distinctions, so I shall be using the terms as synonyms throughout the chapter. I have nevertheless adopted Parten's (1932) distinctions between parallel vs cooperative play, for the description of play behaviour within a play session. I have deliberately omitted the term "imitative play" employed by the structural functionalist tradition, where play is viewed as a vehicle for cultural indoctrination via replication, and mechanical reproduction rather than imaginative reconstruction of the adult world..

these themes? What difference do toys make in the play of Phocaeen children? Is toy play radically different from other symbolic play?

## **6.1 Children's Imaginary domains**

Phocaeen children draw their symbolic play themes from their own life (e.g. "School", "Teachers", "Sisters", "Mum and Child") or from adult life, as it is perceived by children, from TV, films and fiction and from the imaginary worlds their toys are associated with (e.g. Playmobil figures). In their impersonation of roles or animation of toys children comment on the reality surrounding them and on their own position within that reality, creating, recreating and transforming meaning. What is represented and how it is represented varies according to age and gender of players and the dynamics of the group. Some themes (e.g. "Shop", or play episodes drawn from stories such as Little Red Riding Hood) are common among both genders (which does not necessarily mean that they are played in common with children of the opposite sex) and are practiced by many children within the primary school age group, while others are age and gender specific. Ethnicity is irrelevant. Particular play themes seem to have a long history in the life of the players (siblings and first cousins). Furthermore some play themes (solitary) are associated with the relationship of a child with a specific toy (soft toy or toy constructed by a parent) or with the individual anticipations of a child concerning his or her future professional orientation (pediatrician, astronaut, stuntman, actress, singer etc).

I shall first deal, with play activities drawn from adult life themes. By adopting an analysis of Phocaeen children's play in terms of the "reality" it represents I do not imply an assumption that pretend play portrays reality in a 1:1 relationship. As I will demonstrate in the discussion of examples of play episodes, mimicry, symbolic inversion and parody may be present in the same play sequence.

### **6.1.1 Play themes drawn from the life of grown ups.**

#### **Domestic scenes.**

Phocaeen children's symbolic play universe often revolves around the experience of being a grown up. While both sexes are interested in reproducing work scenes in their play (fishing, owning a shop, restaurant or a hotel, white collar jobs), much of the girl's symbolic play drawing on adult

roles is associated with stages of the life cycle (particularly marriage and childbirth) and their future roles as grown up young women.<sup>2</sup>

What usually signified the beginning of a play session, after the linguistic cues - which will be dealt with later - was the visual transformation of girls into women by dressing up. When nine-year-old Lambrini invited me for “coffee” to her “house”, (a former store room), before proceeding to offer me the usual tokens of hospitality (i.e. coffee, water and sweets) she first put on a pair of high heels and a house robe (which used to belong to her mother). Girls’ choices for the portrayal of adult femininity were selective and stereotypical. Regardless of their mothers personal sartorial style the following items were most often chosen out of the gammut of female clothing for girl’s physical transformations into female adults: high-heeled shoes (in the rare occasion that their mother only wore flats, girls would resort to a generous aunt), aprons and robes and hand-bags, with the occasional addition of sunglasses, umbrellas and artificial mink capes (**Figures 6.1-6.3**). These items, which constituted part of girls’ play property, were sought in old, unused or out of fashion garments of their mothers’ and close female relatives (especially MZ or FZ) wardrobes. Make-up and nail varnish are usually part of other role-play themes such as singers or actresses. Furthermore little girls usually wore make-up during carnival masquerades.<sup>3</sup>

Boys dressed up in play themes drawing on fiction e.g. ninja warriors, commandos, and war. Boys often identified with film characters in their play, even when the play theme was not directly associated with the characters they impersonated. In the bank robbing session mentioned later on in this chapter (ftn. 7) Antonis and Christos were Schwarzenegger and Rambo respectively (to my knowledge these particular heroes have never appeared on screen robbing a bank) and wore the appropriate paraphernalia (head bands and arm bands, “knives” and “machine guns”) to emphasize their transformation.

In terms of content, being a young woman primarily means having a house, a husband and a child and sometimes a job. It also means exchanging hospitality and news (i.e. gossip) with female friends and deciding freely on leisure activities rather than asking for permission. Most of these

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<sup>2</sup> Old age seems to appear less frequently, often in role-play rather than toy play. The representations of old age that I witnesses involved a mixed feeling of sympathy and mockery of the rhetoric that Dubisch (1995: 214), has termed “competitive suffering” of elderly Greek women (see section on work scenes).

<sup>3</sup> It seems that choice of carnival costumes is linked to children’s symbolic play preferences. During the carnival ball organized by the Parents Association in February 1989, the overriding majority of primary school girls were dressed in long frilled frocks, representing “ladies”, “queens”, and the opera heroine “Carmen” (standing for Spanish lady). A nine-year-old boy who had mentioned in the survey on play preferences that he liked to play at *Gria* (old woman) chose a similar masquerading theme. Boys in their overriding majority were: Ninja warriors, commandos, cowboys, while some youngsters dressed as cartoon characters such as Thundercats, Superman, and Mickey Mouse. This was not the case in the Upper Neighbourhood children’s spontaneously organized traditional nocturnal procession around the village. The costumes employed on that occasion were not different from the ones used by adults, and

themes often appear in *Koumbares*<sup>4</sup>, *Files* (female friends) or *Kyries* (ladies), which are usually played in same gender dyads of sisters, first cousins and close friends within the entire range of primary school girls (six to eleven). *Koumbares* could involve the use of toys or dolls as props depending on the requirements of the enacted scenes (e.g. the presence of a "baby") and the age of the players:

After moving into a Lower neighbourhood block of flats owned and inhabited by a refugee family, their children and grandchildren I had the chance of receiving frequent visits of children who lived nearby and especially Nina, the seven-year-old granddaughter of my landlady. In one of her visits Nina suggested that we play *Koumbares* and as I declared ignorance on the content of this play theme accompanied by eagerness to learn, she gave me the necessary instructions. We first divided my room approximately in two halves, that would correspond to two houses. The bed belonged to my "house" while the dressing table was her territory. The kitchen was shared. She would "phone me" and would come for coffee at my place. I would have to a) tidy up so that we could sit nicely (i.e. decorate the bed with tiny pieces of cloth she brought from her home) b) offer her coffee c) show her my newborn baby (My Little Pony). A considerable part of the play activity consisted in preparing the setting required by the scenario: Thus Nina helped me "tidy up" my "house" by arranging the cloths that transformed my bed into a living room with a "table" signified by a coloured "table cloth", a sitting space, provided by two miniature cushions (commonly used to decorate the walls of girl's rooms) and the "baby's" cot: a little woolen shawl, knit by Nina's grandmother. Leaving "My Little Pony" sleep in the "cot", we then proceeded to make coffee using to Nina's delight all the "real" utensils employed in the preparation and serving of Greek coffee. Having prepared the "coffee" (which consisted of a cocktail of real coffee, tea, and washing up liquid to create a frothy effect), we then placed the cups on a tray (which is the appropriate way to offer guests coffee or refreshments) and left the tray on the bed. Nina then went to her "house" and "rang me up": "Hello, how are you, I am coming for coffee!" Having done that, she left the room to ring my doorbell. As I opened the door, we exchanged greetings and Nina reminded me of

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revolved around typical carnival themes of gender and age inversion (without however the licentious behaviour typical of men under the circumstances).

<sup>4</sup> *Koumbares* are women related by *koumbaria* ties i.e. ties of spiritual kinship contracted through sponsorship of weddings and baptisms. *Koumbaria* ties exist between the wedding sponsor and the married couple and between godparents and the baptized child's natural parents. In the case of baptism sponsorship, marriage prohibitions are imposed between baptizer and baptized and their linear relatives and between spiritual siblings i.e. godchildren of the same godparent. (Just, 1981: 290) *Koumbaria* ties in Phocaea are not characterized by the patron-client relationship (cf. Campbell, 1964: 217-224) which develops from the social difference between sponsors and sponsored. Phocaeans often choose wedding and baptism sponsors among close relatives, friends and work partners (cf. Hirshon, 1989: 187 for similar patterns of wedding and baptism sponsorship among the Yeraniotes Refugees of Pireaus). The *koumbaria* relationship implies, at an ideal level, mutual obligations of respect and amity. In girl's play *koumbares* are always portrayed as friends.

my duties, while she made herself comfortable on the bed, adding some details on the quality of the performance:

"We would be very polite!"<sup>5</sup> Being polite meant adopting a pretentious tone of voice and addressing each other as "My golden one " (*chrysi mou*) which is the Greek equivalent to "my dear", and saying "please" and "thank you" while changing My Little Pony's nappies and sipping "coffee". Soon a husband was added by Nina, who enacted him, by ringing the doorbell, entering and immediately asking for coffee.

*Koumbares* was not only the most popular play theme among Phocaeen girls (see Appendix I tables 6.1, 6.1.1). Its popularity historically has been such that it has come to be related metonymically to girls' play in general.<sup>6</sup> In girls descriptions of how they play at *Koumbares* there were some recurrent themes:

Well, we take a handbag etc. and we make houses. Each one of us has her own house and we pretend<sup>7</sup> to ring each other up and say, Hi I am coming for coffee and sometimes we have a baby too." (Voula 11 years, Lia 9 years).

Elements from different play scenarios could be combined in one play session. As put by 11 year-old Voula:

"Sometimes when we are playing at *Koumbares* we have a house and a shop and sell things, and then we close the shop and go home and when night falls we sometimes go for walks, but sometimes we play only at shop or we play only at *Koumbares*.

Eight-year-old Marina and her seven-year old sister Eleni added a pregnancy theme, while playing at *Kyries* (ladies), where Marina was momentarily transformed into a doctor as they "needed a doctor to open Eleni's belly" i.e. to take a folded cardigan, which stood for the baby, out of Eleni's robe. Nina in the above description of *Koumbares* also introduced the presence of a baby

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<sup>5</sup> Transformations during Phocaeen children's make-believe play are often communicated in conditional clauses, (translated in English by the past auxiliary form "would") where the grammatical conjunction *tha* + Verb in past tense is used. Phocaeen children use this grammatical form during role negotiation and preparation of the stage props, during the course of a play sequence. Negotiations of transformations in the beginning of a play sequence are often expressed in the future tense. A conditional clause may also serve as a meta-communicative statement indicating the wish to transform free play into pretending: As I was observing a group of Lower neighbourhood boys who were fishing at the harbour, on an autumn afternoon, two nine-year-old members of the group, Lakis and Manolis, started to throw rocks in the water. Manolis, suddenly declared his intention to engage momentarily in pretending by shouting with enthusiasm while pointing to the water "Afti tha itan i kakoi! (these would be the bad guys).

<sup>6</sup> *Koumbares* has historically been so popular among many Greek girls that it has become a metaphor for child's play and childishness. The phrase "Tora tis "Koumbares" tha paixoume?" (Are we going to play at *Koumbares* now?) is used to stress the seriousness of a situation.

<sup>7</sup> Children use the following terms for describing their make-believe: "kanoume oti" (= we pretend that... literally: We make that...) or "leme sta psemmata oti" (literally: we say in lies that...). The latter phrase is a clear statement of framing the activity as "non real" (see Bateson 1985; Corsaro and Evaldsson 1998; Goldman 1998):

When seven-year-old Antonis and eight-year-old Christos were playing at bankrobbers on a hot summer afternoon, Antonis who decided he couldn't be bothered to continue running around in the heat declared: "Look I would have broken my leg, O.K? All right said Christos and when will you get well?" "In two days ". "Real ones? " No, "fake ones" (pseftikes, i.e. fictitious, imaginary).

(My Little Pony) but she chose to emphasize on cooking and coffee making. Thus her version of *Koumbares* was more akin to "House" or "Pots and pans".

While what girls do when they play *Koumbares* may vary, the play theme in all versions deals explicitly with female friendship. Boys did not have any specified play themes under the title "Friends" but more often than not addressed each other as "friend" in role-play, while animated Playmobil figures and good guys in character doll play were also made to call each other "friend". "Koumbaroi", the male version of the term referring to men related by bonds of fictive kinship, which is as active in Phocaea as the female version *Koumbares* in everyday interactions, does not appear in boys' dialogues during play. This is due to the fact that boys usually choose to assume adult male roles which are not immediately connected to the family and kin context, whereas girls' play often revolves around family roles: "Husband and wife", "Sisters", "Mum and Child". In a play session of "Fishermen" enacted by 9-year-old Lambrini and her twin brother Nasos, Lambrini addressed Nasos as "husband", stressing her adult play identity as "wife", while Nasos called her "friend" throughout their interaction. The only case, to my knowledge, in which boys assume male adult roles in a family context, is in "Husband and Wife" or "House" play sessions with their sisters.<sup>8</sup>

### **Play, space and order:**

#### **a) Reproducing gender ideology through symbolic inversion**

Friends in boys' play cooperate for the performance of a particular action, e.g. a construction, rescue each other from the enemy's traps and conjointly attack the enemy. Female friends on the other hand, as portrayed in the various versions of *Koumbares*, *Files* or *Kyries*, are directly linked to the domestic realm and the performance of housekeeping tasks. Before receiving her guest, Nina, in a *Koumbares* session in which I participated as the second *Koumbara*, had to "tidy up", in order to make my "house" look "nice", i.e., well decorated. A tidy house in Phocaea is achieved through the correct balance of stylized order and cleanliness. Cleanliness is achieved through the preservation of a well-swept floor, dust free furniture and a spotless kitchen and bathroom. Standards of cleanliness are quite high in Phocaea and women are judged according to their housewifery excellence. I was told by a transmigrant woman who was well established in the community by the time of our conversation that when she first arrived, local women who visited her on the occasion of her new born baby, tested her housewifery standards by furtively inspecting



the floor under the furniture to check if she had swept the house properly and made remarks about her sparkling white laundry.<sup>9</sup>

Floor sweeping and dusting are part of the daily routine of a Phocaeen housewife, while twice a year the entire house is thoroughly washed from floor to ceiling (ideally wall paint should also be renewed at this frequency). Pressure is exerted especially on girls to participate in cleaning up, usually during holidays, while special emphasis is given to training children of both sexes in keeping their rooms tidy.

Children from the age of seven upwards were expected to preserve a sense of stylized order in their rooms, where every toy has its place. Order in children's rooms has two components: enclosure and display. Thus a number of toys that were small, had many parts, or were played with often but were not seen as decorative items were stored away. Other toys however were on permanent display, except when they were played at. After finishing a play session toys and dolls would move back to their invisible or conspicuous places. As toy display is an important feature in the Phocaeen houses, it deserves separate discussion, which will follow in the last section of this chapter I will deal with this back to this issue in the last section of this chapter.

Of the two components of tidiness, display, expressed in terms of "decoration" (*stolisma*) appears frequently in girls' symbolic play themes.

Decoration is a major component of "House" play, following immediately after the division of rooms. In *Koumbares* the favorite rooms chosen to stand for "house" are, the kitchen and the reception room, the *saloni*. A *saloni* is the ceremonial room used for receiving guests in festive occasions, and as a formal dining room on occasions connected with religious and family ritual (major religious celebrations or namedays). It is often the case that the *saloni* remains unused during the remaining period of the year.<sup>10</sup>

If the house mediates between the private and public spheres and constitutes the constructed physical space through which the good standing of the family must be both safe-guarded -kept

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<sup>8</sup> My information on mixed gender "house" play or husband and wife play sessions is exclusively based on girl's accounts.

<sup>9</sup> In Vasilika, according to Friedl, (1962:43) cleanliness is defined as avoidance of obvious dirt and order as stylized neatness. While Phocaeen housewives share the same sense of order with women in Vasilika, their standards of cleanliness are even higher. This may be due both to architectural changes (modern houses in Phocaea have wooden or mosaic floors as opposed to the dirt floors in rural Vasilika of the 1960s) and an increasing concern with hygiene expressed in avoidance of any form of dirt in the house. Cf. Forty (1986) for increase of the amount of housework in England, despite technological aid of electric appliances

<sup>10</sup> Fourteen out of thirty four households where I compiled toy inventories use the *saloni* exclusively as a reception room, while in thirteen households children sleep in the *saloni*, on sofa beds, due to space restrictions. The ceremonial character of the room, however, is stressed even in the case that it is employed as a bedroom. During daytime all signs of the *saloni*'s dormitory functions are carefully removed: bedding is stored away and sofa-beds are folded back into sofas.

private- and represented to the outside world (Crawford 1984: 121), then the locus of this mediation is par excellence the *saloni*. While the kitchen in Phocaea and in many parts of Greece (cf. Dubisch, 1986: 201) is the locus of the everyday intimate life of family and friends (i.e. the inner group), in which most informal socializing takes place, the *saloni* is the locus of the family's public face in the community. The family's well being is embodied in the display of the best pieces of furniture, the most typical example being the *scrinio*, an elaborate display cabinet, or *syntheto*, a cupboard cum book case containing a few books and several valuables, souvenirs or any valued objects, such as silverware and glassware, trousseaux items and family photographs. A *saloni* then is the appropriate place to receive friends in "house" and *Koumbares* play, while the symbolic reconstruction of a *saloni* is simultaneously an act of control over a symbolic universe whose access in real life is regulated by parents.

### **Space, play and order: b) Gender differences**

"House" play was an opportunity for children of both sexes to transform and order space. Whereas children younger than nine years of age constructed houses for their toys and dolls, transforming space in a miniature scale, older children also tended to transform larger volumes of space which could enclose both themselves and their toys. Furthermore, many Phocaeen children sought from the age of nine onwards a sense of privacy for their symbolic play sessions. Privacy, in the sense of playing out of adults' and older siblings' sight was achieved both through the choice of playtime and play space. Symbolic play often took place during siesta time, when adults were resting and children were supposed to be quiet<sup>11</sup>, or before bedtime, when children were left alone. In terms of space, privacy was expressed through the transformation of a house, workshop or wasteland section into a "spitaki" (little house). Girls and boys had different predilections in their choice of their own space. While girls constructed their "houses" by transforming old storerooms and lofts within or in the border of the domestic realm, i.e. in old storerooms in the house or in the court yard (Figures 6.4 - 6.5), boys preferred workshops, ruins, building sites and fields. For boys house play was often related to war play. The "houses" in the fields were often called "caves", (Figures 6.6 - 6.7) and were built under or in trees. The emphasis in "cave" construction lies in their properties as hideouts. As put by a twelve year-old Lower Neighbourhood boy, who showed me one of the "caves": " One day, when we were playing at war we decided that we needed somewhere to hide, so we made our first "cave" on the "mountain" (i.e. church hill). But now it's gone. They have spoiled it" (here "they" stands for anybody who is in rivalry with the *parea*).

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<sup>11</sup> See chapter 5.

Furthermore "caves" were collectively owned by the *parea*, while *spitakia* ownership varies. Nine-year-old Nasos and his ten-year-old cousin Sotiris, who usually played together, had collaborated in transforming their grandmother's delapidated mud-brick house into a *spitaki*, where they kept their "tools" and considered it as joint property. Girls' *spitakia*, on the other hand, were private property and were visited by other children after invitation.

While girls' "houses" (as space arrangements for role-play not toy play; dolls' houses were temporary constructions) were designed as more permanent dwellings (lasting for some years and undergoing respective transformations), boys' field houses were usually temporary or short lived constructions, as they were constantly exposed to danger of demolition either by angry adults who claimed their timber back or by rival *parees* who discovered the hideout. Moreover, a *parea* of boys might decide the demolition of their house just for the fun of it: A group of "Lower Neighbourhood" boys who spotted me once on my bicycle as I was on my way to an "Upper Neighbourhood" play session, invited me to see and photograph the house they had just erected on a building site, using bricks and planks. Immediately after I had taken the photograph, the same boys, who had proudly posed for me in their masterpiece, started to jump happily on their construction until, to their delight, it was leveled. (Figures 6.8 - 6.10).

Girls' interest when they played at *spitaki* concentrated on details of house interiors, furniture items, cooking utensils, and decorative knick-knacks. Nine-year-old Eftychia, who joined the "Lower neighbourhood" group in the construction and immediate destruction of their *spitaki* had added the final touch by ornamenting the "dining table" with a "vase" (empty can) of flowers. Boys are more concerned with construction details, e.g. walls, "doors", while they often protected their *spitakia* by setting "traps" for the "enemy". More details on gender differences in house-play will be presented in the toy section of this chapter.

### **6.1.2 Play- Mimesis<sup>12</sup> and Mockery: a) Children's representations of Work Scenes.**

In their identification with adult roles Phocaeen children often represented work scenes. Reenactment of work occurred regardless of children's real life employment.<sup>13</sup> and could at times be related to the jobs parents -especially fathers- pursued. Children reproduced adult life scenes not because they were excluded from adult reality but possibly because of their wish to invert their

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<sup>12</sup> I am using the term *mimesis*, in the Aristotelian sense –as understood by a number of Anglosaxon scholars- of interpretation and transformation rather than replication. See Goldman (1998: 19-21).

<sup>13</sup> Phocaeen parents often encourage boys from the age of nine or ten onwards to offer part-time usually unpaid labour at the family enterprise or to earn extra pocket-money by working at shops and restaurants during week-ends and holidays. Work in the second case especially is understood as a method for controlling children's time and their consumerism. (i.e. as a method of teaching the value of money). Girls are not expected to work outside the house until much later (fifteen or sixteen years).

hierarchical position in that reality: The Phocaeen girls who helped their mothers in the daily household routine might reproduce the same tasks (though with different emphasis) in their play.

Only in the latter case they were the "ladies of the house" rather than mother's little helpers. The occupations portrayed were related to the actual adult jobs in the village, and in a sense present an accurate picture of the community's economy. Moreover, children's play preferences by and large corresponded to the community's gender division of labour: Girls play at "Hairdressers" and "Office", boys play at "Shepherds", "Hotel owners", or at "Bank", while both sexes play at "Shop", "Restaurant", "Kebab-shop", and "Fishing".

According to the imitation model of play (e.g. Ammar 1954) fostered by functionalist theories of socialization, where children are seen as passive recipients of an informal process of cultural indoctrination of skills, values and beliefs (see Schwartzman 1978: 98-133 for a review), one could argue, judging from the thematic choice alone, that play representing work scenes constituted a typical example of mimicry and adult emulation and therefore of socialization into particular adult skills.

However, a closer examination of the actual enactment of these work scenes does not necessarily lead to such a conclusion. When boys play at "shepherds" or "animal keepers" they seem to enjoy more the fun involved in playing the animal's parts, (especially their voices and their movements), even though mimicry of grazing or feeding may be present at the same time. As Raum (1940: 255) has suggested, symbolic play differs from reality in that the acts imitated perform a different function from the original pattern and in that the mentality of the imitator and the imitated differ profoundly. Thus, even in the realistic scenes of grazing, reality is not represented identically and children who play the animal's part enjoy being naughty and try to avoid the touch of the shepherd's crook, while the play may often lead to a tag game. Similarly, when children of both sexes up to eight years of age play at "Doctors" (the theme preference drops after the age of nine), rather than rehearsing an adult role they concentrate more on exploring the body and especially its hidden parts. Furthermore, a standard practice in symbolic play is children's rotation in the representation of authority figures or favorite roles (which, as far as authority is concerned, does not usually happen in real life).<sup>14</sup> Ideally, every playmate should get a chance to play the commander and the commanded, the customer and shop-owner etc. Failure to observe this implicit "rule" may lead to friction and canceling of a play session.

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<sup>14</sup> This is rather the ideal type of assuming authority positions during play. In reality much of the power struggle between players takes place during role negotiation in the beginning of a play session, where tension is created between the wish not to "spoil the game" and the desire to play the best role. Cancellation occurs when the second wish predominates. However there are cases where children are offered minor roles, as an exclusion strategy.

According to Fortes, in symbolic representations "...adult functions are rearranged to fit the specific logical affective configuration of play." (1938: 49) In this process of rearrangement however, realistic and fantastic elements may be interwoven: Nine-year-old Nasos's imaginary "hotel" clientele was paying in gold, presumably dug up from the adjacent "gold mine" (an abandoned ice operated refrigerator).

Traditional socialization theories support their arguments for play's function as rehearsal of adult roles primarily by emphasizing play situations where reality is imitated. Indeed, as "imaginary situations always contain rules of behaviour, although they are not a game with formulated rules laid down in advance" (Vygotsky, 1985:541), adult reality may provide a source for the rules of conduct during symbolic play:

In one of the various play sessions I witnessed nine-year-old twins Nasos and Lambrini play at "Fishermen", arguments on the appropriateness of an enacted scene were supported by referral to what their father, actually did when he was fishing.<sup>15</sup>

Indeed a great deal of their efforts during these play sessions concentrated on endowing their fishing play with verisimilitude. The process involved careful preparation of the setting and the objects used as symbolic vehicles: their bed was designated as the trawler, while the floor served as the sea. Shoes played the part of different kinds of fish according to size and colour, the nets were symbolized by blankets while their pillows were used as sacks. In a play session I video taped, they even added a "scale" to weigh their fish, (i.e. two bread-baskets attached to a string) plastic carrier bags for the customer's service, and paper "money". Similarly, salient features of the fishing enterprise recurred in their play sessions: departure of trawler, exploration of fishing spots, anchorage, lowering of "nets", night sleep, hauling of the loaded nets the following dawn, arrival at the harbour, unloading of nets, and repair of damages, classification of fish into categories and placement in "crates" (washing bowls) and finally reproduction of the transaction scenes with the fish-mongers and restaurant owners, including selection of the "best fish" for their best clients (e.g. their maternal grandfather).

Nevertheless, realistic representation and caricature of adult reality could be present in the same play session: After a successful "fishing" trip the twins decided to give a mock feast and proceeded to perform the popular traditional circle dance "kalamatianos", overstressing and ridiculing the elaborate movements of leading dancers, singing non sensical verses and laughing their hearts out.

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<sup>15</sup> Both twins and their older sister, Mania had occasionally joined their father in his overnight fishing trips during their summer holidays. Nasos was particularly proud of his father and never failed to ask him about the details of a fishing enterprise especially if some kind of adventure (e.g. diving into deep water to untangle nets) was involved

Children then are not simply imitators of the adult world but may also act as critics and satirists. One of the favorite themes caricatured in children's play in many parts of the world is adult speech. Goodman (1970 in Schwartzman, 1978:132) mentions an example of two four-year-old American boys caricaturing the greeting behaviour and intonation patterns of two adult women. Greeting behaviour and typical wishes exchanged on name-days particularly are also ridiculed in Phocaean children's play, despite the fact that children may repeat those phrases themselves on the appropriate occasions. One of the most severe criticisms of the adult world via mockery of adult speech that I witnessed, appeared during play sessions of "fishermen" in which eleven-year-old Mania joined her younger twin siblings Nasos and Lambrini:

Mania, who enacted the part of the Fishermen's clientele, took pains in ridiculing typical village characters, "the dais" (macho man), the old lady<sup>16</sup>, seeking sympathy for her aching bones, the "gossiping lady" and the "Vlach" who tells his wife off for buying stale fish. In all of the role caricatures mockery was achieved primarily by imitation and exaggeration of the character's speech (both in terms of content and in terms of accent) and gestures. Thus for the enactment of these roles Mania adopted respective voice tones and expressions: rough for the "dais", monotonous for the old lady, high pitched for the gossip, while for the role of the "Vlach" she stressed the harsh accent characteristic of the village Sarakatsans.

Interestingly enough, Mania's paternal Grandmother was a "Vlach", and her father was considered a "Vlach" despite his father's albanophone origin. Mania and her siblings were offspring of one of the few mixed marriages between "Vlachs" and Refugees (Father of "Vlach" origin, mother of Refugee origin) and identified with both groups according to the context of reference. Thus they were particularly proud of the fact that their father's family (in the extended form) was the biggest in the village and of the fact that their Father's Brother was the community's president at the time. However they did not wish to be called "Vlach" due to the pejorative connotations the term carried (cf. Chapter 3).

During an Upper Neighbourhood football play session in which some Lower Neighbourhood boys participated, the boys started using their nicknames as they passed the ball to each other. Makis, a transmigrant boy from Agrinion was known to his "parea" as "Vlach", a nickname which described his harsh accent, characteristic of his place of origin. Makis did not mind being called a Vlach. The term carried for him no connotations of Refugee-Vlach rivalry. In fact it was his best friend (known as the "trembling one") who had given him the nick-name. At the attribution of the

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<sup>16</sup> Children's attitude towards the elderly is ambiguous, oscillating between sympathy and ridicule and largely depending on the elderly person's tolerance to their boisterous outdoor play. In the particular fishing session both

term "Vlach" to Takis, Lambrini immediately protested: "Why do you let them call you "Vlach"? Makis shrugged his shoulders and continued his game.

On another occasion, Mania playfully imitated the "Vlach" accent in the presence of her paternal grandmother, who reacted immediately: "You were born to a Vlach too, you know!" (Kiesena Vlachos s'ekane!) It is possible that Mania and her sister were making a statement on the evolution of ethnic identity, from the privileged position of a mixed family (which enabled them to participate in the social life of both groups) by choosing to espouse those aspects of the Vlach identity that did not carry pejorative meanings. The rest they could freely mock in their play.

There are good reasons to suspect that children's mockery also included myself, especially in my adult identity as the ethnographer interviewing parents rather than playing with children. Being an adult myself I could not avoid using adult expressions, gestures and grimaces, which children occasionally repeated in a teasing manner. I was told by a number of girls that "Cleo" was a play theme they had played at least once during the period I stayed in Phocaea but unfortunately I did not have a chance to see my mocked version during play. The Cleo roles that were performed in my presence were fairly discrete and emphasized particularly on my "strange" habit (which puzzled girls particularly) of carrying two handbags (one containing my note-pad, and a pencil box containing a pen-knife, among other things, and one for my camera and tape-recorder paraphernalia). The objects chosen out of the variety of my handbags' content for playing "Cleo" were the note-pad, pen and pen-knife (which I rarely used) and the camera.

Mockery is not only present in children's play themes drawing directly on the adult world, but often appears in role inversions present in symbolic play where adult figures are associated primarily with children's own experience.

### **Play, mimesis, inversion and mockery b) Themes drawn from children's experience**

Phocaeen children often comment on their participation in a world where the existing power and authority structure of society is represented by adult figures (Schwartzman, 1978: 126) by inverting during play their hierarchical position in asymmetrical relationships. Power reversals are present in most play themes where children assume adult roles, however they are especially prominent in play events dealing with children's own experience in the form<sup>17</sup> of asymmetrical dyads (Mum and child) or asymmetrical group relationships, (teacher vs children).

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attitudes are reflected.: Mania is obviously making fun of the old woman's complaints, while her brother Nasos chooses to sympathize with her and refuses to take money because "she is a little old lady" (epidi ine grioula).

<sup>17</sup> Schwartzman (1978:244), following Fabian (1974), uses the term "genre" in her classification of play events according to type of authority structure (e.g. asymmetrical dyads, asymmetrical group relationships, symmetrical dyads or groups etc).

"Mum and child" is a common play theme of girls up to nine years of age. "Mummies" cook, go shopping, take their children to the playground, while "children" speak in baby talk, declare hunger and are bottle-fed, follow their mummies around, ask to go to sleep or refuse to go to sleep. More often than not the play event is an opportunity to stress age differences between siblings and first cousins and treat the youngest child in the family as a doll. Lia (9 years) told me that when she was younger her older sisters and first cousins during "house" or "mummies" placed her on a blanket and threw her in the air.

"School" or "Teachers", which is played by both sexes at least from the age of five through twelve seems to be predominantly a girl's play theme in the sense that it is more likely to occur by female initiative. In the survey play preferences (cf. Appendix Table 6.1, 6.1.1 -.2) "School" was the seventh most common choice among girls' play preferences in the merged category of home and neighbourhood. It did not appear however in the boys' answers at all, even though boys gladly participated in "School" play sessions and I had the chance to observe two brothers playing at "school" with their Playmobil figures. Possible reasons for the omission should be sought in: a) the predominant orientation of boys' answers towards outdoor group games b) the stereotypical association of the teacher's profession with women despite the coincidental male majority in Phocaea's primary school (three out of four male teachers were granted tenure in Phocaea).

In school play sessions children reproduced classroom situations commenting on the content of the educational curriculum, on the role of teachers as authority figures, on their own position as students in an educational system based on competition<sup>18</sup>, discipline and learning by rote.

Mimicry, role and structural inversions (e.g. taking turns at the teacher role) and mockery are equal possibilities in class re-constructions during play depending on the implicit agreement of the players on the role content and the behaviour patterns. Thus, in solitary teacher play with imaginary students or in school sessions where dolls are allocated the students' role, girls portray the teacher as a "serious" figure testing students' competence by asking spelling and math questions, praising the correct answers and scolding the "students" who make mistakes. It seems then that in solitary

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<sup>18</sup> During the second term of the PASOK Government (1985-1989) efforts were made by the Ministry of Education to reduce the antagonistic elements of the educational system at least at the level of primary school. Among the measures taken against the psychological drawbacks of competition was the abolition of exams in primary school ( a measure which also reduced the possibility of retaking a year)

Furthermore the marking system was modified: Not only was the previous numerical marking system replaced by an alphabetical one but also the new marks were not immediately accessible to students. (personal communication with primary school teacher Niovi Bethani). The experiment was heavily criticized both as too conservative (marks continued to function competitively in their new names) and as too progressive (exam abolition diminished study motives). Many Phocaeans adopted the latter view, while children often put pressure on teachers to tell them their marks. Despite modifications following the rotation of New Democracy and Pasok in office during the Nineties, the system still discourages antagonism in the first classes of primary school. Numerical marking was reintroduced for



play of girls up to nine years and in interactive play of children up to eight years school enactments revolve around the issue of control.

During a "Teacher's" session played out by seven-year-old Eleni and her eight-year-old sister Marina, where dolls assumed the students' role Eleni extended her powerful position as teacher by introducing a power display of older vs younger students. Speaking on behalf of one of the students (Barbie doll) she announced: "I am off to tease the first grades". In play sessions, where older children (girls or boys) assume the students' role, school situations are re-enacted only to be mocked.

Hardman (1974: 802), found that St Barnaba's schoolchildren in Oxford, who were playing at teachers depicted a stereotype school built up by previous generations of players rather than the school of their own experience: teachers were enacted as stereotypes of authority, while pupils were stereotypically docile. Failure to conform to the docility rule was considered a serious breach of the etiquette calling for expulsion of the culprit from the play session. There are stereotypical elements in Phocaeen children's versions of "Teachers" in the sense that the content of the asymmetrical relationship between teacher and students is handed down by older children, a fact which possibly makes "school" the most game-like symbolic play activity. Two forms of this relationship are enacted most frequently: the authoritarian teacher vs naughty students and the neutral teacher (resembling the "mother" figure in games described in the previous chapters) cum docile students vs the slow student. In the first case teachers are portrayed as extremely strict and abrupt, dispensing discipline and corporal punishment while the "students" deliberately give wrong or silly answers (e.g.  $1+1=11$ ), tease each other, whisper and furtively play with toys whenever the teacher turns his/her back to write on the blackboard.<sup>19</sup> Teasing is accepted as part of the play content, however if it is stretched too far the session may be called off.

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the two last grades in order to prepare children for the demanding requirements and the highly competitive character of secondary education in Greece.

<sup>19</sup> Such backstage play was common in the classroom in children's actual school life. Boys were its undisputable protagonists. One of the back-stage play activities taking place in school was a game played when the teachers had to leave the classroom for some reason. One of the most popular "unruly" games played during teachers' absence from class was a forfeit game called *1-2-3 moko* (1-2-3 Shut-up): a child playing the role of "mana" (=mother, i.e. central person, arbiter, see Appendix III) would shout *1-2-3 moko*, upon which everybody ideally should remain silent. Whoever first broke the silence was immediately smacked by practically everybody present. The consequent turmoil would usually attract the attention of the school headmaster, who would express his indignation against the children's "uncivilized behaviour" ("apolitisti symberifora") and would subsequently start a maths class. Maths intimidated many schoolchildren, so the headmaster's technique for restoring order by bringing the students face to face with the unpopular "times tables" was a successful disciplinary technique.

Other occasions for "unruliness" were celebrations of national anniversaries, where youngsters entertained themselves secretly, exchanging jokes, stifling giggles, or gathering anoraks and whispering that they were on sale, while pretending to attend the teachers' speeches.

Boys particularly enjoy the teasing part and stress disorder, while more often than not when boys participate in "Teachers," the play session leads to a tag game with the girls in the chasing role.

In the second case teachers are rather benevolent figures, while the personality that appears to be mocked (even though criticism of the entire school situation may be present) is the slow student who cannot adapt to the school requirements. In fact the play theme among a group of Upper Neighbourhood girls is called after the name of the student "Zourlokaterina" (crazy Catherine). As put by 11-year-old Christina, "

"Zourlokaterina" is a bandy-legged girl, who does everything wrong and is sent to her mother to find out how to do it right".

Indeed in a play session which I videotaped, Zourlokaterina appeared not to know even the proper daily greeting and answered "Good evening" to the teacher's good morning greeting, after a considerable time lag and the prompt "What do we say Zourlokaterina?" She was subsequently sent to her "mother" who gave wrong answers to make the situation appear more hilarious. The session took place on the pavement outside Christina's house at the presence of some adults who were laughing their hearts out throughout the play event. Similarly the "students" (played by Upper Neighbourhood boys who had just finished a war game) seemed to enjoy Zourlokaterina's wrong answers. They also added their own touch to the play theme. After having examined her docile students on math and history, Christina who was playing the teacher's part ran out of subjects and asked the boys to help her. "Come on, don't you have any ideas on what to do next?" Interestingly enough the "classes" the boys came up with were: Gymnastics, drawing and break which was voted for unanimously.

Similarly, when the "teacher" finally expelled "Zourlokaterina" for her goofy behaviour, a cause of all sorts of mishaps, the boys decided to punish their former school-mate by "beating up" both "Zourlokaterina" and her "mother". The play session ended in general turmoil.

Mockery may be addressed both at the teacher and the slow student during a playful portrayal of school. In a "school" session enacted by nine-year-old Stylianos and his seven-year-old brother Nasos, through animation of Playmobil figures, Lego bricks and other equipment, Stylianos played both the role of teacher and the role of students, while Nasos assumed the role of the boat owner who was to take the children home after school (the "school" was supposedly located at the sea-shore). Both brothers explicitly stated their identification with the particular roles assigned to Playmobil figures (**Figures 6.11-6.12**). Right from the beginning of the play session Stylianos assigned a "dupe" role to a Playmobil figure and presented him (all figures were male) as being in a state of confusion:

Teacher: Which subject do you want to start with my children?

Students: Math!

Teacher: Bravo! Hey you fool, (addressing a playmobil "student") what do you mean by "very well", you idiot? We are having a math class not English!

As Stylianos moved on to other classes (which took place on consecutive school days, allowing for the kids' transport to their homes and back to school the following day) he continued in a similar fashion occasionally staging a mock caning of naughty students. The teacher's "anger" particularly escalated during the history class:

Teacher: Hey, you, "koutornithi" (i.e. twit, literally dumb-bird")

Koutornithi: Ds.. Ds... (nonsensical sounds presumably uttered by the student).

Teacher: Stop it! What was your father's name in the old days?

Koutornithi: Saravakos (famous Greek football player).

Teacher: That was his family name. What about his first name?

Koutornithi: Dimitris.

Teacher (angrily): So, Dimitris Saravakos was his name? (it becomes obvious that the student is actually referring to the football player) You will die! (typical threat among boys).

The "teacher" then caned the "student" in a mixture of angry shouts and laughter, at which point I interfered by asking Stylianos, if his real teacher actually practiced corporal punishment.

Cleo (laughing): Does your teacher bash you like that?

Stylianos: No.

Cleo: So, why do you cane the student?

Stylianos: I don't like them (the students).

Cleo: Why is that?

Stylianos (demolishing the "school"): I am going to change my job.

Cleo : What are you going to be?

Stylianos: A policeman (the playmobil figure representing the teacher was wearing traffic warden gear).

Cleo (insisting): Why was the teacher caning the students?

Stylianos: Because, whenever he turned his back to write on the blackboard they were very noisy.

There are a few points to be made with respect to the common themes in the described school examples:

- a) The recurrence of math as a stereotypical school subject may be due to the fact that mistakes are obvious but may also portray children's anxiety with the subject (Math is very unpopular among the majority of Phocaeen children, who often resort to private lessons to cope with the difficulties).
- b) Errors are used alternatively to exhibit defiant behaviour (mockery aimed at teacher) which is punished or stupidity calling for ridicule (mockery aimed at stupid school mate). In both we are dealing with symbolic inversion, as the teacher becomes the object of ridicule rather than a person to be respected and in the second case the fool/student becomes the main hero of the story. Wrong answers are themselves inversions of the correct replies and serve to invert the seriousness of a situation and cause laughter.<sup>20</sup>

There are two main streams in the interpretation of symbolic inversions as they appear in ritual, humour and play.

- a) Symbolic reversals are cathartic (Gluckman 1954, Radcliffe-Brown 1940) phenomena reinforcing in effect the existing social order, their main function being to represent chaos and disorder thereby dramatizing the importance to return to social order (Da Matta, 1977 in Cohen, 1980).
- b) Symbolic inversions are potentially subversive According to supporters of the second stream, symbolic inversions are proto-structural phenomena (Sutton-Smith, 1972b: 18), i.e. latent systems of potential alternatives to the normative structure from which novelty will arise when contingencies in the normative system require it (ibid:19). When, where and how the contingencies occur is a matter of debate. Zemon-Davis (1978) argues that the possibility for subversion exists in hierarchical societies which allow lower ranks few formal means to protest. Cohen (1980) stresses the importance of the link between ritual and politics in an examination of the role of Notting-Hill-Gate Carnival in the conflict between dominant British culture and ethnic sub-cultures. More recently, Susan Drucker-Brown (1999:181-192) has elaborated on Zemon-Davis to argue for the transformative potential of royal funeral rituals in Ghana.

For Turner (1974:61) the key for the transformation of the potential for novelty into action lies in the work/leisure distinction after the industrial revolution. In tribal and pre-industrial societies symbolic inversions occur within a context of liminal, ergic-ludic phenomena and are usually compensatory for rigidities and unfairness of the normative structure (ibid: 83). By contrast

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<sup>20</sup> It is commonly argued by humour theorists (e.g. Rothbart 1973 in Alford 1981; Perlmutter 2002) that incongruity is a necessary component of humour. Wrong answers in that sense cause laughter because they violate a communicative expectancy.

in industrial societies these phenomena belong to anergic-ludic liminoid genres of action and literature, which are paralleled to Sutton-Smith's vision of play as experimentation with variable repertoires consistent with the manifold variation made possible by developed technology and an advanced stage of the division of labour (Turner 1974: 83; Sutton-Smith 1972a: 18).

A view of play as a source of new culture inherent in the experimentation with alternative structures combined with the inclusion of children in the sub-cultures' theory (marginal groups are the seedbeds of revolution) may produce highly romantic visions of childhood. This romanticizing is especially prominent in the work of many folklorists adopting the "tribal child approach" (James, Jenks and Prout 1998, see chapters 2 and 4) best exemplified in the work of the Opies (1984,1987), where children are challenging the hierarchical adult model by mocking authority in their lore and by offering an egalitarian model of society in their self-organized group games. Sutton-Smith's work on New Zealand children (1972,1981), Schwartzman's observations in an American kindergarten, (1977) James' ethnography of a British primary school (1993), my own observation of Phocaeen children's inclusion and exclusion strategies (cf. neighbourhood and school games) and a number of recent works on children's power games during play (see McMahon and Sutton-Smith 1999 for a review) suggest that children's societies are not as egalitarian as the Opies purport.

Play's subversive potential should not be stretched too far. Sutton-Smith's contingencies, i.e. the context of the play event and the context of the society in which children participate become as crucial as the play text (content and structure). The potential for subversion lies in the text, the actual outcome lies in the context. Satirical songs and symbolic inversions were broadly used during the Greek University students' uprising in 1973 and 1979-1980 and during the 1990-1991 secondary school occupations by Gymnasium and Lycaeum students (In the latter two revolts Pink Floyds' song "The Wall" was the favorite tune accompanying demonstrations). What made satire revolutionary was the historical contingency in which it was employed. Play scholars seem to be in agreement that this is rarely the case however, among preschool or primary school children. In play literature satire has been predominantly viewed as a safety valve, releasing the tension of the socialization process (see King 1987) while simultaneously reinforcing group boundaries by excluding the satirized persons (e.g. authoritarian and unpopular teachers) from the peer group (e.g. Jorgensen 1983).. Corsaro (1997: 133-134) has pinpointed some cases where children can effect minor changes in some rules of school settings through subversive play, e.g. by achieving a tacit agreement with kindergarten teachers to bypass the general rule of not bringing toys to school by smuggling little toys brought from home in their pockets. The children reproduce the school order through sticking to appearances of consent, while simultaneously undermining it through what

Goffman (1959, 1974) would term as “back stage activity”. Argenti’s analysis of Oku children’s mask play in Cameroon as a sophisticate manipulation of alternate realities, while simultaneously reproducing nation models of post colonial power is a recent elaboration of Corsaro’s theory of interpretive reproduction with regard to the relationship of children’s play to ambiguity. The duality of children’s play, as inherently containing both the potential for reproduction of social order and change, has been more recently described in a review article by McMahon and Sutton Smith. (1999: 293-308) in terms of a dialectic between normativity, order and reproduction on the one hand, and subversion, disorder and change on the other.

Phocaeen children's mockery should be also understood as a bifurcated process, containing both normative and innovative, subversive elements. This duality clearly emerges from the consideration of the stereotypical features that children draw on in their satirical play. The stereotypical characters appearing in the school versions depicted earlier have a striking resemblance to characters portrayed in jokes and stories and to traditional shadow theatre characters of the "Karaghiozis " repertoire. Phocaeen children know "Karaghiozis" from television, from occasional professional shadow theatre performances in the village, organized by the community council and from comics. Furthermore children mentioned that they use shadow theatre puppets sold in local shops or construct their own puppets for their own spontaneous "Karaghiozis" performances, which are usually organized during summer holidays and take place in courtyards.

The recurrent theme of corporal punishment in "school" enactments does not directly bear on children's experience. Beating of children within the school or family environment is by and large an issue of the past in Phocaea.<sup>21</sup> Caning however is a typical motif in shadow theatre performances (Chadzipandazis, 1984: 85). Karaghiozis is beaten up at the exposure of his trickery and ignorance after the undertaking of a task he cannot fulfill. (ibid:85)

The "koutornithi" character in Stylianos' school version is a hero in many jokes children read in books or learn from other children. "Zourlokaterina" is the name of a story anti-heroine, whose stupidity leads after several mishaps to the accidental discovery of a treasure. The story also appears in its original version as a source for make-believe. Furthermore, Zourlokaterina is not only a fool-hero, she is also handicapped. Many adult and children's jokes focus on mentally or physically disabled characters, while the village-fool, as outcast and object of ridicule is still fresh in the memories of the parental generation. "Zourlokaterina" then *par excellence* demonstrates

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<sup>21</sup> Some forms of corporal punishment were still practiced by Phocaeen parents in the late 1980s, especially by mothers, who resorted to slippers, feather dusters and fly-swatters for their children's punishment, when other disciplinary measures failed. Teachers could occasionally practice ear-lobe pulling of individual naughty or defiant students, but usually employed shouting and collective restrictions on favorite activities and pastimes (breaks, gymnastics,

children's "free" combination of factual (e.g. boys preference towards disorder expressed in their choice of having a break instead of a class) and fictional elements in make-believe, within the constraints imposed by age and the play group's conventions and the particular social context of Palaia Phocaea. Children in that sense emerge as both conservative and innovative in their use of folk motives and folk characters in their play. Their free mixing of factual and fictional elements is an act of interpretive reproduction (Corsaro 1997). Children are active participants in this process, as in other processes described in previous chapters e.g. the reproduction of exiting power structures and gender stereotypes in the neighbourhood streets of Phocaea and their strategic manipulation in the football chants at school. More examples of children's use of fiction as a source for their imaginary play themes will appear in the following section.

### **c) Themes drawn from fiction: The media as resource for pretense. The case of girls.**

Having briefly touched on the links between mass media, folk literature, books, and children's combination of factual and fictional elements in make-believe, this section will deal with the direct and often acknowledged influence of the culture industry on children's play themes and play styles. Folk literature and culture industry products are treated in this and the following section as yet another source for Phocaeen children's symbolic play themes. Here I adopt Vygotsky's view of play as an act of cultural appropriation and a reworking of pre-existing schemes (Brougère and Manson 1989-1990; Corsaro 1997; Corsaro and Evaldsson 1998). Children in that sense use the reality surrounding them and the imaginary "realities" presented in oral and written literature and the media as a repository of scripts<sup>22</sup> for their imaginative play constructions. The narrative provides the implicit rule structure of the play event (e.g. the traits, and names, of the enacted characters, the form and content of their actions) and the yardstick to compare compatibility of actions and situations portrayed during play. The Market as toy promoter and the culture industry as promoter of images stress existing gender differences and deepen age differences. Choice of particular fiction related schemes and the means for their enactment i.e. the presence or absence of toys create "visible" boundary markers between younger and older children and between children and adults.

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excursions) as methods of punishment. Caning has been banned from Greek schools since the 1960s but continued to be practiced, with the parents' tolerance, throughout the military dictatorship (1967-1974).

<sup>22</sup> The term script is used by Nelson and Seideman (1984) to analyze the organization of children's shared fantasy world and their experiential representations. According to the authors, scripts are composed of a sequence of acts, organized around goals and specifying actor roles, props and scenes. (1984: 47) Throughout this and the following section I will be using the terms script and scheme as synonyms. Scripts and schemes derive from "schemata" i.e. abstract representations of dynamic relations and events (e.g. eating, shopping, travelling) from which children create more detailed plans or action formats (Garvey and Brendt 1975; Singer and Singer 1990)

Phocaeen children often use oral and written literature genres as sources for role-play.<sup>23</sup> Most common among these sources are fairy tales, stories and novels, while jokes can also sparkle a play event, where children enact the jokes' characters repeating the dialogue in a theatrical fashion and using the appropriate stage props. The Three Little Pigs and Little Red Riding Hood are frequent bed-time play themes of children of both sexes from at least six to ten years of age. Furthermore stories may be invented. Inventiveness both in terms of craftsmanship and in terms of resourcefulness in imagining play scenarios is an admired property often compensating for lack of other skills required for a regular inclusion in a *parea's* play sessions.

Nine-year-old Nasos told me that before the beginning of the term the Upper Neighbourhood boys –which should be his *parea* normally by virtue of his residence<sup>24</sup> refused to play with him because he was fat and couldn't run. When he finally succeeded in losing weight things changed. He still wasn't a competent player, but he was gradually included in most outdoor play sessions except football and particularly in symbolic play events, where I often witnessed his playmates openly praising his skillfulness and creativity. Similarly, nine-year-old Nina (who was one of my key informants on girl's symbolic play) was very influential in her *parea* of first cousins (three girls and two boys) as she was extremely resourceful and imaginative. Rena invented stories (usually with magical characters), which she enacted with her cousins in role play or doll play sessions. In the latter sessions (in which only female cousins participated) she used dolls as shadow theatre puppets operated behind a "screen". The dolls chosen for this task were Barbie and Bibi-Bo fashion dolls,<sup>25</sup> "because they are slim and easy to manipulate". Barbies and Bibi-bos were according to one of the plots the "good dolls", who, in their endeavour to find the "magic water which cures all illnesses", get involved in various adventures but overcome all obstacles (e.g. meeting wild

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<sup>23</sup> Symbolic play themes drawing on historical themes had been in fashion by the cohort of children who attended primary school in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The school, which was at the time located at the current Cultural Centre had a cavity in the yard that inspired the performance of "Kryfo Sholeio" (Secret School), a popular myth (see Angelou 1997) Greek history books have propagated on the schooling system prevalent among Greek populations during the years of the Ottoman Rule (1453-1827). Songs and stories about the institution of Kryfo Sholeio abound in Greek primers and History books depicting scenes with children walking in the moonlight to attend these clandestine schools, which were, according to the legend, located in secret places like caves. I was told by the older siblings of the contemporary to my research primary school children that in the early 80s they had used some galleries (that had served as a shelter during WW2) known as the "koimitiria" (= the graveyards) among children and located behind the old school site to stage scenes from "Kryfo Sholeio" in the evenings. This game seems to me to have been closer to a daring game than merely a representation of a historical theme, as the name of the place suggests, however it is interesting in this context that a historical myth was appropriated by children by triggering a shared play event in an abandoned site that had originally been constructed for a very different use

<sup>24</sup> Nasos had no relatives in the village, which made his position more difficult, as kinship is a stronger criterion than skill or bodily appearance for inclusion in a play group. There were many plump children among the village "parees", whose as it were ascribed belonging to the group by virtue of kinship bonds was never questioned. (cf. chapter 5).

<sup>25</sup> Bibi-Bo dolls are the Greek equivalent to Barbie dolls and are presented by Greek manufacturers in the same context of glamour and extravagance. They were hybrid concepts, based on the Greek actress Aliko Vougiouklaki but named after the American actress Bo Derek who was popular at the time of the doll's creation in the late 1970. (Source: *View*, the Sunday Magazine of *Kathimerini* 6.1.02).



animals, represented by soft toys), "because they are good", steal the magic water from the bad witch, and succeed in curing an ill doll (named after and resembling the singer Madonna) after a new series of adventures.

Television, video and cinematic films constitute further sources for Phocaean children's engagement in make-believe.<sup>26</sup> Girls identify with and play at "singers" and "actresses", by wearing high-heels, artificial jewelry (sold at local kiosks, haberdashers and at fairs) and "make-up", using various props for microphones (e.g. skipping rope handles) and musical instruments. Film choice and the concomitant predilection towards enactment in play of the fantastic realms presented in the movies varies according to age and gender. Film-making companies and collaborating toy companies are well aware of this fact and adapt their market strategies to the age-trends of their potential audience. During the Ninja-turtle campaign, in the early Nineties television cartoons in Greece, as in the U.K., aimed at younger children, while the more realistic film addressed preadolescent and adolescent audiences (Coward 1990: 25). Thus, the eternal battle between Good and Evil which is the underlying theme in most of the boys' (from at least the age of five through twelve) and occasionally in girls' play often takes distinct forms creating boundaries between respective age groups.

### **Boys' Play and the Media: The controversy over the impact of aggression and violence.**

Five-to seven-year-old boys are particularly interested in science fiction both in terms of representations of outer space and in terms of the relevant technology. (space crafts, robots,) Boys of this age group (including eight-year-olds) stage their battles in other worldly contexts, which often include super heroes (He-man, Superman) monstrous (e.g. mutant beasts in Thundercats) and mythical figures (e.g. Hercules).<sup>27</sup>

Symbolic play sessions revolve around the themes of threat, confrontation of the enemy, (with arms or man-to-man), capture by the enemy, escape, or rescue (escape appears in solitary play while interactive play involves coordination towards rescue) and eventual trapping of the

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<sup>26</sup> Phocaea had during the period of my fieldwork one open-air cinema operating throughout the summer holidays and predominantly showing a) Greek and American comedies b) Karate and Ninja films c) Adventure and war films with Sylvester Stallone and Arnold Schwarzenegger. Primary school children's access to the cinema varies according to age and gender based time and space restrictions. (Movies start after dark and the location of the cinema at the village outskirts requires adult escort). However, most of these films featured during winter in the three local video-clubs. Most children either possess a video at home or have access to a video set at grandparents' and friends' homes. grandparents' and friends' homes)

<sup>27</sup> This tendency, as Brougère (1988-1989) and Sutton Smith (1988) argue, for French and American children respectively, is hardly new for Phocaean children, as monsters and evil spirits abound in Greek folk tales, fairy tales and folk religion. Brougère explains this trend in terms of its cathartic function in dealing with fear of non human entities. Girls are no less interested in monsters as their consumption of monster-shaped sweets suggests. However, they do not buy or play with monster dolls as boys do

enemy. Older children (nine to fourteen) engage in battle simulations of this world in the form of rule-bound games (War, Commandos) with explicit conventions concerning players' moves, weapons, battlegrounds and team formation (see chapter 5) and consider the extra-terrestrial world as infantile. The heroes of this age group are human beings - to the exception of bad guys who are often portrayed as beastly - who are often placed in exotic contexts (e.g. the Far West, or the jungle). Both groups have common interest in the exotic karate and ninja heroes of respective films, while children of both sexes between six and eighteen take karate lessons at the adjacent village of Anavyssos. Boys' rough- and-tumble play style is strongly influenced by karate films and lessons in terms of bodily posture, play signals, moves and sound-effects. Boys' play abounds with representations of violent acts (e.g. killing) which are played out with toy weapons or substitutes in a fashion which has direct reference to the respective films.

Whether films and war toys actually incite violence and whether these representations actually constitute violent acts is a burning issue among play scholars, parents and public institutions. Parents and public institutions may take actions particularly against war toys, on the basis of the tenet supported by many psychologists (Mendoza, 1972, Turner and Goldsmith, 1976, Potts, Huston and Wright, 1986) that war toys incite aggressive and violent behaviour.

In spring 1988 the municipality of Athens, under the auspices of the liberal mayor Evert, organised a symbolic burial of children's toy guns at Lycabettus hill. The ceremony was given great publicity and was covered by the daily news reel in both State channels.<sup>28</sup> As I watched the pacifist ritual on TV, I noticed that some children who had been obviously dragged into the event by their parents had tears in their eyes, as they publicly disposed of their weapons to their parents' delight and the mayors' applause. The publicity reached Phocaea and some parents during that period told me that they had convinced their children to discard their toy guns. One of the children that had been talked into throwing his weapons away, was seven-year-old Antonis, whose family I often visited, as his mother was one of the first Phocaeans who took me under her wing. Andreas used to engage in solitary play sessions revolving around the theme of space battles, immediately after lunch i.e. at the time when the rest of the family still chatted over coffee. Throughout the 1988 summer period, as his promise not to use weapons was still fresh, Antonis resorted to ashtrays and dish holders to represent space crafts and laser guns. It was not until Christmas that he finally succeeded in convincing his mother that he was "incorrigible" and acquired a new, manufactured space craft complete with laser canons. Antonis' mother in that sense inadvertently consented to the

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<sup>28</sup> Private television was introduced in Greece in 1990

fact that children do not necessarily need toy weapons to stage their battles. Toys rather are used as means for their imaginary representations.

Are then these representations a product of the film industry? Is it because of war films that children engage in or enact battles with or without toys? Are these acts actually violent? Most of the studies that argue for the negative impact of toys and TV ground their arguments on the assumption that children will simply imitate what is put in front of them. This is an unwarranted assumption, as has been demonstrated earlier in this chapter. Furthermore play-fighting among boys is according to Sutton-Smith (1988: 67) almost a universal phenomenon which is hardly new. "Those who do not know children's play but suddenly come to show an interest in it, often mistake what they see as a totally contemporary phenomenon when it is not." (Sutton-Smith 1988: 67).

As for the issue of the aggressive character of children's war and rough-and-tumble play, the major criticism to be applied to the above-mentioned studies, is their failure to distinguish between playful aggression and real aggression. In all of the studies aggression during play did not carry on beyond the playroom. (Ibid:64). Moreover according to Wegener-Spöhring, (1987, 1994) the content of the play does not necessarily involve an unfriendly mode of interaction between children. Indeed Phocaean children may be protective towards their younger siblings during their war sessions and take great pains in preventing anybody from getting hurt. Sutton-Smith has argued (1971,1988) that it is possible that children's play fighting is shifting into a less physical form. My own observations of children's verbalized violence (cf. hooligan chants in school games and football idiom in neighbourhood games and confrontations) corroborate this argument especially when these confrontations are compared to the stone wars and forfeit games of previous generations (cf. Appendix III). In that sense, contemporary concern in children's war play and the concomitant constraining efforts simply require children "to achieve what parents and politicians have not." (Sutton-Smith, 1988: 65)

Films may act as a source for character identification during common viewing sessions, as a trigger sparking off a play session immediately after viewing or as a repository of possible play scenarios. In the first case identification with particular characters may take the form of power play: As seven-year-old Antonis was watching one of My Little Pony video taped episodes with his six-year-old cousin Antonis<sup>29</sup> they asked me whether it was true that lava can melt ice (the episode involved a volcano and an iceberg setting). At my affirmative answer the older Antonis who had

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<sup>29</sup> Children in Phocaea are usually named after their same sexed grandparents. In the naming process, which has been common among all ethnic groups, to a great extent, paternal grandparents have priority over the maternal set. As a result first cousins of the same sex usually may often have the same first name and are distinguished by age, reference to their father's first name or family nick-name.

chosen to identify with the volcano exclaimed triumphantly: *Ides se skizo!* (literally : You see? I am tearing you apart, i.e., I win).

Film narratives for girls and boys may alternatively constitute a rule setting mechanism, when efforts are made to reproduce particular episodes or may provide a point of departure for the creation of imaginary situations which are adapted to the developmental stage and the play group's conventions: As I was watching a "School" session performed by six-and seven-year-old Upper Neighbourhood girls, a group of boys (ages: eight to twelve) who had gathered at a friend's house nearby to watch a "kauboiko" (Western) film, burst out of the house after the end of the movie brandishing makeshift bows, arrows and rifles and announcing : "we're off to play Cowboys and Indians". As I was amidst another play session I could not follow the "warriors". However when they later described the on-goings, it became clear that they had adapted the film to their usual war game rules and conventions.

Similarly, Eleni (seven years) and her sister Marina (eight years) played at "the Bold and the Beautiful", which was the most popular soap opera both among adults and children during my stay in Phocaea, by assigning to the dolls they regularly played with temporary names belonging to the two starring families.<sup>30</sup> The girl's plot, rather than relying on particular episodes depicted the life of the two "good" families,<sup>31</sup> which had little to do with the glamour and rivalry of the Foresters and Logans in the soap opera, apart from the fact that the fancy female characters were played by Barbie dolls. In fact the script followed the lines of a *Koumbares* or "House" session, focusing on themes of baby care, housework, and ceremonial hospitality. Thus the two families had babies (represented by a baby Pony and the miniature doll "Happy-Happy"), while their female members exchanged visits etc.

What happens when the media imagery is linked with particular toys, especially dolls or figures featuring in series of animated cartoons?

The answer to this question is linked on the one hand to the assimilatory function of play, where both fiction and reality are subsumed to the needs of the players and the conventions of the playgroup and on the other hand to the meaning toys acquire in play, which will be the subject of the next section.

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<sup>30</sup> Most Phocaeen girls give their doll names, which may often differ from the names conferred by manufacturers. The process of naming is important and may involve enactment of ritual, to which I will come back

<sup>31</sup> The term good in the context of collective reference to the family denotes, affluence, and hence honour. Affluence brings honour to the family but is not a necessary component of honour. As each individual should strive for the well being of the family and individual's behaviour reflects on the family honour, affluence suggests the successful outcome of these endeavours in terms of "prokopi" (improvement). For more details on the honour-code and its variations among Sarakatsans and Refugees cf. Historical background.

## 6.2 What difference do toys make?

Children's toy world has been the subject of controversy in play literature. Developmental and cognitive psychologists have concentrated their efforts in finding connections between toys and creativity. Toys have been categorized according to their educational value and lists of "useful" toys suggested by psychologists have appeared in the U.S. (Sutton-Smith 1986). This interest in modern toys reflects, according to Sutton-Smith, an idealization of children and their play and the increasing efforts towards control of children after the 18th century. Concomitant with the idealization of play was the interest in the use of toys for the promotion of educational goals. The legacy of major educators of the last century such as Froebel and Pestalozzi has been revived in debates over the impact of educational toys ( see Almqvist 1994 for a review) and more generally on the impact of the toys' form and content – the meaning toys acquire in their trajectory through the consecutive sites of the toy commodity chain- on children's play ( see Seiter 1993; Cross 1997; Rogers 1999; Gougoulis 2000b for a review). With the commoditization<sup>32</sup> of toys in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and the development of aggressive promotion techniques in the last thirty years in the context of the global expansion of toy industries and markets, a series of scholars, journalists and lobby-groups of parents have become sceptical of the values that modern toys inculcate to children. The toys that have especially been questioned with regard to the values they are assumed to promote to children are fashion dolls, war toys, action figures and video games.

In the 1990s the voice of toy critics was reinforced by a polemical work of the communication specialist Steve Kline (1993) who challenged Sutton's Smith's <sup>optimistic account</sup> optimism about the potential of children's play to assimilate modern ~~industrial~~ toys. Starting from a Piagetian <sup>f</sup> understanding of symbolic play in terms of a tension between the cognitive structures of assimilation and accommodation, and Postman's tenet on children's deprivation of their (Apollonian) childhood by the electronic media, Kline argued that assimilation processes could no longer be possible in the case of the toys produced after the mid 1980s. This was due to the restructuring of the toy industry and especially the development of new promotion techniques based on the embedding of toys in narratives.

The concept of toy "narratizing", coined by Kline and Pentecoste (1990: 241-242) describes the process of a sophisticated embedding <sup>of</sup> modern toys in symbolic universes constructed by the culture industry rather than by children's imagination. Narratizing is the connection of a toy/ action figure/fashion doll to a particular symbolic domain, e.g. Star Wars (or the worlds of Pokemon,

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<sup>32</sup> Throughout the thesis I am employing the term commoditization as a process involving the production of toys as commodities. Commodities are defined in the marxist sense, ie., as objects produced for the market . (see narotzky 1997, Fine and Leopold 1993).

Digimon and Harry Potter currently), through a particular promotion strategy: the tie-in of a character toy to a cartoon shown on children's TV zone). Children according to this line of argument have far less scope for creativity, as they are inevitably influenced by the scripts which are increasingly linked to toys through television broadcasting, the film industry and packaging. Their play becomes game-like, whereby they accommodate play to the 'reality' of the media rather than assimilating the media in their make-believe play.

With the questioning of the determinist effects of the media on children in the 1990s by scholars such as Helen Seiter (1993), David Buckingham (2000) and the parallel break with the epistemological legacy of Piaget by researchers working within the framework of social constructionism, structuration theory and practice theory (see chapters 2 and 4), new models for viewing children as social actors emerged which challenged Kline's polemic. Gilles Brougère's research among French boys playing at Power Rangers clearly showed that children use the media as implicit or explicit rule structures. These structures were however open to negotiation, reworking and manipulation according to children's power contests during play. (Brougère 1996).

Toy critics, according to Brougère and Manson (1989-1990), echo ideological and moral debates such as the opposition to violence, sex role conditioning, cultural imperialism, etc. The validity of these assumptions can only be investigated in the analysis of the interaction between children and toys during play. This is the line of analysis I have chosen to pursue. Thus, in the following section I will present the content of children's toy play and the means (i.e. dolls, toys and other objects transformed by children into playthings) employed in the imaginary representations. These themes will be compared to role-play themes depicted above in order to investigate the importance of toys in play and their impact as potential constraining agents on imagination. As contemporary children play with toys produced by the Market which directly or indirectly draws a dividing line between young male and female consumers, I will mostly focus on girls' play, as boys' play has been examined in the previous sections.

### **6.2.1 Girls a) Doll play**

Doll play has a prominent position in Phocaeen girls' pretend play up to the age of nine approximately, reaching its peak by the age of seven to eight, while it gradually wanes after ten years of age. Young boys may participate in their sisters' doll play up to the age of six and may keep certain soft toys as bed companions up to the age of seven. Tomboys, do not own or play with dolls, possibly because they wish to differentiate themselves from the rest of the girls. Outgrowing play with dolls is a sign of growing up. After the age of nine girls rarely receive or ask for dolls as

presents, confining their doll play to their existing doll collection.<sup>33</sup> Most of the ten and eleven-year-old girls I interviewed told me that they had "grown up and only occasionally played with their dolls", which at their age meant hairstyling, dressing and fashioning outfits on toy sewing machines. They did not play with all of their dolls however. Outgrowing doll play also involves changes in preferences to the dolls used in play. Thus classic dolls (babies and girls) are abandoned earlier than fashion dolls, whose design (slim and supple body and limbs, hair that can be easily combed) promotes hairstyling and dressing activities.

Parents did not seem to openly discourage their daughters from playing with their dolls, they did try however to direct them towards more "useful" requests (clothing and jewelry) on occasions associated with gift exchange (Christmas, birthdays, name days, Easter). Teachers' interference could take more overt forms. As I expressed my surprise on the sixth-grade girls' omission of doll play in the survey on play preferences, I was informed that their teacher had suggested that they "shouldn't play with dolls now that they've grown up".

Girls used their dolls in play to explore their future as adult women by inverting their position in the experienced authority structure. Dolls in this process were under the children's control and were transformed, manipulated and animated according to the wishes of the players and the requirements of the play narrative. Control over dolls involved physical and conceptual transformations. Physical transformations consisted in what is usually perceived by parents as "spoiling or breaking the toy down", i.e. dismembering a doll while trying on a tight outfit, painting the doll's face to symbolize make up and cutting the doll's hair to try out a new hairstyle. Such transformations may be activities for their own sake or may constitute part of a specific role allocation. When no male dolls are available, for instance, a girl doll may change its gender by means of a short haircut. Radical interventions on the doll's physical integrity, however, may be subject to parental restrictions, to which I will come back in the next sections..

#### **6.2.1.1 Caring for dolls: a) child care and companionship**

Although dolls, as I have shown in the previous section, may be used in many play themes (cf. School, fairy tales), conceptual transformations of dolls primarily involve ascription of child and adult roles in scenarios associated with domesticity, family life and stages of the life-cycle. Child roles are allocated to dolls in parenting scenarios, entailing child care themes, where girls play the role of the mother. Dolls are thus transformed into "babies" that need to be taken care of and

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<sup>33</sup> Soft toys do not follow this pattern. They continue to rate high among items considered appropriate for gift exchange throughout adulthood.

nurtured. Baby care includes, feeding, care of body hygiene (bathing, changing nappies) and appearance (dressing, changing hairstyles, changing clothes), cuddling and putting the "baby" to bed. Doll play may involve other generations, as mothers, aunts and especially grandmothers help young players at their "child care" duties by offering handicrafts: hand knit bed spreads, cushions (which often symbolize beds) and hand made outfits.<sup>34</sup> Childcare play is an opportunity for an exchange of play experiences between different generations:

When Christina and her three cousins visited their grandparents who had retired in the family plot of land tending goats, they played with rag dolls constructed by their grandmother. Similarly, grandma Lambrini had made Sarakatsan cots for her four granddaughters' dolls.

Girls in child care play are not always protective figures to their dolls. They also may act as power figures exercising discipline and corporal punishment. Thus, Eleni and Marina (seven and eight years respectively) had permanently ascribed to their doll "Maria" (possibly named after their mother) the role of the naughty girl, who was punished all the time. "Maria" also played the role of the incompetent student in "School".

#### **Modern toys and traditional 'mothers': doll baptisms**

Mothering duties may further involve celebration of individual life markers such as birthdays. Thus eleven-year-old Dimitra held a birthday party for one of her dolls, where she invited her friends and cousins. Guests were treated with sweets and refreshments. Birthday celebration in Phocaea is a rather recent phenomenon, a novelty dating from the late 1960s, which is still restricted to children and adolescents. Adults do not celebrate birthdays but name days.<sup>35</sup>

Children may also celebrate name days, their importance however is peripheral as opposed to adult celebration which is a public event, an occasion where the house is ideally open to any well wisher. Children's birthday and name day celebrations are regulated by parents and visits require invitation by the celebrant. One of the fairly widespread traditional practices associated with playing at being mother to a doll consists in endowing the doll with a social identity, through its naming. Despite the fact that most of dolls sold in the market already possess a name indicated on the doll's original wrapping, Phocaeen girls often decide to give their dolls names of their own

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<sup>34</sup> Dolls' furniture and doll houses were just beginning to gain popularity among Phocaeen girls in the winter of 1989. Five out of 34 girls, who agreed to show me their toys, had a bedroom for the doll Happy-Happy (a girl doll produced by the Greek firm El Greco) which was available at local shops, while only four possessed My Little Pony's stable

<sup>35</sup> Name day celebrations reflect the importance of names in Greece. In Greek thought a name is more than a simple matter of identity, as it is related to each family's concern with life and continuity. (Hirschon, 1989:204) Greek names are by and large drawn from the saints of the church calendar and follow a recurrent pattern within the family (cf. footnote 29). Names are celebrated on the annual festival of the relevant saint's day, which means that all family and community members named after the particular saint celebrate simultaneously.



choice. Fashion dolls, character dolls and heavily advertised dolls and soft toys have a greater chance of retaining their original names, which may be temporarily changed according to the requirements of a play narrative. (cf. Bold and Beautiful above) In contrast to the Market's predilection towards foreign names, Phocaeen girls tend to draw their dolls' names from the Christian calendar, and often name their dolls after kinsmen. Conferring names to dolls may be a simple procedure, but more often than not it involves the enactment of baptism.

Infant baptism is one of the most important life-cycle rituals in the Greek Orthodox tradition both in terms of its religious and social implications. In religious terms, the infant becomes a member of the Greek Orthodox Church, and is redeemed from the original sin. The role of the godparent is critical during the ritual, as he/she becomes a spiritual guardian to stand and answer for the child during baptism and the ensuing rite of Holy Chrism, through which the Holy Spirit descends upon the person of the newly baptized (Campbell, 1964:219). It is the godparent, who holds the child during the entire ceremony, indicates the child's renunciation of the Devil, declares the future Christian's name, (in some parts of Greece it was the godparents' prerogative to choose the child's name) anoints the infant with blessed olive oil and delivers the child to the priest for the act of baptism, which consists in the infants' threefold total immersion in a font with blessed water and oil.

The godparent's ritual role continues after the baptism, for it is his/her responsibility to escort the child to church on three consecutive Sundays after the ceremony, for the reception of the Holy Communion. The role of the godparent (male: *Nonos*, female: *Nona*) as spiritual guardian is further symbolised through the annual offering of the Easter candle which is held by the godchild (*vaftisimios/ vaftisimia*) on the Easter Saturday evening service.

In social terms, baptism is important because, through the ritual the child formally acquires his/her name and hence his /her social identity and because it creates bonds of spiritual kinship (*koumbaria*) between the godparents and the baptized child and between godparents and the child's natural parents.<sup>36</sup> The relationship of friendship and mutual respect between the *koumbaroi* is expressed in a series of formal exchanges (gifts, visits).

From the children's viewpoint a *Nonos/a* is a very special relative, who has given them their name, and whose love is expressed in gifts offered on name days, birthdays and major holidays. Children in return should love, honour and respect their godparents. Phocaeen children seem to be well informed on the details of the baptism ritual not only because they regularly attend many

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<sup>36</sup> Despite changes in the civil code in 1983, which permitted civil alternatives for naming and marriage, the overriding majority of the Greek population continues to perform major life crises rituals in church. Only two civil marriages are

baptisms (and weddings) during their childhood but also because they themselves may acquire the role of godparent. (Figure 6.13- 6.14) A wedding sponsor customarily has the right to baptize the couple's first-born child or to transfer the godparenthood rights to one of his/her offspring. The assignment of the godparent role to children is understood as a gradual introduction to the responsibilities and obligations of adult life.

Given the importance of baptism in a child's life it is not surprising that young Phocaeen girls consider doll baptism part of their "mothering" duties. Doll baptism may be performed as part of solitary or interactive play. In interactive play emphasis is laid on the representation of the ceremony details and on allocation of the important roles, the most important role being that of the Nona. Finding a Nona for the doll to be baptized is considered essential for most girls who practice doll baptism.

Eight-year-old Giasemo who was planning to baptize one of her dolls was patiently waiting for the summer holidays to perform the ritual, as the Nona of the doll was a holiday vacationer. Girls may take turns in playing godmother to their friends' dolls. Once the Nona is found (usually best friend or regular play companion), natural and spiritual mother of the doll agree on the name to be given, date of baptism and on the formalities of the event. The preparations may last for several days, especially if the ceremony is attended by guests.

Ten-year-old Eftychia and Georgia told me that when they were younger (eight and nine years) they performed several doll baptisms. When Eftychia's Sindy doll was to be baptized the girls, who had attended some doll baptisms during that summer, decided to hold a public ceremony. Gina would play the role of the godmother. Both girls sent handwritten invitations to their friends in the neighbourhood and took pains in finding the necessary items for the enactment of the ritual (a bucket for the immersion of the dolls, towels for wiping the dolls after the immersion and a bottle of olive oil for the anointment of the doll's body). After the ceremony, guests were treated with chocolate sweets (representing sugar almonds traditionally offered at baptisms and weddings).

Doll baptism practiced during solitary play does not call for a godmother role. Six-year-old Maria, who usually played alone with her dolls, during her parents' absence at their shop, rotated in the role of the priest and the role of the dolls' mother, holding the doll during the baptism, pronouncing the priest's blessing and imitating the "baby's" crying during the immersion in the "font" (washing bowl) (Figures 6.15-6.16).

Dolls in child roles may acquire a special importance as the girl's companions. While soft toys are the favorite bed-time companions for girls (from infancy through adolescence) and boys

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reported in the community archives for the years between 1983-1989, and in both cases the spouses are non Phocaeans. All Phocaeen children have been named through baptism in church.

(acknowledged up to six years approximately), girls may drag along their favorite dolls wherever they go. When Georgia and Efthychia were nine they took their Bibi-Bo dolls to the beach and made them swim and sunbathe next to their "mothers".

### **Making dolls speak: Tradition and modernity**

#### **Life-cycle rituals**

Doll play with dolls in adult roles rotates around themes of family life and domesticity and focuses on female roles. Male roles are more peripheral. Sisters Voula and Lia often enacted domestic scenes with their dolls Carolina and Bibi (two cheap imitations of fashion dolls).

Carolina and Bibi were sisters, who visited each other's "houses". Bibi was married to rag doll Humpty-Dumpty, who was away, as he worked for the merchant marine. (Voula and Lia had relatives who were seamen). The couple had a daughter (Happy-Happy doll), and a maid<sup>37</sup> (Happy Dolly) who did the shopping using a miniature bicycle (which was not part of the doll's accessories, but an item meant for decoration of children's rooms).

Girls' interest in their future life as young adult women, does not only concern the content of family life from the female perspective, but also the process of acquiring a family through marriage and childbirth, which are both reconstructed in dollplay. The themes may coincide in the same play session. During one of my visits to eight year-old Marina and her sister Eleni, their nine-year-old cousin Rena showed up to play with the *Bibiboudes* i.e. Bibi-bo fashion doll, the term often used for any fashion doll including Barbie.

The play session took place in the girls' room and included two wedding ceremonies, a child delivery, a visit for coffee and a death ritual, while the main roles were enacted by two Bibi-Bo dolls, John-John, (Bibi-bo's boyfriend), "My Little Brother", a glow-worm and a rag doll. Use of stage props was minimal and a great deal of objects were imagined. The first wedding focused on the preparation details and on the ceremony "per se. Wedding preparations involved dressing the bride (Bibi-Bo) in a red dress and necklace (presumably offered by the groom John-John) and making the bridal bed (a doll blanket knit by the sisters' paternal grandmother). In the meantime the bridegroom was supposedly waiting at an imaginary church entrance. When the bride was ready she stood next to the groom and the ceremony started with Eleni in the role of the priest uttering "Agios o Theos.." (Holy is God: phrase preceding prayers and part of the funeral service). The girls then realized to their great amusement that they had not provided for a *koumbaros* and

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<sup>37</sup> The presence of a maid is a recurrent theme in symbolic play reenacting domestic scenes and constitutes yet another example of children's free combination of reality and phantasy in their play. Maids are not part of children's reality in

wedding wreaths, but they carried on amidst spells of laughter. The couple was soon declared married and after exchanging the ceremonial kiss was dressed in nightwear and placed on the "bed". After lying in bed with John-John, Bibi-bo was announced as pregnant ( Figure 6.17) and delivered her baby (tiny glow-worm) with the help of a one-legged (the second leg had been lost) Bibi-Bo doll who played the role, of the doctor by "opening up the bride's belly".

Having finished the delivery, the "doctor" was ready to marry a rag doll, when a dispute broke out among the girls concerning size compatibility between the couple (the rag doll "Bambis" was too big) for Bibi-Bo). As John-John was to be the *koumbaros*, the next candidate was a "Little Pony", who was rejected, because it was too small, in favour of "My Little Brother". As in the first wedding the sequence ended with a child delivery. In the next play sequence, the two Bibi-Bo dolls were sisters, who had coffee together before taking their kids to the playground. When the coffee scene ended, Rena decided to include John-John in the scenario: he would be one of the sister's husband, who was an acrobat and had a fatal accident, so the girls staged a mock funeral chanting "Jesus Christ bless us all". The two Bibi-Bo dolls accompanied the deceased to the tomb, amidst sound effects of crying. After the burial the widow Bibi-Bo announced that she was leaving for America and assigned her sister the duty of tending the oil-lamp.<sup>38</sup>

One of the arguments put forward by scholars, who condemn modern toys, is based on the assumption that the form and structure of a toy determines its use in play. Modern toys in that sense direct children's imagination towards a predicted outcome, leaving no scope for creativity and imagination. The above mentioned examples of the various conceptual transformations which dolls undergo during play do not seem to corroborate this assumption. This is not to say that the form of a doll does not influence the content of play, its effect however is not determinant, a fact which is in keeping with Brougère and Manson's findings in French nurseries. (Brougère and Manson 1989-1990: 72) Baby and girl dolls, fashion dolls, soft toys and My Little Pony dolls have all equal chances to be baptized, even if the baptism confirms the name by which they appear in the market. Whether a doll will be baptized depends on the age of the player, the particular relationship of the girl with her dolls and the conventions of the play group rather than on the form or initial design of the doll. Similarly nothing in the form and structure of a Barbie doll can predict her transformation into a naughty student who teases the first grades (cf. "school" play above). Fashion dolls do have

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Phocaea, they do appear, however, in the majority of Greek films, especially comedies, which children avidly watch on television

<sup>38</sup> Keeping the oil lamp of a grave alight is part of the numerous grave site rites, associated with the spiritual welfare of the deceased. Grave maintenance is a task undertaken by the adult women in the deceased person's family. Children may accompany their mothers or grandmothers in the performance of these rites. The girls mentioned in the play session were familiar with these rites because their grandfather had died the previous summer. On death rites in Greece cf. Danforth (1982), Hirschon (1989).

greater chances to be used in symbolic play themes drawing on adult roles, but again their glamorous lifestyle is not necessarily portrayed during play.

Dolls, like other toys, are symbolic vehicles, whose meaning is multivocal and is subsumed to larger imaginative representations. (Sutton-Smith, 1986). Whether a Pony will be used as a pony, a bridegroom, a baby, or a simple stage prop depends on the requirements of the symbolic scheme.

Schemes are derived from the children's perceived reality and from fiction, which act as potential constraining forces in play by setting the implicit rules in the plot. The following section will deal with doll play derived from the media.

### **Playing at the media: Soap operas and narratized toys**

So-far I have discussed the symbolism dolls acquire in play themes drawn from "real life" or in play themes where fiction is used as a point of departure to create imaginary situations, which have often little to do with the narrative which sparked the play event. (cf. Bold and Beautiful above). Girls however are no less imaginative with their dolls in reproductions of particular episodes of films and animated series linked directly to these dolls.

In one of the numerous doll-play observations of Eleni, Marina and their cousin Katina, the girls reproduced one of "My Little Pony" episodes (No. 9). The plot focused on the theft of "magic stone" which keeps Dream Valley warm and sunny and its successful recovery by the Ponies and their human allies Molly and Nathaly. Emphasis was laid on the preparation of the stage props used to represent the ponies' fictive world. Thus the girls spent considerable amount of time preparing the Pony's Castle (i.e. Paradise Estate) in Dream Valley (Ponyland) and used for this purpose a great deal of objects. Nothing in the form and the initial design of these objects and playthings could have predicted their use in this play scenario. Two stuffed caterpillars represented the castle's walls, while a purse symbolized the door. The "castle" contained two "prisons" (abaci) for the imprisonment of the "bad guys who stole the magic stone" (large Glow-worms) and was guarded by two stuffed dogs, two "potato kids", a mouse and a rabbit. The "precious stone" (fake jewelry from the "faux bijoux" collection) stood on top of the caterpillar walls next to the queen of Dream Valley (Barbie doll), who was guarded by a Flutter Pony and Eleni's favorite soft toy, Ninikos. Two ice-cream shaped Easter candles, (flanking the "queen" and two tiny glow-worms (standing on pencil boxes, i.e. potential prisons) served for the provision of artificial light, after the theft of the "magic stone" and the consequent black-out. Half a dozen of Ponies were placed in the "castle" in lying positions, as they were supposed to be sleeping during the theft scene. Within the castle's walls a number of facilities were provided for the Ponies' daily life: a "pond" (cup) with drinking

water, two "cameras" (view-masters), a "stereo" (musical calculator), which played music at the "queen's" arrival and a "treasure box" (Happy-Happy doll's bathtub) containing the Ponies' "jewelry". The play sequence followed by and large the lines of the original plot, in a condensed form, focusing on the Ponies feelings (despair at loss of stone, and relief at its recovery) and ended in a joyful celebration where the ponies held a dance. (a frequent theme in Pony series and in girl's "traditional" play scenarios).

One of the main themes that fiction genres and especially films have introduced in girls' play is the combat between good and evil, which is absent in "traditional" play scenarios drawing on the "real life" of children and adults. There are some notable differences in the way this combat is carried out in girls' films (especially Pony series) and in the films boys watch, a difference which also appears in children's play. Ponies never engage in violent acts against their enemies. In fact they are portrayed as benign and frail creatures, who get easily tired and show their suffering during their various adventures. They rely on their coordination, unity, and powerful alliances to cannive ways of avoiding disasters, while one of their favorite techniques of escaping traps is by turning enemies into friends by appealing to the tender feelings underlying the evil facade. By contrast, boys heroes are par excellence brave, violent, and triumph over their enemies either by the means of direct confrontations which range from man to man combats to battles of entire armies or by sophisticated technological devices.

### **6.3 Beyond play: Toys as possessions**

Recent developments in the anthropological study of consumption have tried on the one hand to examine in depth the ways in which local cultures attach meaning to global commodities, i.e. to examine consumption as an active communicative process and on the other to bring back its structural components as expressed in many attempts to link commodity consumption to political economy, discourse theory and cultural studies. The works of Sutton-Smith (1986), Steve Kline (1993) Miriam Formanek- Brunell (1993), Gary Cross (1997), and Mary Rogers (1999) could be read as applications of the latter approaches to toys.

Consumption however is not the end of the process of circulation of commodities as implied by classical economic theories, but rather the beginning of another, perhaps secondary and informal, circuit of circulation embedded in social practices involving commodities as possessions. Besides the well documented practices centered around conditions of purchase and use, the study of consumption would then involve, as Collin Campbell (1995:102, 108-110) and Grant McCracken

(1988:71-92) have argued, cultural practices such as the maintenance, repair preservation, disposal and re-circulation of any commodity as possession.

Toys as possessions have been studied in play theory and research in terms of the make-up of children's collections with relationship to broader social issues such as gender stereotypes (Rheinhold and Cook, 1975 ), social limitations to the quantity of toys per child (Brougère 1999), and social representations reflected in selection of particular toy categories (Nelson and Nilsson 1999). Further studies concerned with gender and consumer socialization have focused on children's aspirations towards possessing toys (Almqvist, 1989, 1996 Penell 1994). A number of works have also been concerned with the children's informal circuits of toy circulation such as barter, (i.e. swapping), gambling and sharing practices (e.g. Evaldsson 1993; Webley 1996; Katriel 1991) in terms of children's active participation in learning about economic processes.<sup>39</sup>

Far less studies have dealt with the processes of preserving and maintenance of toy collections, which will be the focus of the next sections. In order to understand better the importance and manifold meanings that are invested in toys as possessions, a brief historical background on the introduction of commercial toys in the community will be provided first..

### **Past and Present: The introduction of commercial toys in Phocaea**

Whereas nature and the built environment provided children of previous generations with most of their playthings, contemporary children's sources for toys in Phocaea are mainly determined by the Market. This is not to say that trophies of exploration, and objects of some degree of intervention varying from handicraft to recycling were not present among Phocaeian children's playthings, however, the overriding majority of toys was bought from retailing outlets found locally or in adjacent urban centres (Lavrion, Glyfada, centre of Athens).

As already mentioned in chapter 3, during my stay in Phocaea 11 shops out of a total of 79 enterprises registered at the 1988 census of commercial enterprises<sup>40</sup>, included toys or other play equipment (e.g. bicycles) in their merchandise, but none sold toys exclusively. As in the rest of

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<sup>39</sup> See Zelizer (2002) for a recent review of works dealing with children's participation in formal and informal economic activities.

<sup>40</sup> Source: National Statistical Service Census of industrial, mining, manufacturing and commercial enterprises and other services, 30.9.1988. A couple of years prior to the beginning of my fieldwork toys could also be found in one of the local bakeries which was also selling pastries at the time. In the past 30 years, many confectionery shops in Greece have operated as gift shops and they still display some toys on their shelves for last minute buys on days associated with gift exchange. By the time I started fieldwork the toy and pastry section of the local bakery had been converted to a video-tape lending unit. A gift shop that sold soft toys when I first visited Phocaea in 1986, had diversified to children's clothes, possibly in the face of growing competition by two new enterprises dealing with popular toy brands. In Spring 1989 the wife of the kiosk owner opened a linen and "dowry items" shop which included Easter-candles with toy-premiums in its seasonal merchandise. Thus the total number of the retail outlets dealing with toys during the year of my fieldwork was 12.

local markets in provincial towns and urban neighbourhoods of Greece in the 1980's, toys in Phocaea could be found in grocery stores (*bakalika*) (board games), corner shops, haberdashers, gift shops and stationery shops.<sup>41</sup> This lack of specialization, an index and a result of the small size of the local market, partly reflected the general state of toy retailing in Greece prior to the concentration of retail outlets in the mid 90s through the creation of toy chain stores and toy supermarkets. It also highlights the social meaning of commercial toys, as reflected in the process of their introduction in the community.

Commercial toys were introduced in Phocaea at least since the mid 40's.<sup>42</sup> Modest playthings like marbles and tops could already be found in the 1930s in the first *bakalika* (grocery stores) that were set up by refugees who had practiced the same trade back in *patrida* (homeland) in Asia Minor (West coast of Turkey today). Most toys however in the 1930s and 1940s were crafted for or by children<sup>43</sup>

The occasional rubber- and later, leather-ball, doll, or piece of doll furniture could be seen in hands of children with access to urban commercial goods, i.e. the shop-owners' children, children with fathers working in Pireaus and children with urban relatives. They were offered as gifts on major gift giving festivals and especially New Year. These toys -most probably cheap products of the first Greek toy workshops and cottage industries as they were bought in peripheral shops of urban refugee establishments- were not necessarily new. In some accounts they were described as out-grown toys of the gift-givers. As gift-exchange before the 1950s was mostly limited to food treats, clothing or shoes, these toys, whether first or second hand in origin, were rare offerings.

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<sup>41</sup> The main toy outlets were : two corner-shops which sold *eidi peripterou* "i.e., kiosk items" (cigarettes , newspapers, sweets), soft- drinks, ice-cream), and *psilika*, i.e., haberdashery ( e.g. sewing material, pins etc), a "gift and cosmetics" shop, a haberdasher also offering outdoor and holiday equipment ( e.g. beach umbrellas), a light furniture and holiday equipment store, a book and stationery store, two grocery stores, and the local kiosk. Toys could also be found in analogous retail outlets in the adjacent community of Anavyssos and in the supermarket located in the "polykatoikies" area on the coastal avenue.

<sup>42</sup> In terms of ethnic differentiation in chronological order of acknowledging children's play as an activity worth of spending money on, Refugees were quicker to adopt commercial toys than Vlachs and Locals, as they were quicker to adopt urban life-styles. (see Historical Background). The hardships of those who were old enough to have experienced the "first expulsion" from their homeland between 1914-1919 did not seem to alter the view of childhood as a period deserving gifts to play with. Thus, 80 year-old Panayota , the youngest and only girl- at the time- among four brothers, recalls receiving a commercial doll from her indulging father who was a worker at the port of Thessaloniki during that period .

The entire section on toys of previous generations is based on interviews with parents of contemporary Phocaeen children and interviews with retailers and members of their families.

<sup>43</sup> An example of which toys were available in a shop in wealthy urban centres of Greece in the Thirties can be found in the 1938 catalogue of a haberdashery in Syros, Kaloutas and Tsirobinas, which obviously addressed an upper middle class clientele. A far cry from Phocaeen basics, this shop listed 86 different toys on pages 6-10 of the catalogue: dolls, doll's furniture, pots and pans, toy cars, planes, pistols, trains, animals, clock-work and musical toys, yo-yos, board games, carpenters sets , rubber balls and glass marbles (Kaloutas and Tsiropinas 1938). The catalogue is part of archival material belonging to the Toys and Childhood Department of the Benaki Museum Athens- (special thanks to Maria Argyriadi).



They appear in many accounts as being treasured and in some cases were remembered as being played with “by the entire neighbourhood”.<sup>44</sup>

Urban relatives and summer vacationers were simultaneously trend-setters, through their children, who had commercial toys, and a source for commercial toys through gift-offerings to local children and by accident. In many accounts of Refugees who were born between 1930 and 1950, their first ready made toy- possibly their only commercial toy- was a gift from an urban vacationer- relative or not- who rented a room in their house for the summer. Not all vacationers however were as generous. Other arrangements were also possible for young Phocaeans. When Maria, who was born in 1949, was a girl, she remembers having a little black doll (black baby-dolls were in fashion in the 1950s and 1960s in the Greek market) that belonged to an “Athenian” (collective term denoting “urban” and used indiscriminately for Athens and Pireaus) vacationer’s girl that stayed every summer in their house. Maria loved this doll a lot and could play with it the whole winter. When summer came she handed it back to its proprietor. Some toys were not left back intentionally. Tasos, who was born in the mid 1940s recalled how local boys, during his childhood, scavenged the beach for balls accidentally left behind by vacationer who returned to Athens after summer holidays were over.

The desire for commercial playthings was established in Phocaea, before the ability to consume toys was spread enough to permit the local *bakaliko* and *psilika* shop to add toys other than simple means for boys’ games of skill to their stock. If parents and relatives failed to respond to children’s wishes, some Phocaeans fulfilled their dream of a leather ball or a ready-made doll through labour.

Nasos recalls that he had to work for a week in the salt-pans when he was 13 or 14 in the late Forties to be able to buy himself a leather-ball from Athens. Toula’s story was similar. Having played with self- made rag dolls and vacationer’s commercial toys during her doll-playing years, she had to wait until she was thirteen to be able to earn the money to buy a commercial doll for herself. As many teen-aged girls of the era, whose parents retained their agricultural occupations after tourism began to reshape the economy of the village, Toula, joined in the late 1960’s the women of the village who worked at Sfyrris’ sun-houses. The doll, bought with her the sun-houses wages at the toy stalls of the local fair organized annually on Saint Irini’s festival, was kept until the birth of Toula’s daughter, who played with it until it was beyond repair.

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<sup>44</sup> According to Mergen’s analysis of American autobiographies children of the American countryside in the 1870’s, considered the toys of the nascent American industry inferior to homemade items. (Mergen 1992: 89). This was not the case in Phocaea, where commercial toys during the period preceding the opening of the coastal avenue- a period remembered as socially rich but materially poor- were associated with well-being and were admired. This is what being played with “by the entire neighbourhood” implies.

The situation changed after the gradual economic transformation of the village in the '60s brought about the rise in the value of land and the orientation of the community towards tourist enterprises. As new shops opened, and cash inflows grew, more traveling to Athens was required for supplies. Travels brought toys from Athens. 32 year-old Despina remembered receiving presents- usually toys- from Athens whenever her dad visited the capitol to buy cosmetics for his barber shop. By the end of the 1970s plastic toys and dolls were available at three shops: the pastry shop, the grocery store and the haberdasher's.

#### **a) Toys on display in the Phocaeen homes**

In 1988-89 Phocaea had still many low-rise buildings that were built in the 1960s or 1970s and housed the majority of the Phocaeen born families of all ethnic groups. Transmigrants, who worked at the Karelas textile factory in Lavrion, tended to live in rented accommodation, usually one-bedroom flats provided at low rent by the factory as part of the contract. Most families with one locally born parent (of either Refugee, "Local" or Vlach origin) were owner occupants of two-bedroom flats or houses (20/25 in my sample)<sup>45</sup>. Living in rented flats was a solution in the case of divorce, growing children or in the case the initial inherited house (cf. chapter 3) had been demolished and a block of flats was under construction. As the families I visited (N=34) had an average of 2,38 children per household (a total of 81 children), and often included one grandparent, housing conditions were rather crowded for the average Greek standards of the time and most rooms in the house served multiple functions.<sup>46</sup> It was only the parental bedroom that was exempted from multiple assignments and sharing activities in 99% of the houses that I visited. Even in houses with 4 children and two rooms the parental couple would retain their bedroom, while children would sleep in the sitting room and/or kitchen. The hearth of the house was built around the marital bonds symbolically reminded by the presence of wedding wreaths in the icon-shrines hanging in corners or above doorways in parents' or children's bedrooms (the result of the blessed procreative activity).<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>45</sup>In terms of size of dwelling, owner occupant working class families with one locally born parent shared the same housing conditions with working class transmigrants but the houses of the former were located in the heart of the village and its networks. As we have seen in previous chapters virtual and symbolic distance from the village often overlapped in the case of transmigrants and was a crucial point in negotiating inclusion in the village "parees" (groups of friends or playmates). Similarity in economic background implied by housing conditions did not put local children on the same footing with transmigrant children.

<sup>46</sup> In fact only in three households was a separate room available per child..

<sup>47</sup> The priorities in space allocation within the home could seem to constitute an antinomy vis-à-vis the stereotype of the child-centered Greek family, where the provision of a bedroom for children would possibly rank first in such a family's priorities. Although I haven't discussed the issue with parents, my guess is that priority in parental privacy of sleeping facilities is meant to keep their sexual activity private from children i.e. as a protective measure, which is compatible to

While allocation of sleeping functions to kitchens and dining or sitting rooms to serve children's bedtime was not uncommon, 21 out of 34 of the houses I visited had a bedroom shared by most if not all the children of the family. This was the room where most toys were kept, but it was far from being the only space where toys were stored or exhibited.

Children's toys were often found in parent's rooms in three instances:

- a) As a solution to lack of storing space, in which case toys would be placed in a crate on top or inside a wardrobe and would have to be fetched every time the child wanted to play with them,
- b) as a means of parental control over expensive toys (such as Playmobil settings, large vehicles)—especially in the case of boys—,
- c) or as part of the room's decoration.

In the first case the act of moving toys in the parent's domain was an issue of convenience, in families with more than two children in one-bedroom dwellings. In the second case, the presence of toys in the parents' room— especially when children of the house had a bedroom of their own—constituted an example of the various attempts of parents to control children's play (control of play-time, play-space and playthings). The shift to commercial toys after the 1960s and 1970s in the area, a development in which the previous generation of children had so actively participated (see previous section) also meant ironically that contemporary children became more dependent on adults in order to acquire their playthings. As toy making by children had declined at the time I conducted my fieldwork—to the point that the few hand-made items that appeared in street play sessions were admired as pieces of art by other children— children's choice of and access to toys was something that had to be negotiated with adults, as it was the parent's buying power and estimation of a toys' value that was decisive for getting a toy in the first place. While children could overcome parental resistance to acquiring an expensive toy by asking a close relative to get it for them (especially grandparents), access to the acquired expensive toy would be regulated. Toys out of reach or toys in areas of regulated access— were expressions of parents' wish to make good value of the money spent on a toy. If the toy was expensive it had better last, i.e. its exchange value had to be transformed into play value.

In the third case, of toy display as part of the of the parental room's decoration - toys attested to the strong link between mothers and children, while also revealing a nostalgic attitude of mothers to their own childhood. Toys within this category were usually dolls, soft toys, My Little Pony

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a child-centered logic. On the symbolic importance of the marital bed as expressed in wedding rituals commonly practiced to the present day in Greece see Hirschon (1989:138-139).

dolls and some infant or toddler's toys, especially in houses where children did not have a bedroom of their own. Toys as ornaments symbolized maternal attachment to her children, as it was mothers who were ultimately responsible for the maintenance and arrangement of decorative order in the house. Commercial toys were in this case manifestations of the emotional links between generations.

The way commercial toys influence intergenerational links has been discussed in academic literature in terms of rupture (Kline 1993) reinforcement (gift theories) or paradoxical mediation (Sutton-Smith 1986). In the first case toys become the symbolic vehicles of the alienating forces of the Market. In the second case toys in the form of gifts strengthen relationships between gift-givers and children. The third case argues for an ambiguous position of toys as factors both reinforcing and attenuating ties, as in Sutton Smith's famous example of the modern parents who offer toys to their children to establish an affective bond while at the same time asking the children to play with their toys alone (ibid: 1986) The focus of the main bulk of this literature has been usually on the way toys are employed in play. Play however, as we have already seen, isn't all that is involved in toys. Whether as part of play scenes- such as those discussed in the previous section- or as part of a room's decoration toys had an important role in display situations in various places in the house, thereby attesting to and materializing social categories such as age and gender and the emotional links, between members of the household. Both of these manifestations were evident in children's bedrooms.

### **Children's rooms: the material culture of childhood**

The existence of a separate space for children in the house suggests underlying cultural assumptions on age. The material culture of a room objectifies key notions of gender and generation<sup>48</sup> and the ways in which these social categories are constructed through participation in a system of commodity provision. My description of children's rooms will focus on those aspects of toys as children's material culture which are related to the process of construction of toy's social meaning as *commodities* (as products of capitalism) on the one hand and as *possessions* (in Miller's 2001: 107-121 sense) on the other. By following this distinction I wish to link the consumption of toys (as defined by McCracken 1988 and Campbell 1995) to the other sites of the toy commodity chain .

The appearance of children's rooms and their belongings was by no means uniform in Phocaea, depending on the family's income, size of the house and room and the mother's particular

taste. Although furniture style and colours differed from family to family (sometimes within the same room) one could speak of a predilection towards “natural” light shades of varnished pinewood (the colour in Greek is called “xyli”, i.e. what is perceived as the natural colour of wood) for beds and book cases. The choice of light colours for children’s furniture contrasted to choices in other rooms of the house, especially parlours/sitting rooms (“saloni”), where darker shades (and more expensive qualities of wood) prevailed. Walls were painted with plastic white or light shades of pastel colours, usually yellow, grey or beige. Floors were tiled, wooden or mosaic depending on the age of the house. Old houses had mosaic or tiled floors, while flats tended to have wooden floors in the bedrooms. During the winter carpets usually covered the floor surface between the children’s beds.

Most bedrooms had apart from children’s beds some kind of facility for studying (one or more folding tables, planks protruding from a book-case etc), accompanied by an equivalent number of chairs, a book case or shelves hung on a wall and a fitted wardrobe.<sup>49</sup>

Beds were covered with duvets or blankets -often gender and age coded in terms of patterns and colours. Gauze or cotton curtains patterned with animal, floral and fairy tale or cartoon characters covered windows and balcony doors. As most bedrooms were shared with other siblings (often of opposite sex) if any coding was present on the curtains it tended to refer to the age of the bedroom’s occupants rather than the gender. Gender was indicated by wall, bed and desk decorations indicating the space of the room used by a girl or a boy. A girl’s presence in the room would be made obvious by the presence of dolls on the curtain shelf/rod, on the wall sections above a girl’s bed or place of study and on book case shelves. In sister’s rooms dolls decorated beds as well. A boy’s presence would be signaled by the omnipresent Rambo wall calendar, (Figure 6.18) boys’ comic books, toy vehicles and sports trophies or football team banners. Soft toys in all forms were found in all rooms and were not part of gender coding.

The presence of particular toys in Phocaeen children’s rooms was heavily linked to the local and national marketing strategies. Although television advertising had been banned since August 1987, toy companies were free to use the radio and other media, such as street advertisements, newspapers, and children’s magazines to promote their new products to children. In addition to that toy lines that had been introduced during the TV advertising era continued to be produced. The Bibi-bo doll was the most heavily advertised toy in 1986. There was hardly a girl in Phocaea

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<sup>48</sup> See for instance the studies of children’s rooms conducted by Rheinhold & Cook (1975), Buchli & Lucas (2000) and Mitchell & Reid-Walsh (2002).

<sup>49</sup> Wardrobes in most types of modernist architecture flats constructed after 1960s in Greece are built in the bedroom walls. The Greek term employed for this arrangement is “entoichismenes doulapes”= “walled wardrobes”.

without a Bibi-bo doll. In fact most of the advertised toys were present in children's rooms (e.g. the 4X4 wheeled "agrimi" [=wild animal] vehicle etc.).

Not all toys present in a child's room were connected to advertising at a national scale. Local retailers used several strategies for reaching children (Easter candle premiums, and promoted lines at children's eye-level on major holidays). Still other toys featuring in the rooms attested for the presence of a travelling relative or were the products of their mother's decorative schemes. (e.g. mother's old toys).

### **Toys on Display: Maternal toys in children's rooms and children's own display agendas.**

Children's rooms were- subject to size- meant for sleep, study and play- (see previous section on indoor play contexts). The rooms were characterized by a concern for space saving (e.g. bunk beds where possible, folding tables, sliding desk tops) and a more generalized concern for a certain type of stylized and highly decorative order centering around two main features as we have already seen in the previous chapter: enclosure and display. As a rule, functional items and most often played with toys and fashion dolls and accessories or playthings with low decorative value (e.g. board games) were assembled in bags, boxes or crates and tucked away in various storage areas (wardrobes, lofts, drawers, cupboards, storing bins,) remaining relatively out of view.<sup>50</sup> Shelves and heaters were lined by knit work and embroidery. Toys played a central part in the ornamental schemes with dolls and soft toys in a prominent position, even in boys' rooms. Dolls and soft toys sat in orderly rows or other groupings on anything in the room that resembled a shelf: curtain rods, heaters, book cases. (Figures 6.19-6-21).<sup>51</sup> Rag dolls hung on walls above beds – often indicative of the sex of the child who slept on it-<sup>52</sup> or were suspended on lampshades, edges of book-shelves etc. Some rooms displayed entire play scenes complete with dolls and stage props on the floor or other surfaces.

One of the things that struck me, when I first saw girl's toys was the display or general maintenance of some dolls in their original packaging, even when they were not part of the room's decoration (Figure 6.22). In almost every room that I saw- and photographed- somewhere on a book shelf would appear a doll-in-the-box or a doll in original wrapping (Figure 6.23), e.g. in an open type of carton packaging, promoted by El Greco in some soft toys and dolls such as 'My

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<sup>50</sup> See Friedl 1968: 43, Pavlides, 1986 and Hirschon 1989 for a similar concern with enclosing utensils and linen in rural and urban localities in Greece.

<sup>51</sup> Curtain rods in many Greek houses are often encased in wooden oblong boxes. In Phocaea they were frequently used as display shelves in children's rooms.

<sup>52</sup> Some families tended to keep boys and girls' sleeping areas separate, especially in the case of big age difference between opposite sexed siblings, this was not however a generalized practice especially in one-bedroom flats.

Little Brother”/”Sister” etc).<sup>53</sup> My initial interpretation of the encased toys was associated with a more general concern against polluting dust,<sup>54</sup> one of the main daily tasks of housework, that girls seemed to reproduce both in their play and their room maintenance. However, as I looked more carefully at my material on instances of toy maintenance and preservation, explanations offered to me by some girls (“we keep them in the box to protect them from dust”) seemed to me that only partly addressed a bigger issue, especially as in many cases toy preservation seemed to transcend one generation and enter into the next. In many homes, for instance, mothers had preserved the toys of their childhood and in some cases these toys were displayed in their children’s rooms regardless of the latter’s gender.

If homes are intersubjective spaces constituting catalogues of memories and emotions (Garvey, 2001: 51), children’s bedrooms could be read as intergenerational spaces where maternal bonds to existing or -as we shall see- future children were materialized, in the presence of maternal toys or in the act of paying attention to preservation of dolls or other toys for the future. Dolls in boxes or the concern for the longevity of a toy or doll could also be interpreted as materializations of the concern for a girl’s future as mother. When I went back to the field in May 2002 and discussed with the former children of my fieldwork- and now young adults some of which were engaged and planning to start a family of their own- what they had done with the toys of their childhood, I discovered that the toys that were part of room displays that I had photographed back in 1989 had survived through removals and were stored in lockers.

One of the questions I regularly get during my field-trips to Phocaea, after the main bulk of my fieldwork was over, is whether I am still working- ironic as it may sound- on children’s play, so I keep my Phocaeian friends up to date with my involvement in the Peloponnesian Folklore Foundation’s (PFF) play-related research projects and the latest toy acquisitions of the museum’s childhood section. In the context of such a discussion on a donation of some celluloid dolls and a set of handmade doll’s furniture offered by some friends of mine to the PFF, I asked 24- year-old Dina whether she had kept her Bibi-bo dolls and whether she would consider the possibility of donating one of them to the museum. Dina informed me that she had kept many of her dolls, including her three Bibi-bo dolls, and that they were neatly stored by her mother in a locker in the basement of the block of flats that was erected in the place of the old house, where they used to live. It was Dina, who had asked her mum to preserve the dolls when she outgrew them, both

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<sup>53</sup> Girl’s doll display in original packaging was not practiced among 4 families with a more modernist orientation in choice of children’s furniture and decoration ( e.g. simple, clear-cut lines, lacquered furniture in white or light shades, avoidance of cramming the room with decorative paraphernalia)

<sup>54</sup> See Dubisch (1986) and Friedl (1968:42-43), for earlier reports of analogies in other rural Greek areas and Douglas (1966) on dust, pollution, and universals..

because of her emotional attachment to them and because she was thinking of passing them on to her future daughter – if she had one. Giving them to a museum was totally out of the question.

Besides dolls, other toys of display seemed to escape the separation rituals which usually were part of outgrowing one stage of childhood and moving into the next. This was true for boys too but it was mothers who took the initiative in this case. Nasos's Playmobil pirate ship had survived clearing out rituals<sup>55</sup> and removals of the family and was safely kept in a storeroom. "He would have killed me if I threw it away" remarked Panayota, Nasos's mother, at my question. Panayota had also kept some of her own childhood toys but they didn't make it to the new house where they now lived, due to poor storing conditions. The stories of Eleni and Marina was similar to that of Dina. Their mother was the type of person who keeps things but they chose which things to keep. One of the toys that had survived was Eleni's favorite soft toy, "Ninikos" despite his delapidated condition (what actually remained of poor-old Ninikos was his head and some dangling rags) some Barbie dolls, Barbie's swimming pool and Barbie's house. The preserved toys were waiting for a next generation of players to appreciate them.<sup>56</sup>

### **Toys as links between generations**

One could argue that preserving toys constitutes an attachment to the past. Recent anthropological studies and literature on collecting (see Hecht 2001:5) have indeed discussed the act of preserving objects of our childhood as an articulation of history and memory. History however, is a bifurcated process. The act of collecting and recollecting memories is closely linked to the future (as in the case of toy collections donated to museums) constituting a medium for conveying messages to later generations. This is also true in the case of toy preservation among

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<sup>55</sup> Children's interest in toys as playthings lasted until the end of primary school and maybe the first year of secondary school., depending on the degree of individual attachment to particular toys or play themes. E.g. Eleni and Dina played with Barbie's swimming pool until they were sixteen and fourteen years old respectively. Children's toy collections underwent constant change in terms of size and use during childhood and adolescence. As children lost interest in their toys as a result of boredom or simply because they outgrew that kind of play, or symbolic play altogether, toys often changed proprietors. Outgrowing childhood and moving into adolescence also meant separation from some if not all toys. The process of dismantling a toy collection included passing on to younger siblings or cousins, discarding, donating to the poor, and preservation as decoration and storing for the future.

<sup>56</sup> To add a sense of context to the Phocaeen data, here is some information on more general trends concerning toy maintenance and separation from outgrown toys among Greek children: According to a survey conducted by the Pedagogical Institute of the Greek Ministry of Education among 532 preschool and primary school children, in 2001, 45% of the children preserved their toys-regardless of their condition- after having stopped playing with them, 45% threw broken toys away and 5% transmitted their toys to other children.

( Source: I Apogevmatini, Daily Newspaper, 2.1.2001)

The survey did not refer to gender differentiation, however my data from Phocaea and a small survey I conducted with 38 Second Year undergraduate anthropology students at Panteion University in 1996, indicate that girls are far more likely to preserve toys as mementos of their childhood with the intention of passing preserved toys on to their future children. Women in many cultures are entrusted as guardians and caretakers over a family's inalienable wealth. (see Johnson 1998: 226 on women in Philippines).



individual families<sup>57</sup> For hidden in the preservation of toys as memories of a childhood past is the notion of future childhoods: i.e. preserving for the generation to come, for one's future offspring. It could be argued then that a kind of homology exists between toy preservation and the preparation of trousseaux, which was a generalized practice among Phocaeen girls starting from the age of six or seven.<sup>58</sup> Trousseaux were still put in public display before weddings in the area<sup>59</sup>. Toy preservation and building a collection of trousseaux are both features of the same process of social reproduction. Both practices share a concern with and an investment in the future. Collecting trousseaux for girls constitutes a social aspiration towards starting a family; in a similar way, preserving the toys of one's childhood offers a means to consolidate the ties between future family members, while simultaneously emphasizing mothers' relationships to their children and reproducing social expectations of girlhood as preparation for motherhood. Children, especially girls actively engage in the reproduction of gender and family ideology both by consenting to or promoting the preservation of their toys for the time they will have children of their own and by collecting trousseaux to build the homely environment necessary for their upbringing. The toys displayed as decors in parents and children's rooms objectify the notion of family continuity as possessions embodying present, past and future childhoods.

## Conclusions

In this chapter I have explored children's world of make-believe as transformative acts, which in Phocaea are predominantly associated with the home and its environs- all interstices between the "public" and "private" spaces. The greatest part of the discussion has focused on the meaning that toys acquire in play in the context of the debates on the impact of globalizing processes on local children's cultures. Through detailed ethnographic examples of girls and boys play themes with and without toys, I have illustrated how toys in Phocaeen children's play are best defined, as means for children's imaginary representations. This view contests arguments claiming that a plaything's

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<sup>57</sup> This is indicated both by my examples in Phocaea and by case studies of museum donators ( see Gougoulis 2002) . The fact that preservation addresses the future generation is explicitly stated by girls. Furthermore children are active participants in this process. Even when mothers actually store the toys away for the future, they do so on behalf of their offspring

<sup>58</sup> When I visited 8-year-old Giasemo , who was an extreme case in toy maintenance ( she played at pots and pans in their original box, then washed up after the play session and put all crockery back in the box – she also asked for permission to play with her dolls , because her mum didn't want her to destroy them), she showed proudly to me a trunk full of dowry items that her mum was gradually amassing for her. Trousseaux consisted of linen, crockery , cutlery, cooking utensils, embroideries and ornaments. The provision of embroideries and linen was often an additional source of income for the family either through organizing dowry items parties or through opening a dowry-items shop.

<sup>59</sup>Increasing numbers of young women were disputing this practice during my fieldwork, feeling embarrassed and annoyed by the public display of their future home possessions and by the curiosity of nosy relatives who felt free to

meaning can be read off by its form (as in the debate on educational toys) and contrasting the pessimist findings of media specialists (e.g. Kline 1993) suggesting the narrowing effect of contemporary toy promotional techniques (narratizing) on children's scope for creative pretense. I argued that children's make-believe constitutes, within the limits set by the market, a form of symbolic bricolage in which fact and fiction, tradition and modernity, local and global, mimicry and mockery are intermixed and in which everything handy during the ludic encounter is employed for the realization of agreed upon scripts. The Market in these terms operates as a regulating force which is countered by children's active participation in and reworking of the local value system and- in the case of girl's play- involves a reproduction of those gender stereotypes that link women with domestic, procreational and nurturing roles.. In other words girls are found- in some respects- to be the guardians of traditional play forms in quite similar ways that adult women have been reported in numerous ethnographies of Greece (e.g. Seremetakis 1991; Hirschon 1989) as being entrusted with the task of cultural continuity manifested in the salient importance of family bonds in contemporary Greece (see for example Petridou 2001) and especially in the strength of maternal bonds to her children<sup>60</sup>.

This feature is best illustrated in the display of children's toys in Phocaeen homes, where they come to represent not only existing family bonds but the anticipation towards future families, as the meticulous care, maintenance and preservation of childhood toys suggests. Anthropological works on children's pretense (Schwartzman 1977; Evaldsson 1993; James 1993), drawing on Clifford's Geertz textual approach to the production of culture in terms of a metasocial commentary, Foucault's theoretical approach to power and theories of agency developed from a variety of sources (structuration theory, symbolic interactionism, social phenomenology, practice theory and social constructionism) tend to stress the context in which children's texts are produced. What these new approaches to children's play have in common is a view of play as doubly socializing, in that children get to know about their future –e.g. by representing adult roles in their play- “through getting on with life in the present” ( James 1993:176), i.e. through dealing with present concerns with power relations. As children's play scripts are viewed as “stories that children tell themselves about themselves” (Geertz 1993: 448-453) emphasis is laid on children's relationships which frame the content of play, i.e. on the context of these stories ,manifest in children's, strategies of inclusion and exclusion and strategic manipulations of role allocations and scripts to comment on their present anxieties, concerns and intentions as participants in their peer and adult cultures. of the

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open drawers and wardrobes of the future bride. during the trousseaux display. Today the ritual of display is still practiced by many families in Anavyssos. In Phocaea it is definitely in decline.

culture of childhood. This aspect of childrens' play has been the primary concern of the previous chapters on play at school and play in the neighbourhoods of Phocaea. As children's play however partakes in globalization processes, its meaning is inevitably shaped by the interplay between the local and the global. No matter how active social agents are – adults or children- in hybridizing meanings of global commodities, it should be taken into account that the fact that toys have come to symbolize childhood is a product of western industrial capitalism, both in the conceptual –rather than actual- separation of children from labour and in their subsequent positioning in the realm of leisure, that is play. Historically, as Brian Sutton- Smith (1986:26) has suggested play has connoted playing with others rather than playing with toys. The conceptual identification of childhood with toys in Northern America, for instance, as the historian Bernard Mergen (1992:88) has illustrated did not occur before 1870, a date marking the industrial take-off of the American Economy. In the autobiographical material examined by Mergen, this period was also marked by the emergence of new attitudes of adults and children towards toys. Toys, on the one hand became viewed seen as collectible possessions and sources of value for their owners and were identified with the very notion of childhood on the other. By foregrounding the form, content and the material ingredients of play, I have illustrated how children during pretense, construct, reproduce and transform meanings, and by doing so contribute to the interpretive reproduction of dominant values in their local and wider Greek society, such as the importance of family. As the material on toy display in the Phocaeen home suggests, the use of toys has become inextricably linked to this process by virtue of their conceptual binding to present, past and future childhoods.

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<sup>60</sup> Many ethnographic works on Greece have stressed the significance of motherhood for Greek women and Greek society in general. (eg. Friedl 1962; Campbell 1964; also see Rushton 1992, Dubisch, 1995 for more recent examples).

## CHAPTER 7

### CONCLUSION

Western childhood according to Ennew (1986) has become a period in the life course characterized by social dependency, asexuality and the obligation to be happy, with children having the right to protection and training but not to social or personal autonomy. Being a child means to have a place in the social order where power relations are weighted in favour of adults.

Being a child however, is not only defined by age and power relations but also by social experience. So the study of childhood should be complemented by the study of childhood as practice; the ethnographic engagement with what children actually do and with the nature of their experience. The study of practice in anthropology has been increasingly associated with the need to understand the particular place of materiality in practice (e.g. Bourdieu 1977). Archaeologists and social historians are increasingly becoming interested in what Hugh Cunningham (1995:1 in Sofaer-Derevenski 2000: 5) has termed the material ingredients of childhood. A child who is forced to abandon the material aspects of its social existence, as might happen to a child in a war stricken area, may experience this loss as a loss of its childhood. Cunningham (1995:1) cites the words of 11-year-old Zlata, a girl caught up in the siege of Sarajevo who draws a list of the things she misses most and interprets their loss as follows:

‘Loss of innocence, school, friends, contact with nature, toys  
and sweets for Zlata meant being a child without childhood’.

Childhood in Phocaea in the late 1980s had all the ingredients mentioned by Zlata, Cunningham and Ennew. Children in Phocaea enjoyed a central position in the family, participating in most of their parents’ activities. Children were highly visible in public spaces, hanging around, running errands for adults of their immediate or extended family, participating in all aspects of daily social and religious life and playing.

Play is one of the most important aspects of contemporary children’s culture. It is with the “material ingredients” of play – children’s playspaces and playthings – that this thesis has been mainly concerned, as sites of cultural reproduction (James, Jenks and Prout 1998:89).

Calls for the study of children “in their places” have been present since the late 1970s (e.g. Schwartzman 1978: 330, 1983:200-214) and it was Helen Schwartzman who urged for the need to study children in their “natural environments” as opposed to laboratory or institutional settings and in the sense of the varying contexts of children’s play not only for the sake of exploring “how these particular contexts affect play texts but also how texts may both comment on and critique as well as transform contexts” (Schwartzman 1978: 330). Many researchers since have developed an interest in the spatial contexts of play. At present there is a growing literature by social geographers on childhood spaces as arenas where gender identities/ideologies (e.g. Gagen 2000, McNamee 2000) or the social boundaries of childhood are constructed, reproduced and changed (e.g. Mathews 2003, see Holloway and Valentine 2000b for a review).

The structure of my own ethnography and the decision to situate my observations in all settings where play took place in the community of Phocaea, was partly stimulated by Helen Schwartzman’s call and partly by an interest in debates about the “effects” of commoditization on children’s playworlds as portrayed by the work of Brian Sutton-Smith (1986).

Most of the extant research on western children’s play has been either located in one spatial context, with the predominance of school centred studies or has focused on one aspect of children’s material culture. This thesis has sought to contribute to anthropological and interdisciplinary play research by examining the materiality of play **across different sites** and by examining both children’s interaction with spaces and the objects of play.

My decision to locate my ethnography across the different settings of home, school and neighbourhood, although initially based on my focus on the commoditization of play, yielded some interesting results on school play, especially with regard to the reported presence of divided cultural worlds across gender lines, a view also referred to as gender segregation. By comparing, for instance, the structure of children’s play groups in the neighbourhoods and at school, I had the opportunity to see how children’s kin and residence patterns of playgroup formation in non-school settings were filtered in the school playground by the age grading emphasis of the school system. My experience of play in different settings, also offered some interesting nuances concerning the performative aspects of gender construction and reproduction, by viewing gender relationships during play as not simply a matter of

dividing along gender lines to play separately but of performing gender within or across playgroups and play events. These performances may become empowering according to the context of their use. This is illustrated in chapters 4 and 5, for example. in the different meaning attributed to football as a same gender and a mixed gender performance at school and in the neighbourhoods of Phocaea.

Space is part of children's material experience of the world, a medium rather than a container for action (Tilley 1994:10). As Chris Tilley has argued, spatial experience is not innocent and neutral but invested with power relating to age, gender, social position and relationships with others (ibid:11). Allison James' ethnography (1993) made this point clearly by illustrating the spatial mapping of gender relations in the school playground she studied. As football was a male activity in Hilltop school, the domination of the playground by football players also mapped out gender asymmetries. This was not the case on the Phocaen school playground. As chapter 4 illustrates, girls not only participated in the main football game but also changed its meaning by using the age grading system of the school to redefine a male activity into an aged-based conflict which they controlled.

The importance of space as a medium for action and as an arena of contestation is discussed in chapter 5, where the focus is on the spatial, temporal and social boundaries of play. This is the chapter which mostly deals with power contests and the structuring of playgroups along lines which are well reported in other Greek ethnographies (e.g. Friedl 1962; Hirschon 1992), that is, aged based hierarchies and power relationships between children and between children and adults. Children contest and manipulate some of these boundaries or transform them for the enactment of their own pursuits, while they also seem to reproduce others e.g. moral boundaries. Corsaro's notion of interpretive reproduction is especially relevant in this chapter, which brings out children's contribution to reproduction and change of the boundaries circumscribing their play in the village neighbourhoods.

The home, on the other hand, has been examined as the main site of commoditization, as it constitutes the primary space for consumption, maintenance and the use of toys during play and beyond.

In looking for a unified approach to the study of children's relationships to play spaces and playthings as commodities, I have sought for common analytical concepts in social geography, material culture and consumption studies and the new sociology of childhood that have been influenced by the theories of social action put forward

by the works of Bourdieu (1977), Giddens(1990, 1991) and the theoretical amalgam of Marxism to semiotics introduced by the Birmingham Centre for Cultural Studies.

The concepts, which I have found most useful in describing the relationship between structure and action in children's playful engagement with the material world are:

- a) The concept of appropriation, which is a multivalent analytical tool shared by most recent approaches to contemporary culture, be it children's play (where its roots are traced to Vygotsky 1985), space (as in most works of the new geography of childhood, as represented by Holloway and Valentine (2000a) , and toy consumption (a common approach shared by consumption theorists such as Miller 1987 and childhood theorists such as Corsaro 1997). In this thesis the notion of appropriation runs as a leitmotif through all the chapters, as a means to best describe children's agency vis-à-vis things and spaces.
- b) Children, however, are not free-floating agents in the material world. Their participation in the modern capitalist society is structured by particular historical conditions and relations of power. In order to best describe these constraints, which bear upon the notion of interpretive reproduction, I have also applied Giddens' notion of structure as a set of rules and resources for action (1990), to both the spatial contexts which structure and are structured by children's play, and to the playthings of children.

With regard to the discussion of the use of modern toys, as sophisticated products of the powerful synergy between the sites of the toy commodity chain (design, production, marketing and merchandizing) and the media industry (Kline's polemical argument, see Kline 1993) Vygotsky's cognitive and affective theory of play (1985) as taking place within the zone of proximal development and his emphasis on appropriation, as developed by Corsaro (1997) have all been particularly useful. When Suttton-Smith wrote *Toys as Culture* in 1986, he put forward an interpretation of the use of toys in play that was based on structuralism (Piagetian and Levi-Straussian). Children, he argued, subsume toys to their imaginary schemes and manipulate their toys according to their desires a) by virtue of symbolic play's assimilatory character (according to Piaget's cognitive theory of play) and b) by virtue of toys miniature size. Here he relied on Susan Stewart's work *On Longing*, which put forward the very convincing view of miniatures as being more conducive to the transformative agency of their users than larger constructions, which

encapsulate people (such as monuments or buildings, see Miller 1987:170)<sup>1</sup>. The use of toys, Sutton-Smith concluded, is unpredictable by virtue of the paradoxical character of play. This argument heralded his subsequent theoretical development of the ambiguity of play, drawing on the works of Bateson(1985); Turner (1974); Spariosu (1989) and Foucault (1973).

Stephen Kline's polemic attacked Sutton-Smith's first two arguments from within the same theoretical framework using new evidence arising out of the linkage between toy consumption and the other sites of the toy commodity chain. Modern toys, Kline contended (1993), cannot be assimilated by children during their play because they are carefully scripted through a process he termed narratizing. Children accommodate their play to the toys rather than appropriate the toys to their play.

Let me now turn to the ethnographic evidence from Phocaea to see how an anthropological approach to children's play can further contribute to questions regarding the relationship between structure and agency, consumption and production, subjects and objects. Children's play emerged as a symbolic bricolage both in role-play sessions without toys and in play using global toys and dolls. Sutton-Smith was right to argue for play's ambiguity and uncertainty (Handelman 1990), not however because of play's structural properties as an assimilatory activity regardless of social context, but because play is a socially embedded activity, which is the product of negotiation between its participants. The fact that I observed children's play and games in all contexts – at school, at home and in the streets of Phocaea – helped me understand the way play is related to the structures and conventions of the playgroups. During a longitudinal study, such as is commonly the case with anthropological research, the researcher is privileged to observe play as it is performed in its natural environment and with players who have known each other for a long time and have developed over time shared scripts and common interpretations of play props. The children I observed in Phocaea were siblings, cousins, neighbours and friends, who had played together for years and who had added to the scripts they produced both their knowledge – in Corsaros' terms of evolving membership – about the worlds they portrayed and their relationships to each other. Barbie, and Bibi-bo and My Little Pony dolls, despite their glamorous

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<sup>1</sup> The relatively static view of space by structuralism has been contested by recent phenomenological and post structuralist approaches to landscapes and monuments (see Tilley 1994, Bender and Winer 2001, Caftanzoglou 2001, Yalouri 2001).



paraphernalia had the same chances to be baptized, married or widowed, as any other dolls. The scripts children produced seemed more to be related with their age, i.e. with their developmental interests and with their hierarchical position in the local power structure, their gender and the requirements of the agreed upon script, rather than any inherent or designed properties of the toy or doll. Vygotsky's theory of play as a social activity which enables cultural appropriation and Corsaro's notion of interpretive reproduction seem more relevant frameworks for the understanding of Phocaeen children's play practices than the Piagetian mentalist model of play.

Did the toys children used make no difference? Were the scripted toys not referring to the imaginary worlds provided through the synergy of toy industry and media?

My evidence suggests that the way a toy would be used in play had to do with previous conventions applied by the same players and by agreed upon symbolisms. This was clear in the way children referred to particular objects as stage props. Barbie heads for instance were used by some groups of girls in puppet theatre performances staging fairy tales. The children, who staged the "Fishermen" play theme described in chapter 6, used a range of objects for their play, some of which had retained their symbolism for consecutive years of pre-bedtime play. Scripted or branded toys or dolls did have a bigger chance of being employed in play themes associated with scripts drawn from the imaginary worlds associated with the toys or in general with themes drawn from the media rather than traditional genres (adult roles, literary genres, shadow theatre play etc). So a Little Pony was often used in reproductions of play episodes drawing on TV. This did not mean however that the toy restricted children's imagination, just because the girls chose to structure their play script along the lines of an episode. Their scripting was no less imaginative than the stereotypical portrayal of authority figures in the School play sessions described in the same chapter. Props, roles, and scripts were actively negotiated among the participants, while the episode might soon turn into a regular nurturing theme or end in burlesque, disorder and laughter.

Boys and girls emerge as active participants in their play, whether they decide to reproduce or challenge existing roles and hierarchies and yet their agency is circumscribed by boundaries and conventions implied by their participation in their peer culture, the local adult culture and the global culture which toys represent.

The world children portray often reproduces gender stereotypes, which need not necessarily coincide with what Mary Rogers (1999) has termed as “the icons of emphatic femininity” which contemporary Barbie dolls represent.

The stereotypes that Phocaean children reproduce are interpretations of their local value system through the lens of the global toys. Girls, I have argued, as Sutton Smith (1979) and James (1993) also maintain, do seem to reproduce traditional play forms in many ways (but see school play), but their focus on domesticity and tradition need not be interpreted as disempowering. As a number of ethnographies (e.g. Dubisch 1989: 20-26; 1995) have suggested both maternal roles in Greek society and the role of guardians of tradition may be empowering (Hirschon 1989, Seremetakis 1991), as Greek women frequently use the quality of motherhood to bolster their own sense of worth, in the context of the salient importance of the notion of family and family bonds in Greek society<sup>2</sup>.

I am not arguing that the market has no consequences on the children’s lives, or that it should be left to its own devices. Parents, educators and communication scientists are rightly concerned with the consequences of economic deregulation on children’s culture (Gougoulis 1995), as the relation of powers are shifted not necessarily towards children but to toy and videogame designers and producers. A number of recent works linking consumption to production have argued for the need to link political economy to cultural analysis of goods (see Fine 2001 for review). The creative use of dolls in play does not solve problems for example, of racial inequality or unequal access to consumption (for which see Miller 1997, Chin 2001), nor does it help in resolving contradictions at the working place, e.g. the fact that contemporary transnationals may rely on dubious conditions of child labour to produce toys – see Rogers 1999). And yet the role of consumption should not be underestimated, as vicarious or producing false needs (see chapter 6). Anthropologists have sufficiently demonstrated the importance of commodities in everyday life, at least since the publication of *The World of Goods* (Douglas and Isherwood (1979). What I am arguing is that toys, as other commodities (e.g. Miller et al 1998) in the Phocaean context are used, among other things, for defining social relationships. Whether as a means for inclusion and exclusion, markers of gender and

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<sup>2</sup> See for example Herzfeld 1997 (84-65) on the State’s pronatalist policies . and Petridou (2001) on the mediating role of food in reproducing and reinforcing notions of home and family through parcels sent by mothers to students who live abroad.

age identity, or manifestations of friendship, most of all what toys represent is the objectification of childhood itself manifested in the prominent position of toys in the homes of Phocaeen children. Children actively participate in this process of objectification by maintaining, displaying and preserving their toys, which come to represent links between present, past and future childhoods.

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**APPENDIX I:**  
**TABLES**

## **Introductory note and guide to tables**

The following tables have resulted from a survey on 139 Phocaeen schoolchildren's play preferences (70 girls and 69 boys). Children were asked to write on a piece of paper their five favourite games – in random order – in three particular sites: at school, in their neighbourhood and at home. They were further asked to describe the games, if possible, and explain in a few words what they liked about them and why they preferred these games. All activities that children mentioned were included in the survey and counted as playful pursuits, even if they did not correspond to most – narrow – definitions of play (e.g. reading, drawing, collecting, walking around).

A list of the different play activities appearing in children's answers was compiled and sorted by site and gender of players. The entries per game were counted separately for girls and boys and appear in all tables in the column under the heading "n". The numbers that appear under the heading "n" thus indicate children's common choices of games, ranked from the most common to least common choice. So Skipping Rope ranks first among the games that girls mentioned that they liked playing at school ( table 4.1), as this particular game was referred to by most girls (n=38), while Tag, which is second in rank, appeared in 36 girls' answers. Percentages appear only in tables 4.1; 5.1 and 6.1. Percentages were not counted in the tables that present the age breakdown of game choices (tables 4.1.1-2; 5.1.1-2 and 6.1.1-2), because they did not yield statistically significant numbers.

Tables 4.1; 5.1 and 6.1 illustrate the game preferences of girls and boys in two separate columns. Tables 4.1.1-2; 5.1.1-2 and 6.1.1-2 further present a detailed age and gender breakdown of children's answers. The age of the participants was as following:

**Grade one:** six years

**Grade two:** seven years

**Grade three:** eight years

**Grade four:** nine years

**Grade five:** ten years

**Grade six:** eleven years

Not all children covered the three requested sites in their answers. Many children rather preferred to distinguish between school and non- school playful activities, merging

the categories of home and neighbourhood in their answers. I therefore decided to take children's categorization into account by creating a merged category of home and neighbourhood (tables 6.1; 6.1.1 and 6.1.2). Tables 5.1; 5.1.1 and 5.1.2, on the other hand, present the games which were specifically mentioned as neighbourhood play by the children. Playful activities pursued at school appear in tables 4.1 and 4.1.1-2 . The reader should turn to chapter 4 ( pp. 80-84, 90, 94 ) for a discussion of the tables and the context of the survey. Detailed descriptions of the games and their performance are given in Appendix III.

**Table 4. 1**  
**SURVEY RESULTS: PLAY PREFERENCES OF 139 PHOCAEAN SCHOOLCHILDREN**  
**CHOICE 1: PLAY AT SCHOOL**

	<b>Girls N* = 67/70 G= 49</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Boys N* = 57/69 G= 46</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
1	Skipping Rope	38	56,7	Football	45	79
2	Tag	36	53,7	Tag	29	50,9
3	Football/ball	29	43,3	Basketball	25	43,8
4	Hide & Seek	25	37,3	Hide & Seek	23	40,3
5	Long-jump	15	22,4	Volleyball	14	24,6
6	1-2-3 stop	14	20,9	Long-jump	13	22,8
7	Races, relay-races	11	16,4	Commandos	12	21
8	Kitty-Kitty "Patito" Walking around	9	13,4	"Apples" (ball game) "Abariza" Skipping Rope	7	12,3
9	Elastics	7	10,4	Races, Blouse Kitty-Kitty	4	7
10	Hopscotch, Basket-ball, "Apples" (ball game)	6	8,9	"Patito", War Karate	3	5,3
11	"Shop"	5	7,5	Cops & Robbers Cat and Mouse/ Cat and Dog "Space-crafts"	2	3,5
12	Volleyball, shot-put, "Abariza"	4	6	Climbing, Sliding Hopscotch, Caps "Spools", Drinks and Cigarettes (chasing games) Sucker, Tiles, Rugby (ball games) Discus, shot-put, Up and Down, Walking around, "Long Donkey", Bicycles, Stonewar Mike Knight, Star-fighters Shop, Spies, Reporter (Pretend Games) Gyro-Gyro Oloi (Singing Game)	1	1,7
13	"Aba-bi" (Singing game), Blouse, Domino (ball game) Playing in sand pit	2	3			
14	Commandos, "Owl", Little girl (chasing games) "Menta-Menta", Tiles, "Sucker" (ball games) Statues, Sliding, Karate, Wrestling, Collecting flowers, stickers,	1	1,5			
	War, Cops and robbers Poison, Drinks-and- Cigarettes, Spools	0		Elastics, 1 -2-3- Stop, Menta- Menta	0	

\* N= Number of schoolchildren referring to games at school. The second number refers to the total number of the children participating in the survey.

G= Total number of different games mentioned by children.

n= number of entries on a particular game

**Table 4.1.1**  
**PLAY AT SCHOOL: AGE AND GENDER DISTRIBUTION OF GAME PREFERENCES**

**GIRLS** N\* = 67/70 G=49

	Grade 1 N= 6/8	n	Grade 2 N= 9/9	n	Grade 3 N= 8/9	n	Grade 4 N=14/14 N	n	Grade 5 N=15/15	n	Grade 6 N=15/15	n
1	Tag Sand Pit Hide & Seek	2	Hide & Seek Skipping Rope	7	"Shop" Skipping R.	5	Skipping R.	13	Tag	11	Football	11
2	Football Hopscotch 1-2-3- Stop Patito Statues Fisherman's boat (singing ) Tennis With Friends Reading Writing Drawing Walking Around	1	Tag	4	Tag 1-2-3-Stop	3	Tag Hide & Seek	8	Football	10	Tag	9
3			Kitty-Kitty	2	"Aba-bi" (singing game)	2	Elastics	6	Skipping R.	9	Long jump Walking	5
4			Football	1	Hide & Seek, "Patito" Elastics Tiles	1	Football (chanting incl.)	5	Long-jump	8	"Patito" 1-2-3-Stop Basketball Shot-put	4
5							"Patito" Apples Hopscotch 1-2-3 Stop	3	Kitty-Kitty	6	Skipping (Kamara) Volleyball	3
6							"Abariza" Blouse Long-jump	2	Hide & Seek	5	Hide & Seek "Domino" (Ball game) "Abariza"	2
7							"Menta-Menta" Kitty-Kitty Sucker etc Little Girl (tag) Races Gymnastics Chase and Hide & Seek Long Donkey 1-2-3- Flox	1	Races, "Apples" Walking Around	3	Beach Tennis Hopscotch	1
8									1-2-3 Stop Basketball	2		
9									Commandos Volleyball Hopscotch	1		

\*N= Number of interviewed girls referring to games at school in their answers. The second figure refers to the number of girls participating in the survey.

G= Total number of different games mentioned by girls

n= number of entries on a particular game

**Table 4.1.2**  
**PLAY AT SCHOOL: AGE AND GENDER DISTRIBUTION OF GAME PREFERENCES**

**BOYS N\* = 57/69 G =46**

	Grade 1 N= 5/15	n	Grade 2 8/8	n	Grade 3 11/11	n	Grade 4 13/13	n	Grade 5 11/11	n	Grade 6 9/11	n
1	Tag	4	Football	7	Football	8	Football	10	Football	11	Football	7
2	Hide and Seek	3	'Apples' Skipping rope (“snake”) Tag	4	Hide and Seek Basket Ball Tag	5	Tag	9	Commandos	10	Basketball	5
3	Football Kitty-Kitty	2	Hide and Seek 'Patito' Long-jump Cat-and Mouse/ Cat and Dog	2	Tag	3	Hide and Seek Volleyball	8	Tag	8	Long Jump	3
4	Star fighters Mike Knight Up-and down (Gym) Gyro-Gyro- Oloi (Singing game.)	1	War Stone war Hopscotch Races Volleyball Caps	1	Karate Space-crafts	2	Basketball	7	Basketball	6	Tag Hide and Seek War Volleyball	2
5					Shop Spies Reporter (sports) Climbing Sliding “Sucker” ball	1	Long Jump	4	Long Jump	4	“Abariza” “Apples” shot-put, discus “Tiles” Cops-and- Robbers “Drinks-and- Cigarettes”	1
6							“Abariza”	3	Hide and Seek	3		
7							“Blouse” Commandos Kitty-Kitty Skipping Rope	2	Volleyball “Abariza”	2		
8							“Apples” Races Cycling Walking around “Long Donkey”	1	“Blouse” Horse fights Karate Rugby, Races Skipping Rope	1		

\*N= Number of interviewed boys referring to games at school in their answers. The second figure refers to the number of boys participating in the survey.

G= Total number of different games mentioned by boys

n= number of entries on a particular game



**Table 5.1 PLAY PREFERENCES OF 139 PHOCAEAN SCHOOLCHILDREN**

**CHOICE 3: PLAY IN NEIGHBOURHOOD**

GIRLS N* =29/70 G=37		n	%	BOYS N* =27/69 G=30		n	%
1	Hide and Seek	19	65,5	Football	19	70,4	
2	"Abariza"	13	44,8	Basketball	16	59,2	
3	Tag	11	37,9	Hide and Seek	11	40,7	
4	"Menta-Menta"	7	24,1	Volleyball	7	25,9	
5	Skipping Rope Elastics Basketball Football Volleyball	4	13,8	Tag War	6	22,2	
6	Beach Tennis ("Rakettes") "Apples", Tiles (ball games) "Patito", Hopscotch	3	10,3	"Apples" "Abariza"	5	18,5	
7	Blackman, "Spools", "Fish" (Chasing games) Statues	2	6,9	Tennis	4	14,8	
8	"Aba-bi" (Singing game) Domino (ball game) Poison, Sausage "Shop", "Travellers" (Symbolic) Hoola-hoop 1-2-3 Stop	1	3,4	Commandos	3	11,1	
9	War, Rugby, "Sucker" (ball game), "Blouse", Races, other athletic events, Fishing	0		1-2-3 Stop Tiles, Handball Rugby Fishing	2	7,4	
10				Kitty-Kitty "Blouse" Domino (Ballgame) Races, Shot-put "Menta-Menta" Explorers	1	3,7	
				Skipping Rope, Elastics Hopscotch, "Patito" Aba-bi (Singing game) Poison, Sucker, Kamini Statues	0		

\* N= Number of children listing neighbourhood games in their answer. The second number indicates the total number of children that participated in the survey.

G= Number of different games mentioned by children

n= number of entries on a particular game

**Table 5.1.1**

**PLAY IN NEIGHBOURHOOD : age and gender distribution of play preferences**

**GIRLS N\* = 29/70 G=37**

	Grade 1 N= 3/8	n	Grade 2 N= 2/9	n	Grade 3 N= 8/9	n	Grade 4 N=3/14	n	Grade 5 N= 5/15	n	Grade 6 N= 8/15	n
1	Hopscotch "ball" (=football) "Patito"	3	Hide and Seek Basketball "Apples" Toy Cars "Owl" (chasing g.)	1	Hide and Seek	5	Hide and Seek Tag	2	"Abariza" Menta- Menta	4	Hide and Seek Tag	6
2	Hide and Seek Tag	2			Elastics	4	"Sausage" "Abariza" "Ababi-bi" (Singing g.) Fivestones Volleyball	1	Hide and Seek	3	"Abariza"	5
3	Cycling Beach – tennis	1			Skipping- Rope "Abariza"	3			Football	2	"Menta- Menta"	3
4					"Apples" "Tiles" Blackman	2			Skipping – Rope "Tiles" Volleyball Basketball "Spools" (chasing g.)	1	Football Basketball Volleyball Beach tennis	2
5					Tag, "Spools" (Chasing g.) 1-2-3- Stop Statues, Domino (ball g.) Kitty-Kitty Hoola- hoop	1					Roller Skates Going for Walks Statues Boardgames Poison King-oh-King	1

\* N= Number of girls specifically referring to games in their neighbourhood. The second number indicates the total number of girls that participated in the survey.

G= Number of different games listed by girls

n= number of entries on a particular game

**Table 5.1.2**

**PLAY IN NEIGHBOURHOOD : age and gender distribution of play preferences**

**BOYS N \* =27/69 G= 30**

	Grade 1 N= 6/15	n	Grade 2 N= 2/8	n	Grade 3 N= 7/11	n	Grade 4 N=2/13	n	Grade 5 N= 2/11	n	Grade 6 N= 8/11	n
1	Football	6	Football "Apples" (ball game.)	2	Hide and Seek Tag Volleyball	3	Abariza	2	Hide and Seek Commandos	2	Football	8
2	Basketball	5	Hide and Seek Tag War Basketball	1	Football Tennis	2	Hide and Seek Tag, "House" "Menta-Menta" 1-2-3 Stop Statues War, Commandos "Domino" (ball game)	1	Football War Baseball "Abariza" Gardeing	1	Basketball	6
3	Volleyball	4			Explorers "Menta- Menta" "Toy cars" 1-2-3 Stop Volleyball War	1					Hide and seek "Apples" (ball game)	3
4	Rugby Handball Tennis	2									War Tiles Volleyball "Abariza" Fishing	2
5	Hide and Seek Tag	1									Drinks and Cigarettes Longjump Races Shot-put "Blouse" Going for Walks Waterpolo	1

\* N= Number of boys specifically referring to games in their neighbourhood. The second number indicates the total number of boys that participated in the survey.

G= Number of different games listed by boys

n= number of entries on a particular game

**Table 6.1 PLAY PREFERENCES OF 139 PHOCAEAN SCHOOLCHILDREN  
CHOICE 2: PLAY AT HOME AND NEIGHBOURHOOD**

	<b>GIRLS N* =66 /70 G=75</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>BOYS N* = 52/ 69 G=64</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
1	Dollplay and My Little Pony Dollplay (gen) ("with dolls or with my doll")	31	47	Football	18	34,6
2	Hide & Seek	25	37,9	Hide & Seek	16	30,8
3	Tag	14	21,2	Basketball	15	28,8
4	Boardgames** in general, Skipping Rope, "Abariza"	13	19,7	Boardgames** in general	13	25
5	Basketball	10	15,1	Toy vehicles	10	19,2
6	Monopoly	9	13,6	Playmobil, Chess Cycling	9	17,3
7	Chess	8	12,1	Monopoly, War, Volleyball Electronic games	7	13,5
8	Menta-Menta, Stamp Collections "School" (symbolic)	7	10,6	Tag, Backgammon	6	11,5
9	Watching TV, Domino (Ballgame)	6	9,1	Miniature Football	5	9,6
10	Football, Volleyball, Cycling, Kitty-Kitty Elastics "Koumbares" (symbolic) Music, Drawing	5	7,6	Commandos, Skipping Rope, Vehicle cards	4	7,7
11	Hopscotch	4	6,1	Toy soldiers, Robots, Playing with real animals, Tennis, "Abariza" Computer games, Fighting, Karate,	3	5,8
12	"Patito", Apples, 1-2-3 Stop, Puzzles, reading books, computer "House" (Symbolic) Barbie, Bibi-bo (specification of No1)***	3	4,5	"little figures", LEGO "Triliza" (boardgame) toy-weapons "grandma", "train", (symbolic) "Apples", Fishing, Stamp collections	2	3,8
13	Toy vehicles, Soft toys, "Ship, "Doctors" Watching TV "Mum & Child", Tiles, Melissa, Gyro-gyro oloi (singing games) Beach tennis, Back- Gammon, coin & poster collections	2	3	Action figures(Thunder- cats, He-Man), Reading, drawing, Races, Kitty- Kitty, "Menta-menta" Hopscotch	1	1,9
14	Playmobil figures, Pots and Pans Drinks and Cigarettes, Fish, Gnomes (chasing games ), Sausage "King-oh- King", 1-2-3 Red-Light, Statues, "BrokenTelephone", Walking Karate, Commandos, Gymnastics, Horse, Hairdressers, Office, (symbolic) playing with my brother, Spin the bottle, Blindfold, Ringing Doorbells, Fivestones Kamini, Checkers	1	1,5	Dollplay, soft toys, Music, "Blouse", Poison, Kamini, "Sucker" Elastics "Patito" 1-2-3 Stop Statues	0	
15	War, "Blouse", Poison "	0				

\* N= Number of children interviewed merging categories of home and neighbourhood in their answers. The second figure refers to the number of children participating in the survey.

G= Number of different games listed by children n= number of entries per game

\*\* Board games refer to a) generic reference by children to unspecified board games as category b) board games other than Chess, Monopoly and Backgammon which are listed as separate entries. "Triliza", is listed separately because it is usually carved on the ground (see chapter 4 and Appendix III)

\*\*\* Barbie and Bibi-Bo dolls are counted as separate entries and as part of the general category dollplay

Table 6.1.1

## PLAY AT HOME AND NEIGHBOURHOOD: age and gender distribution of play preferences

GIRLS N\* = 66/70 G=75

	Grade 1 N= 8/8	n	Grade 2 N=9/9	n	Grade 3 N=8/9	n	Grade 4 N= 14/14	n	Grade 5 N=13/15	n	Grade 6 N= 14/15	n
1	Doll play Watching TV	5	Doll play	6	Doll play	8	Hide & Seek	8	Abariza	6	Stamp Collections	7
2	Chess Abariza	3	'Teachers'/ 'School' My Little Pony	4	Hide & Seek	3	Dollplay Board games	5	Hide & Seek Tag, Monopoly /other Board games	5	Hide & Seek Chess Skipping Rope Basketball	5
3	Hide & Seek Board games 1-2-3 Stop 'All around Manolis'	2	Skipping R. Vehicles Soft toys Hide & Seek Tag	2	Koumbares Board games Drawing Elastics	2	Tag	4	Menta-Menta	4	Board games Volleyball	4
4	Patito Tag Skipping R. Monopoly Puzzles 'Domino' (ballgame With my brother Music Hopscotch 'Perna-Perna -e- Melissa' (Singing g.)	1	«Gnomes» Mum & Child 'Office' 'Doctors' 'House' 'Koumbares' Board games Monopoly Puzzles Cards Cycling Ball Kitty-Kitty 'Perna-Perna -e- Melissa'	1	Pots & Pans My Little Pony 'School' 'House' 'Mum & Child' Skipping R. 'Patito' Tag Ball games Cycling Kitty-Kitty Abariza 'Perna-perna -e-melissa'	1	Abariza Kitty-Kitty	3	Basketball 'Domino' (ball game)	3	Reading	3
5							'Ship' (symbolic) 'Tiles' 'Triliza" Basketball Music Hopscotch 'Menta-Menta' Skipping-Rope	2	Doll play Electronic games/ Atari Elastics Football 'Apples'	2	Monopoly 'Triliza" Backgammon Coin/ poster Collections Drawing Music Football 'Domino' (ball) Tennis	2
6							'School' 'Doctor' 'Koumbares' 'Hair-dressers' Monopoly TV Drawing 'Patito' Spools/Fish 1-2-3- Red light, Fivestones Statues King-oh-King Blindfold Sausage 'Broken- Telephone' Spin the bottle Football Cycling Walks Ringing doorbells	1	'Koumbares' 'School' 'Horse' Playmobil Puzzles Commandos Drinks & Cigarettes Skipping Rope Hopscotch Volleyball Cycling	1	Computer / electronic games Sea-shell col. 'Apples' Elastics Menta-Menta King-oh-King Cycling Tag 'Kamini' Gym (Checkers)**	1
7											'Abariza" Doll play	0

\* N= total number of girls referring to home/neighbourhood (without distinction) in their answers. The second figure refers to the number of girls participating in the survey.

G= total number of different games mentioned

n= number of entries on a particular game

\*\* Checkers are listed separately and in the general category of board games.

**Table 6.1.2.**  
**PLAY AT HOME AND NEIGHBOURHOOD: age and gender distribution of play preferences**

**BOYS N\* =52/69 G=64**

	Grade 1 N=8/15	n	Grade 2 N=8/8	n	Grade 3 N=9/11	n	Grade 4 N=12/13	n	Grade 5 N=10/11	n	Grade 6 N=5/11	n
1	[Vehicles (trucks, cars, etc)]	7	Toy cars Karate/play- fighting ("xylo")	3	Football Hide & Seek	4	Cycling	9	Basketball	6	Board games (other than chess & Monopoly)	4
2	Toy cars Playmobil	4	Playmobil Toy soldiers Board games Football 'Apples' Hide & seek Skipping Rope 'Train' (symbolic)	2	Playmobil Action figures Board games Tag Volleyball	2	Chess Monopoly Backgammon	5	Hide & Seek	5	Chess Stamp Collections Football Basketball	2
3	Football Basketball Volleyball	3	Action Figures (Thundercats) Robots Commandos "War" "Elephant" "Grandma" "Football" Cards Beach tennis	1	Toy cars With animals Puzzles War Karate Toy weapons Electronic games Writing Tennis Basketball	1	Hide & Seek	4	War Football Electronic games	4	Monopoly (Checkers) ("Triliza") Reading Stickers Coin Collections Fishing Volleyball Races Tennis Water polo	1
4	Robots	2					Football Basketball Tag	3	Vehicle cards	3		
5	Toy -airplanes Space crafts Ships Lego Weapons Board games 'Football' Atari Trade cards (vehicles) Boxing Hide & Seek War Kitty-Kitty Tennis	1					Board games 'Football' With my dog Electronic games Skipping Rope	2	Chess Board games Commandos Computer Games (Atari) 'Abariza'	2		
6							Toy cars Playmobil "House" "Grandma" "Ship" TV Drawing Walks Gardening Hopscotch "Abariza" Blindfold	1	Toy cars Lego Toy soldiers Monopoly 'Football' 'Triliza" Backgammon Fighting ("xylo") Volleyball Tag "Menta-Menta" Fishing	1		

\* N= total number of boys referring to home/ neighbourhood (without distinction) in their answers. The second figure refers to the number of boys participating in the survey.

G= total number of different games mentioned

n= number of entries on a particular game

\*\* Checkers and "Triliza" are listed individually and in the general category of board games

**APPENDIX II:**  
**FIGURES**

Figure 3.1 Map of Greece with indication of Phocaea's location.





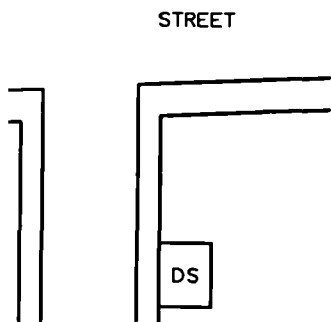
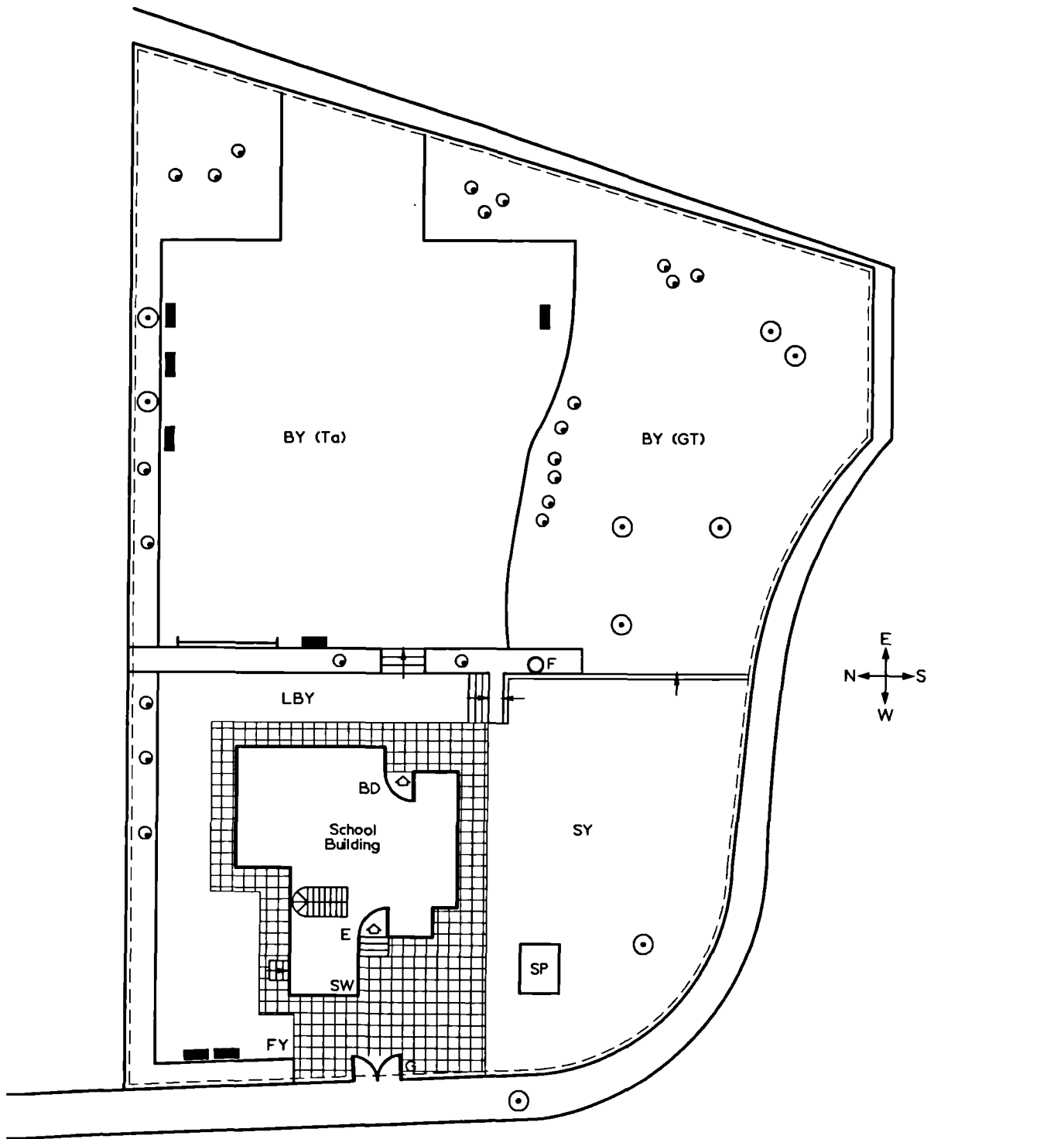
Figure 3.2 Map of Attica.









**Figure 3.3 Palaia Phocaea. View from the “mountain”.**



Figure 4.1 Plan of Phocaea's primary school building and playground.



Key			
G	Gate	⊙	Trees
E	Main Entrance	⊙	Shrubs
FY	Front Yard	SY	Sidyard
	Paved part of Front Yard	BY(Ta)	Back Yard - tarmac surface
BD	Back Door	BY(GT)	Back Yard - Grass and tree area
	Steps	F	Water Fountain
	Staircase	LBY	Lower Back Yard
SW	Entrance Side wall		Railing separating the two yard levels
SP	Sandpit	DS	Dairy Shop
	Bench		Fence

**Figures 4.2 and 4.3 Sharing space. Play in the tiled area of the front yard**

Simultaneous use of one playground area for the performance of two or more games. The girl leaning on the entrance gate (Fig. 4.2) is playing at Kitty-Kitty, while a group of girls aged 8-11 years line up for Jump Rope. The 7-year-old girls behind the jump rope players (Fig. 4.3) are playing at "Patito"

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**Figures 4.4 and 4.5 Appropriating playground features for gender performance: gymnastics and stunts.**

Girls and boys use different features of the playground for gymnastics and stunts. The railing which separates the two playground levels at the back yard is used as a monkey bar by girls. The fig tree is commonly used for the performance of various “stunts” by 5-7 year old boys. Notice the karate kick of the boy on Fig. 4 5 as he jumps off the branch.

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**Figure 4.6 The school playground as a world of make-believe.**

For younger children the playground is used for the construction of symbolic worlds either through providing the materials for the construction or simply as a social context where peers cooperate for the construction of imaginary domains through role enactment. The 6-year-old boy with the anorak tied around his neck has just hurled himself from a fig-tree branch declaring that he is Superman. His peers are busy digging holes and making magic “food”. Meanwhile, older children in the background are engaged in a football match between third and fourth grades taking place on the unpaved side yard.

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**Figures 4.7 and 4.8 Appropriating structural features of the school building for games.**  
Central person game (1-2-3 stop) using the entrance side-wall for being "It" (Fig 4.7) The girls and boys participating are aged between 8-11 years

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**Figures 4.9 and 4.10 Mixed gender pretend play**

The symbolic reading of the playground often involves mixed gender dyads or groups. The 6-year-old boy and girl in the sandpit (Fig. 4.9) are making a mountain. The 6-year-old boys and girls in front of the school gate in Fig. 4.10 are engaged in a scenario involving road construction vehicles, while waiting for their older siblings to be dismissed.

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**Figures 4.11 and 4.12 Extending the boundaries of agency. Physical transformation of playground features.**

The brick lining of the patches of green dividing the two playground levels at the back yard provides a surface that can easily be carved for sedentary games using diagrams. The two 7-year-old boys are playing at *Tiriliza*.

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**Figures 4.13 and 4.14 The “grand match”. Players (4.13) and chanters (4.14).**

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**Figures 4.15 and 4.16 The “grand match”. Disputing the score.**

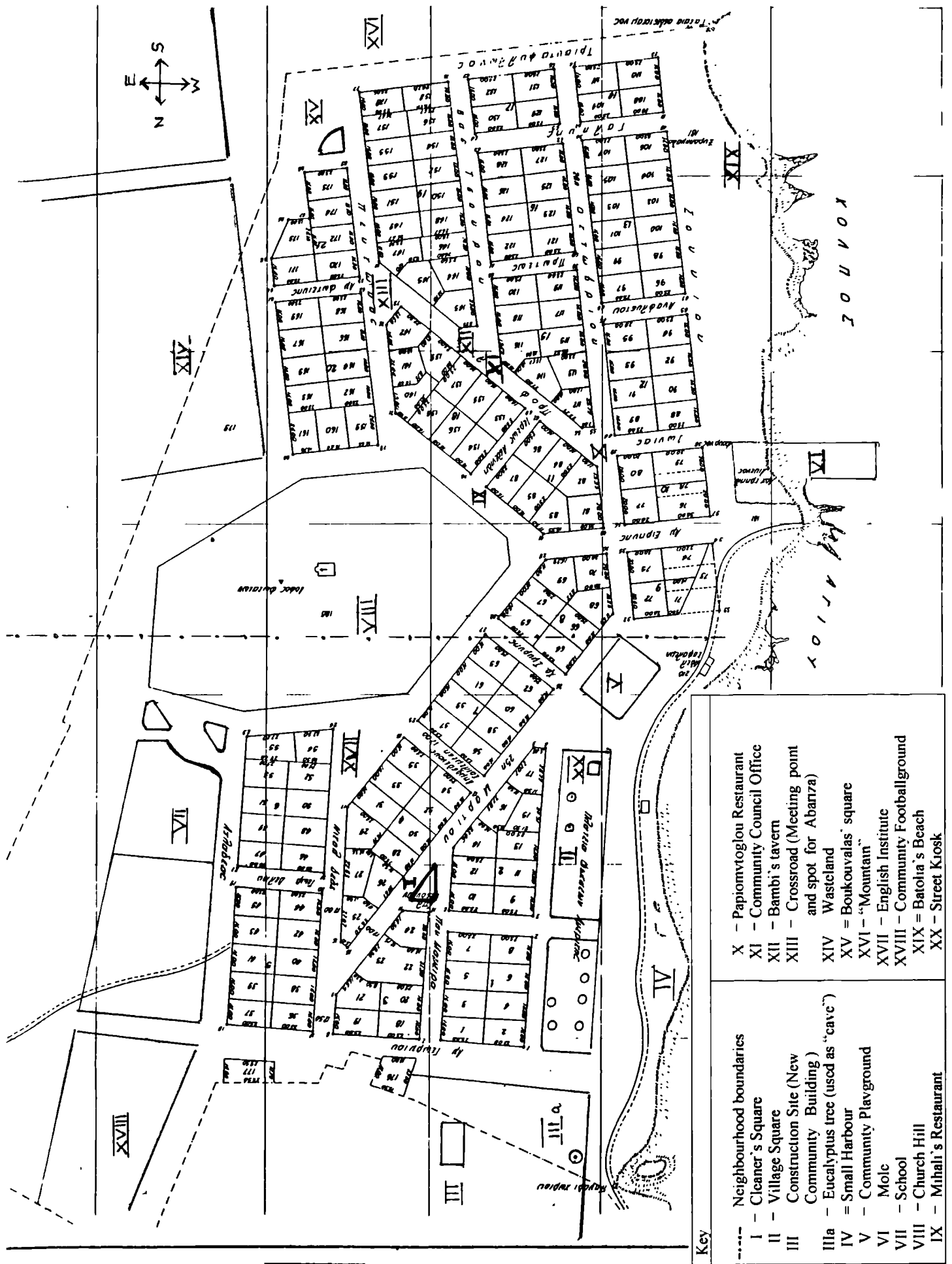
Players and chanters unite to exchange insults with members of the rival coalition. Fifth grades and supporting allies (below) are clearly not happy with the claimed victory of the sixth grades (above) who retort from the safety of their classroom.

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Figure 5.1 Phocaea's major play places during the period of fieldwork.



**Figure 5.2 View of the Upper Neighbourhood.**



**Figures 5.3 and 5.4 Playing at pots and pans on the window-sill.**

Young children's play often takes place at the interstices between public and private domains.

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**Figures 5.5 and 5.6 Outdoor toy-car play as public performance.**  
Players and onlookers.

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**Figure 5.7 Playing at Hide and Seek in Lower Neighbourhood.**  
Hideout in mulberry tree on community square.

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**Figure 5.8 On the way to the playground with younger brother in push-chair.**  
Older siblings are often allocated child-minding tasks.

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**Figure 5.9 Training for war-play on the church hill.**

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**Figures 5.10 and 5.11 Football confrontation between Upper and Lower Neighbourhood boys on the community square.**  
The rival teams pose for a photograph before the match begins.

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**Figures 5.12 and 5.13 Upper versus Lower Neighbourhood football match on village square.**

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**Figures 5.14 and 5.15 Mixed gender nocturnal street play: starting a game.**

The boy in photo 5.15 is playing the role of arbiter, while two girls “count steps” to choose team members for a session of “Blouse”. The winner of this duel will have the advantage of selecting the fastest runners in her team.

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**Figure 5.16 Play in serious contexts: playful ringing of church bell on Good Friday.**  
By adding *trilies* to the monotonous mournful sound of the church bell, the boys are having fun while testing the limits of seriousness.

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**Figure 6.1 Dressing up for a *Koumbares* session.**

Girls select stereotypical features of adult female apparel: sun-glasses, high-heels, handbag, necklace and synthetic fur-coat transforms the 9-year-old girl into a “lady”.

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**Figures 6.2 and 6.3 Playing at *Kyries* (Ladies)**

The two sisters (aged 7 and 8) are dressing up (Fig. 6.2).

The younger sister in the pink robe is “pregnant” (Fig.6.3).

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**Figures 6.4 and 6.5 Storeroom as “kitchen”**

A 9-year-old girl “makes Greek coffee” in a place of her own. The handbag on the right is one of the many play props kept in the girl’s “kitchen”. Children of this age often claim and succeed in gaining control over ancillary domestic space for their playful pursuits.

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**Figures 6.6 and 6.7 Eucalyptus tree as “cave”.**  
Boys’ constructions often serve as hideouts during war play.

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**Figures 6.8-6.10 Mixed gender house play on construction site.**

Construction sites offer plenty of materials for children's make-believe. Children's constructions, however, are often transient. After a busy morning of construction and decoration (Fig. 6.8 and 6.9), the whole group delights in the demolition of their brick house (Fig. 6.10).

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**Figures 6.11 and 6.12 School parody with Playmobil figures.**

Children are symbolic bricoleurs during pretense. Play props, toys and imaginary domains are freely mixed and used by these two brothers as resources for the enactment of a school parody. The 7-year-old boy is organizing the safe return of his Playmobil “students” to their homes. The Lego-brick boat, which serves as a means of transport, is equipped with a “machine-gun” (the red brick in the front) for the “bad guys”. In the meantime, his 9-year-old brother is staging mock classes. The miniature classroom is “instructed” by a figure in traffic-warden gear.

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**Figures 6.13-6.14 Children as godparents.**

The 11-year-old girl is assisted in her role of *nona* (godmother) in the baptism ritual by her mother.

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**Figures 6.15-6.16 Doll baptism.**

Immersion of doll in washing bowl for the performance of the baptism.

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**Figure 6.17 Fashion dolls and global toys in local play scripts.**

Fashion dolls are often used by Phocaeen girls in traditional play themes enacting stages of the life-cycle. After marrying John-John (the Greek equivalent to Ken), the Bibi-bo doll in the middle is “pregnant” to a tiny glow-worm, which has been stuffed under her clothes.

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**Figures 6.18-6.19 Toys in children's rooms.**

Dolls and soft toys are displayed in a stylized decorative order in both boys' (Fig. 6.18) and girls' rooms (Fig. 6.19).

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Figures 6.20-6.21 Toys in display: girls' rooms.





**Figures 6.22-6.23 Preserving toys and dolls in original wrapping.**

Many dolls are preserved and displayed in original packaging by Phocaeen girls. Some girls did not remove the boxes even during a play session. The box is used in this pots and pans play session as a tray.

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## APPENDIX III

### DESCRIPTION OF CHILDREN'S GAMES IN PHOCAEA

#### Introductory Note

The descriptions provided in this section cover formal or improvised games characterized by the presence of a more or less “fixed” body of overt rules and covert pretence, ( see chapter 1 for a discussion of the continuum between play and games), while pretend play themes are thoroughly described in chapter 6. Most games discussed were listed among children’s play preferences in the Survey on the 5 most preferred play activities (see chapter 4) Improvised games with makeshift rules that do not survive the course of a play session (e.g. sliding down the banister in a particular way, climbing, rough-and tumble play) are presented in the relevant chapters. Formal sports (e.g. Long-jump, Shot-put) that were taught by teachers and performed only during gym are not included, if no alterations were introduced in them. School games taught by teachers are included in the Appendix, despite the fact that some of them were only played during gym, since they might not be known to the readers.

I am fully aware of the fact that such descriptions, present ideal types of games, ossified forms of basic rules, which of course are negotiated, challenged , ignored, cheated on and changed, during the course of a game. Notwithstanding the above limitations, this section is meant as a practical guide for the reader to help contextualize the issues discussed in chapters 4 and 5. The descriptions are close those that children provide, when asked how a game is played. Wherever possible- a note on their history at the local or national level is provided, if deemed necessary. I have mentioned next to the Greek terms used in Phocaea, the English names of similar games played among children in Britain, Australia and the USA both for comparative reasons and in order to help the readers recall from their memories the feeling of playing a game, which no linear description can provide. It should also be noted that the rules of a game vary from *parea* to *parea* in Phocaea, as each play group develops its own micro –regulations. Powerful and skilled players may introduce new rules. Athenian holiday makers were in that respect regular trend setters in terms of introducing new games or game variants, which is not to deny the fact that they also learnt games from Phocaeen children.

Games with asterisk markings are games that were played by previous generations of children but had been abandoned by the time I conducted my research. Concerning my classification strategies:

As children's games can seldom fit in clear cut categories, especially if they are examined as age and gender based performances rather than fixed sets of rules, I have employed in the discussion a variety of several classification criteria for all games following the advice of Sutton-Smith (1992).

This mixture implies that, while I do not endorse the theories underlying the taxonomic systems I am using, (see Introduction) I have nevertheless found them useful as descriptive devices that help clarify a game's basic characteristics in analytical (-etic) terms, which nevertheless are based on my experience as participant observer. Thus I have drawn on the taxonomies of Roberts Arth and Bush (1959), Sutton-Smith (1992), Opie and Opie (1984), and Bishop and Curtis (2001) with a bias towards the broad and fairly descriptive, activity based game categories of Opie & Opie (1969) and Bishop and Curtis (2001).

**Aba- bi:** See also *Oh Mariam*. A singing, clapping and elimination game, played by large groups of girls between 10 and 12 years at school and in the streets of Phocaea. The players form a circle facing inward. At each syllable of the song each girl strikes with her right hand the left hand of the girl next to her. When the last syllable of the song is uttered (i.e. the word "boof"), the player whose hand is to be struck must retract her hand to avoid the strike, or else she is out. When only two players remain, they face each other and continue the song, each girl holding the right hand of the other making small half rotations. At the word "boof" the girl who fails to retract her hand and is struck, is out, leaving the winner to triumph over her victory. The song, which has nonsensical verses,<sup>1</sup> names of notes and English numbers- in the *Oh Mariam* version-, goes as follows:

Aba-bi coloni, colonasca

Ababi, coloni

Academi safari

Academi, boof, boof<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Many Greek singing games use verses with combinations of meaningful and meaningless words. See Delorenzi-Schenkel (1987: 28-44) on general characteristics of Greek children's music and singing games.

<sup>2</sup> "Boof" is an introductory exclamation preceding most counting-out rhymes. The child who counts out brings his/her fist close to his/her mouth and pronounces the sound "boof" before chanting the rhyme.

The *Aba-bi* song was also used as a counting out rhyme by Lower Neighbourhood girls.

**Abariza** (Prisoner's base/ *jeu de barres*): A popular mixed gender, team game played in the neighbourhoods of Phocaea by 8-14 year-old children. *Abariza*, especially in the long summer evenings, usually culminated a play session together with Hide and Seek or Blouse alternatively. The game is played at street corners usually in the space between two lamp-poles (bases) and the objective is to seize the base of the opponent team by simply touching it. Its history seems to go back to the period of the medieval times, as the first known Greek reference dates from the 13<sup>th</sup> century (Koukoules 1948: 180-181).<sup>3</sup> Children are divided in two teams by their captains (see "putting steps", footnote 4). Each team chooses one of the lamp posts as their *abariza* (base) and takes position underneath. Players of both teams must touch the pole chosen as their *abariza* with one hand. This touch of the *abariza* is important, because it offers immunity to all players of the team. But on leaving the base, its immunizing effect is diminished, so that the last player to leave the base has always the strongest power. The touch of the opposing team on the other hand is always polluting and destructive, and the base needs to be protected at all times from such an event. The game begins with an open invitation, "Sas kaloume" (we invite you), by members of one team (team A) to their opponents of team B to send a player into the no man's land between the two bases. As soon as the volunteer of team B reaches the middle of the distance separating the bases, team A sends a player to face the opponent, player B, by addressing a personal threat, "S' echo" B

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<sup>3</sup> I am not implying here a form of historical continuity or "long durée" (a notion which, I think, re-establishes continuity through the back door). Toys and games- if the latter are conceived in terms of a basic rule structure i.e. as abstractions excluding the performative aspects of gaming, have tricky trajectories, as historians have pointed out (e.g. Mc Clary 1997, Cross 1997). They may be independently invented in several parts of the world or disseminated under particular historical and demographic conjunctures. They may be played for a number of years in one place to be abandoned for an unknown period and revived through very different routes, e.g., as an imported fashion, or as a result of a revivalist movement. The Enlightenment was marked by an interest in the games of Classical and Roman Antiquity, while the Middle Ages, came under scrutiny in Central Europe during the 19<sup>th</sup> century with the formation of the first Nation States. At that time, many European countries -Greece among them- incorporated games in their educational curricula, which means that schools were probably important dissemination mechanisms of games. It is extremely difficult in the case of Greek games to trace their historical trajectory, as Greek play scholars have been strongly influenced by continuity discourses until very recently and have thus provided ahistorical and decontextualized studies of games in terms of survivals from Ancient Greece (See Danforth 1984, Gougoulis 1999, 2000a). Continuity is always a possibility, of course, if enough sources exist to document the presence of games sufficiently and if games are examined as forms or texts without contexts, since contexts always change historically and cross-culturally-. However in the present state of research, if any kind of continuity in Greek games exists, it is most likely to be found in the discourse of the scholars who report it, rather than in the games themselves.

...( name of player)"= ( I have you, i.e. I can get you B...). Player B is weaker, having left his base before player A, so (s) he either returns to base, or tries to score an *abariza* by touching the enemy's base ( i.e. the lamp post), without being caught. Neither of the objectives is an easy task because – and here lies part of the game's suspense - each team sends out helpers, while making sure that their base is securely guarded from the "enemy". The fact that the immunizing effect of the homebase touch does not cover all players in the same way, which means that tables of chasers and chased are turned all the time, adds to the excitement of the game. Captured children are taken as prisoners to the enemy's base and can be released either by receiving the immunity touch from members of their team or when their team scores an *abariza* by touching the opponent's base. The winner is the team that scores most *abarizes*. *Abariza* is best played with many participants ( ideally from 12 to 20) and can last quite a long time, which is why it is not usually played at school during the breaks but during gym.

For a similar version among American children of Indiana in the 1950s see Brewster (1953: 56-59) listed under Prison Base and classified as a chasing game. The version reported by the Opies (1984: 143-146) does not share the immunizing effect of the base with the Greek and the American version and the goal of the game is not to conquer the opponents' base but to take as many captives as possible, which is why the Opies classify the game as a catching game. As already mentioned in the introductory note, games, seldom have one distinguishing feature that can be used as a classifying principle, so it is best to use mixed criteria. *Abariza* is a war simulation and catching game according to the Opies' activity based taxonomy, a game of strategy and physical skill from the point of view of outcome determinants according to Roberts, Arth and Bush (1959) and a game with a high physical content in terms of the broad tripartite system introduced recently by Bishop and Curtis (2001). If one adds the criteria of the interaction between actors, "agencies" (= means, instruments) and types of spatio- temporal organization suggested by Sutton-Smith (1992:3-16) it is also a competitive team game, an outdoor game using physical boundaries and a game without playthings. I have taken on board Sutton-Smith's illuminating remarks on games' classification criteria in the organization of the discussion of each game, however I shall not go through the same procedure of referring to the classification possibilities of each game, as this would constitute another project in itself.

**Agalmata** (Statues): A central person game, similar to *Stratiotakia*..., where players- usually girls aged 7-11 compete in performing a kind of pantomime at the request of a central person. The girl who is It stands with her back turned to the rest of the players. When she turns round the players “freeze”, pretending they are statues. She then approaches one “statue” at a time and pretends to wind it up. The “statue” then comes to life and starts dancing until the central person says “Sti thesis sou” (back to your mark), which signals the end of the performance. The best performer is chosen to be “it” in the next session. Thus, the central person role in this game, is a coveted rather than a disliked role. Boys rarely participated in statues, and when they did so, it was in the neighbourhood rather than the school context. Statues is played with the same name but with some differences by British children, according to Opie and Opie (1984: 243-247), who classify the game in the category of exerting games.

**Alogomachies** (“horse” fights): A duelling game played in the sea, as a mixed gender game, and at school among boys only. Two small boys mounted on the backs of two sturdy boys push each other until one falls off. When the game is played in the sea the riders sit on the bigger children’s shoulders. The Opies refer to similar games played by British school children under the entry Piggyback fights (Opie and Opie 1984: 217).

**Apples** see (*ta*) *Mila*

**Arapis** (Black Man): A chasing and catching game with a high authority central person role, played in the Upper neighbourhood by 7-11 year-old girls and boys. Children divide in two teams, facing each other at a distance, whereas the Arapis (who is chosen by counting out rhymes)<sup>4</sup> takes position in the middle.

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<sup>4</sup> The following counting out rhymes were popular among Phocaeen children ( especially among the 6-9 year-olds of both sexes and among girls between 6-11)

- a) Akata, makata soukouta be/ Avel, Favel domine/ akata, makata soukouta be/ avel, favel, vge (nonsensical, except the last word “vge” = you are out.
- b) Abebablom, tou kithe blom/ Abebablom toukithe blom, blim, blom ( nonsensical)/ tha pas edo ekei ( you will travel around)/ sti Voreio Ameriki ( in North America)/ Mazi me ton Ali Passa na paizeis mou-si-ki ( and play music with Ali Pasha)/ Ola ta koito ( I look at everything)/san paidi kouto/ (like a dumb kid)/ tin Akropoli kai ton Lykavytto ( the Acropolis and Lycabettus Hill)
- c) Kili, Kili, Naka/ Zaka Yo ho/ Haba boom/ boom, boom, boom, boom/ Ore, maggiore/ Jerry, Jerry/ Boom. Boom. Boom/ ore, maggiore/ Jerry, Jerry, boom/ Voulva, voulva/ boom.boom, boom, boom (nonsensical mix of words sounding like or derived from Japanese, French, Italian and English).
- d) Eisai Kinezaki (are you Chinese?)/ tros to ryzaki ( do you like rice?)/Poses koutalitses (how many spoonfuls?) e.g. treis ( e.g. three) And the child proceeds to count out the numbers by touching the players on the chest. The last player to be touched is out.
- e) Tria ballonia ston aera, mana patera vges ( Three balloons in the air, mother, father, you are out)

Children of both teams try to cross over to the other side, while the Arapis tries to intercept the crossers. The child who is caught takes the place of the Arapis and is “it” in the next round. Arapis was a game Phocaeen children had learnt from Athenian holidaymakers (girls), a couple of summers before my research took place. See Opie and Opie (1984:124) under Crossing Over, and Brewster (1953: 56) Black Man for similar games played by English and American children respectively.

**Asteia Kollitiria** (Funny Stickers): A singing and hand-clapping game played by dyads of girls aged 7-10 years. Girls cooperate in performing several combinations of hand-clapping whilst singing the jingle of the sticker game promoted by the Greek firm El Greco, in 1987 and 1988. Hand clapping songs were often drawn from the worlds of cinema, e.g. by referring to names of film stars such as Alikì Vougiouklaki, television (popular “family” series or cartoons, e.g. the Smurfs, and Kojak) and commercials (Amita juice and Asteia Kollitiria). A few hand-clapping games drew from the ‘traditional’ repertoire (i.e. themes of romance, or adaptations of light musical themes that were popular in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup>

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- f) I mana mou ki I mana sou mazevane radikia ( your mother and my mother were collecting dandelion leaves) / Ki I mana sou berdefitike (but your mother was confused)/ kai mazepse pontikia ( so she collected mice)/ Go-go-go ( me, me, me)/sy, sy, sy ( you, you, you)/ To pontiki eisai esy ( It’s you who is the mouse).
- g) Anevika s’ena vouno kai vrika ena gourouni ( As I was climbing a mountain, I found a pig) To koitaxa kala, kala kai sou moiaze sti mourì (I had a close look and it looked like you)/ Go-go-go (me, me, me) /sy, sy, sy ( you, you, you)/ To gourouni eisai esy ( It’s you who is the pig).
- h) Eklase o Vengos ( Vengos farted , Vengos = famous Greek comedian) kai vgike ena aggouri (and a cucumber came out)/ kai to aggouri espase ( and the cucumber broke)/kai vgikes esy (and you came out = you are out).
- i) Echo ena aftokinìto pou olo,olo trechei ( I’ve got a car that runs and runs)/ Kai pou tha stamatisèi? (and where will it stop?) The child who is touched last must answer the question by referring to a country (e.g. America). The answer s to all questions in this rhyme as in “Kinezaki” above has strategic significance as the number of syllables and later the choice of a colour define the course of counting out. After the choice of a country the rhyme goes on: “Kai ti chroma tha zitisei?” (and which colour will it choose?) e.g. Aspro ( e.g. white)/ “Echeis apano sou to chroma aspro?” (Do you have the colour white on you?) . If the child who is touched last wears anything in white (s)he is out.
- Older cohorts of boys and girls (9-13) preferred a different set of counting out rhymes with less text but more scope for calculation of the odds. The process was somewhat different from that carried out with the rhymes a-h. Children formed a circle facing inwards and extended their right hands facing downwards. As a child chanted the counting out rhyme, all players moved their hands up and down. When the rhyme was near the end , the chanting child made a quick decision on the direction his/her palm was going to face. According to a predetermined agreement those players whose hands faced the same or opposite direction as the chanter were out.
- j) Kourbania , Kourbania , Oi pio polloi vgainoune ki oi pio ligoi ta fylane Kourbania, Kourbania, The many are out, the few ones are “it”). When two children are left they change the song to the following:
- k) Me tou voithou to cheri ( with the helper’s hand)/ kai tou drakou to machairi ( and the dragon’s knife)/ mia gaidoura yopferèi ( a female donkey is suffering) apo pyreto sto cheri ( from fever on the hand)/ opoios echei me tou voithou to cheri den ta fylaei ( whoever agrees with the helper’s hand is out).

century and were appropriated by girls of three generations, e.g. *Sto Zappeio mia mera* = One day in the park of Zappeio , *Ela maga na sou po* = Listen, you guy ). Some hand-clapping rhymes with nonsensical verses are also used as counting out rhymes (*Ebe-sibono*, *Oh Mariam. Aba-bi*). The text and tune of *Asteia Kollitira* were drawn from the TV jingle without changes. It goes as following:

*Asteia kollitria* ( Funny stickers)  
*M'aresei na kollao* (I like to paste)  
*Kai me tous filous pou agapo* (and with the friends I love)  
*Na paizo na gelao* ( I enjoy playing and laughing)  
*Edo echo tin Stoumfita* ( I've got Stroumfita here)  
*Ton Papa Stroumf pio pera* ( and Papa Smurf over there)  
*Ton Asterix ton Ovelix* (Asterix and Obelix)  
*Kai paizoume oli mera* ( And we play all day long).

**Basket** (Basketball): Phocaeen children played basketball in every part of the village without the need of basket frames or rings. The tree branches were a first-class substitute for basket rings. Basketball had local versions which children had adapted to their needs in a similar fashion to football (e.g. “mono” = simple (with a single goal post)) and which constituted appropriated forms of the organized adult versions.

**Berlina** \*<sup>5</sup>: A guessing game with a ritualized dialogue on the theme of gossip and the consequences of its exposure. The *Berlina*, a central person who sits on a fence, or low wall facing the rest of the players has to guess which of the participants has spread good or bad information (insults or compliments) about her/him. Played by previous generations of children until the mid 1980s. Some girls told me that they had played *Berlina* and mentioned it when interviewed, but it was not listed among their preferences (see survey tables) nor did I witness it being played.

**Bicycles**: (See *Podilata*).

**Bilies** or **gyalenia** (Marbles): An aiming and tossing game played with glass marbles, exclusively by boys, on roundabouts, the church hill, the community playground and any unpaved wasteland or empty plot of land. Previous generations of boys (during the period from 1930 to 1960 approximately), played with commercial and marbles they made themselves from the clay soil in front of the old



primary school (currently the Youth Centre), that became workable during late Spring and Summer. *Bilies* retained its seasonal character even after the covering of the road made the environmental base of seasonality superfluous. It was a game played in the summer by groups of boys aged between 7 and 14. The season was initiated by older boys and ended with one or two children having in their possession all the marbles of the community's boys. The most popular *bilies* game was "Buzz" (tossing one marble against a line of other marbles of various sizes). The name of the game is derived from the biggest marble ("buzz"), which is usually placed at one extreme of the line). Another popular game was *Trigono* (triangle), named after the shape formed by the targeted marbles. *Bilies* were bought locally at corner shops and haberdashers, and were often owned together by pairs of friends.

**Bines** (Piggy-back): A riding game usually played between younger and older siblings or cousins of both sexes. Youngsters are mounted on the backs of the older children, who gallop around pretending to be horses.

**Bizz:** A guessing game, especially popular among boys from 10 years onwards (it could be also played by adults with children), until the early 1980s. A player who is "it", stands with his back turned to the rest of the players and his arms crossed, so that his left elbow rests on his right forearm. With his eyes closed he extends his right hand to his left side with this palm facing the players. He then receives blows on the palm or on the back from one player at a time and must guess who did it. As soon as the blow is received all players imitate the sound of the bee (it is from the buzzing sound that the game derives its name) to confuse the It figure. When the correct guess is made the person who delivered the blow becomes "it". I was told by 10 year-old boys at the time of my research that they occasionally played Bizz, (e.g. in summer time with holidaymakers), but I did not observe the game played myself. It was not mentioned among children's play preferences either. See Brewster (1953: 12-16) under Blind Man's Buff for similar games in various European countries and the U.S.

**Blousa** (Blouse): A mixed gender and age racing game played by two teams of children. It was especially popular at school during the "free play hour" of gym and a frequent game choice during the summer and autumn evenings in the

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<sup>5</sup> *Berlina* used to be the name of the platform where convicts were exposed to public ridicule before their punishment. The word originates from Italian. In Medieval Italy the *Berlina* was the cart used for holding up convicts to public scorn (Babiniotis 1998: 1148).

neighbourhoods of Phocaea<sup>6</sup>. Children divide in two teams by “putting steps”.<sup>7</sup> Both team members are given numbers (e.g. from one to ten) and the rival teams form two parallel lines facing each other at a distance of several feet. Children of rival teams with the same number must stand directly opposite each other and they must be of equal skill, or else disputes break out.<sup>8</sup> A child who plays the role of *Mana* (= Mum, Mother)<sup>9</sup> stands out, places a blouse in the middle of the distance separating the two teams and calls out a number. As soon as the number has been called, a child bearing the particular number leaves each team and runs to fetch the blouse and return with the trophy to his/her team without being touched by the rival player. If (s)he succeeds, his (her) team receives a bonus point. If the player is touched by an opponent the team loses a point. Suspense is added to the game as more players are called out by the *Mana* to help the first players and through the application of tricking strategies.

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<sup>6</sup> Some games enjoyed a high popularity over a lengthy period of time and then were suddenly dropped or superseded by other games. Blouse and Kamini were examples of these games that had been in vogue during summer and autumn but were not frequently played at the time I conducted the Survey on play preferences. This explains why Blouse was only mentioned among school play preferences (with one entry among boys’ neighbourhood play preferences), and Kamini received only one entry among girl’s school play preferences.

<sup>7</sup> *Vazo vimata* (to put = to count steps) is a sorting out process used for choosing teams. Two “archigoi” (leaders) – sometimes the oldest, or strongest children, sometimes those who simply shout out “vazo vimata” and sometimes those children who volunteer when the rest ask: *Poios tha valei vimata?* (who will “put steps”) – stand out of the crowd facing each other at a distance of ten to twelve feet and proceed to take steps while repeating a particular formula. At each word or syllable of the formula only one step is allowed. The aim of this contest is to step on the opponent’s foot after calculating how many and which kind of steps are needed. The player who steps on the opponent’s foot has the advantage of making the first choice, i.e. of taking the best player on his/her side. Power balance between the two teams is maintained by the fact that the winning “leader” could not choose the entire team at once but took turns with the rival leader in choosing the second player, then the third etc. If a team in a mixed gender play session ended up with more boys or stronger players however, changes were demanded by the other team, especially by the girls, as boys usually cooperated in cheating and teasing girls. During my stay in Phocaea popular counting feet formulas included kinds of food: e.g. *Psomi, tyri, elies, sardelles almyres* (bread, cheese and olives, salted sardines), names of football teams e.g. *Pa-na-thi-na-I-kos, A-EK* etc. Several strategies were used and negotiated to avoid being trodden on, such as making half moves (“*misa*” *vimata*) tip toes (“*mytitses*”) or making the “stork step” (*Pelargos*), i.e. standing on one foot instead of moving forward, but the “stork move” caused friction and was usually rejected as cheating.

<sup>8</sup> In the Blouse sessions that I observed trouble-makers were expelled from the teams, as they were considered guilty of “spoiling a game”, an act calling for direct action by the majority who wished the game to go on. These decisions were usually taken by older girls, who often adopted the role of arbiter in games.

<sup>9</sup> “*Mana*” roles in Greek games are central person roles of high authority. They may represent disliked, threatening or mockingly authoritarian figures – and usually subverted roles – similar to “he” or “it” in British games, or they may play roles of arbiters or stage directors, making important decisions on how a game will proceed, such as who will chase whom or how many steps one should take to get or reach a playmate, depending on the game’s goal. *Mana* roles, may be assumed by girls or boys by counting out rhymes or by shouting out “*Mana!*”.

Blousa was a game that spread to Phocaeen schoolchildren through the initiative of a schoolteacher who had taught the game to two cohorts of children during gym. As it included many elements that children liked ( team antagonism, racing skills, quick pace, unexpected turning of tables between teams), it was adopted as a neighbourhood game and acquired during this process new regulations, while they also changed the game's basic instrument and its name. In the initial form taught by the schoolteacher, as a traditional panhellenic game, the game was called Mandili, (= Kerchief) from the garment used when this game version was popular during the previous generation of schoolchildren. As kerchiefs were no longer part of the children's wardrobe, Phocaeen children substituted the Mandili with a blouse, changing the name of the game to Blouse respectively. See Opie and Opie (1984: 198-199) under Drop Handkerchief for a similar game to the original version (Mandili) as played by British children. The children's version is closer to the American game "Steal the Bacon", as described by Brewster (1953:59).

**Boukala** (Spin the bottle): A sedentary courtship game played in the summer evenings by girls and boys aged 10-14 (and older). Children form a circle around the bottle-spinner (volunteer, or child who shouts first). The children sitting at the two ends of the bottle perform several predetermined tasks (kisses, handshakes, slaps, etc).

**Broken Telephone:** See Chalasmeno tilephono.

**Kangouro** (Kangaroo): A jumping game similar to Leap- frog played at school until about 1983.

**Cat and Mouse:** see Gata kai Pontikos

**Chalasmeno Tilephono** (Broken Telephone): A sedentary, verbal game playing with the theme of misunderstanding caused by mishearing. It is played on sidewalks or in back yards. Children sit down in a row. Each child whispers a phrase very quickly into the next player's ear. As the speed of whispering usually distorts the phrase, by the time the message reaches the last child who spells it out in a loud voice, it has most likely ended up in gibberish, or something funny. British children in the area of Richmond, played a similar game known as Chinese Whispers in the mid-1970s (Personal communication with Joanna Marriott).

**Commandos:** A central person hiding game combining the basic structures of War and Hide and Seek, popular among boys and girls 8-11 years old. At school it was played with imaginary weapons and in the neighbourhoods of Phocaea with

make-shift or commercial toy daggers, guns or rifles. A child who is “it” (“ta fylaei”)<sup>10</sup>, is armed with an imaginary or toy rifle - depending on the setting of play - counts up to predetermined number, while the “commandos”, who hold “daggers” hide. The commandos can be shot from a distance, if seen by the child who is “it”. The first commando to be spotted (and “shot”) is “it” in the next round. The hiding “commandos” objective is to sneak behind the “it” figure and “stab” her/him with imaginary knives, in which case he or she is “it” again. According to Upper Neighbourhood children, the game was introduced 2-3 years prior to my research by Athenian holiday makers. Commandos, when played among boys, often involved dressing up and identification with popular international film stars such as Arnold Schwarzenegger or Sylvester Stallone (see Chapters 5 and 6).

**Cops and Robbers:** Similar to Commandos and War. See Kleftes kai astynomoi

**(to) Dachtylidi (The Ring):** A sedentary singing and seeking game, the objective of which is to find a hidden ring or pebble. Children sit in a row, with their hands clasped together, while a central person the *Mana* (= Mother) stands out. The *Mana*, who is holding a ring or pebble in her clasped hands, goes from child to child putting her hands in each child’s hands while singing simultaneously:

Pounto pounto to dachtylidi (where’s the ring, where’s the ring)

Psaxe, psaxe den tha to vreis (search as you wish, you won’t find it)

Den tha to vreis den tha to vreis, (you won’t find it, you won’t find it)

to dachtylidi pou ziteis (the ring you’re looking for)

Before the song is finished the *Mana* secretly drops the ring or pebble into one of the children’s hands and assigns to one of the players the task of guessing who has the “ring”. If the player succeeds (s)he takes the place of the *Mana*. The game is

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<sup>10</sup> “It” roles in most Greek games have no particular names (if they do, the game is usually called after that name, e.g. Kitty-Kitty). The emphasis is on the action which is called “guarding” and there is no symbolic association with a fearful person or mythical figure as in the case of some games based on the approach – avoidance or chase and escape opposition (see Opie and Opie 1984: 20 for a general discussion and Corsaro 1997 for the Bogey Man metaphor in games cross culturally). The linguistic metaphor used for the person who is It in Greek chasing and hiding games, refers to a person who is allocated the task of guarding something, or rather guarding some *things*, since what is guarded is always referred to in the plural = “ta fylaei”. The symbolic association that comes to my mind, as the expression is old, is that of tending a flock of sheep or of guarding an orchard from thieves. In Phocaea the “it” figure was the child who would “guard”. So all counting out procedures concern who is going “to guard”.

considered a girl's game but boys may also participate when it is played in the neighbourhoods of Phocaea.

At school it was played only during gym, under the direction of the third grade teacher who involved all boys and girls in the class in the quest for the ring and the singing of the song.

Mothers (born between 1950 and 1960) of children contemporary to my research) described a slightly different and funnier version. The child who guessed correctly where the ring was left the line of players with the *Mana*, who hid the ring on the guesser's body ( e.g. in a pocket or among the hair ). The other children then started to search by tickling the ring bearer and the game ended in a general burlesque. See Brewster (1953: 9-11) under Thimble, for similar games played in Europe and the USA in the 1950s.

**(oi) Deka Erotiseis** (The Ten questions): A sedentary guessing game played indoors among small groups of children (siblings, neighbours, cousins) . The guesser must discover a person, animal or thing that another child has thought of, by asking ten questions.

**(ta) Deka Paichnidia** (The Ten games): A mixed gender game of skill played with a ball bounced against a wall by one or more players. A ball is bounced against a wall in ten ways, each way counting as a "game". The ball-player counts down aloud during the entire course of the game. E.g. Ten simple bounces on the wall, nine passes under the right arm, eight bounces with the back turned to the wall etc. Children who frequently played this game were know as "inventors" of the "ten games" to their friends. See Brewster (1953: 87-88) under König for similar ball-bouncing games played by English, Czech and Hungarian children.

**Den Pernas Kyra Maria** (You don't pass Mrs Mary): A central person, circle singing game played by young girls. It is similar to Queen Mary as described by Opie and Opie (1988:321-324). Players form a circle and hop anti-clockwise singing verses in a dialogue with the central person (Kyra Maria), who remains outside the circle hopping along in the same direction. The objective of the game is to be chosen by the central person (Kyra Maria) and hop along with her for one round, to re-enter the circle, allowing for the next girl to be chosen as the song re-starts. The game then is a test of friendships. I did not see the game performed myself, however, and the description was provided by a 9 year-old- girl during the survey on play preferences (see chapter 4) without the accompanying song.

**Dilitirio (Poison):** A mixed gender, central person chasing game, whose excitement relies on the fact that the time the chase begins is controlled by the chaser. The players who are about to be chased not only do not know when the chase will begin but must remain close to the chaser, as they must touch his/her extended hands with one of their fingers, while the chaser speaks out the following phrase: “Echo mia boukala pou mesa echei .... (I have got a bottle of ... ) Several drinks can be mentioned as potential ingredients, but when Poison (“Dilitirio”) comes up, it signals the beginning of the chase. The players must release their hands from the chaser and disperse quickly to avoid being caught. Whoever gets caught is forced to stand against a wall or a tree, holding one arm extended against the wall in the form of an arch and remains thus immobilized until another player releases her/him by passing under the arch without being touched by the chaser. Another version of the game, which I did not see myself, came up in interviews with Upper Neighbourhood children. When the chased were caught according to this version, they had to squat and could be released by a player who passed one leg over them. In both versions children who were caught three times could not be freed anymore and acquired the role of the chaser. The chaser’s touch had an immobilizing effect in both versions. *Dilitirio* was played as a sequel to other central person games with many participants, such as Gata-Gata or 1-2-3 Stop at school. It is a “democratic” game in that it allows for the participation of children of all ages without requiring special permission. It can go on for quite a while, if the chasers are skilled enough or confident enough to permit the chased children to distance themselves before commencing the chase. If chasers catch the chased children very quickly, older players get bored and soon move on to another game. *Dilitirio* combines elements from other chasing games, such as *Koritsaki*. Neither game was played very frequently during the course of fieldwork and each received one entry in the survey on play preferences (they only featured among girl’s play preferences in the neighbourhood and at school respectively). In terms of British analogies, *Dilitirio* combines elements from Poison and Stuck in the Mud, as described by Opie and Opie (1984: 99-100 and 110).

**Dielkystinda (Tug of War):** I am deliberately using an etic term here, namely the ancient Greek term under which the game is classified in anthologies of games used as instruction manuals for gym teachers, as my informants did not refer to the game by any particular name. It was a game initiated by the local priest in Sunday

school to add an element of fun to the learning process. When class was dismissed the priest invited the attending children to divide in two teams, facing each other, and compete in pulling a rope (see photo). Tug-of-war is an example of a series of ancient games that were revived by gym teachers in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, during the era of Classicism, and one of the first to be included in Greek gymnastics manuals. cf. Gougoulis (2000: 68).

**Domino:** A central person, mixed gender ball game similar to the Spanish version of hatball as described by Brewster (1953: 84). It was popular among 8-14 year-old children and was usually played by 6-10 participants. Children gather around a central person (*Domino*) who plays the role of *Mana* initiating the game by calling out any player's name (including her own). The player whose name has been called out is "it" and tries to hit the rest of the players with a ball. As soon as the name has been heard, the rest of the players disperse, while the ball-holder throws the ball in the air and counts to three. At three all players must freeze or else they become "it" (or are out in other versions). The ball-holder then tries to hit a child, who can seek immunity by catching the ball before it bounces. The catcher can change the course of the game by naming another child for the role of ball-thrower. This is usually avoided by expert players by rolling the ball. If the ball-thrower fails to hit the targeted child (s)he is out and the *Mana* assigns the role of ball-thrower to another player. Players who are hit without managing to catch the ball or catch the ball unsolicited are either out ("kaigontai" = they are burnt), or receive a "pseira" (a "louse", i.e. a minus point). The child who collects most "pseires" (lice) becomes "it" in the next round. In the version without "pseires" the game starts afresh when all players have been eliminated. Domino was played frequently in the neighbourhoods of Phocaea but it was most often a girl's rather than a boy's choice. If boys had a ball and no girls were around, their most probable game choices would be football, basketball, volleyball and Apples (in that order), which explains why Domino was listed only once among boy's play preferences. Given the limitation of the Survey to list five favourite games, it was overshadowed by the most popular games. The game was learnt by older children (who were in high school during my research).

**Drakos\*** (Dragon), A hiding game played by the parental generation of Phocaeans in the 1950s. The following version was described by a father of Refugee origin. *Drakos* is the reversal of Hide and Seek, as one person hides and the rest try to hunt him down. The player who tracked the *Drakos* first took his place in hiding.

The game was remembered as being played after dark and the possible hideouts extended throughout the village, rather than within the limits of a neighbourhood, which was the case in Hide and Seek among children contemporary to my research.

**Drinks and Cigarettes:** see Tsigaropota

**Elastics:** see Lasticho

**Ena-dyo-tria flox:** Mentioned by a 4<sup>th</sup> grade girl in the survey as a game she liked playing at school. Actually it is a kind of playful rite performed to prevent quarrels between friends. If two girls during a conversation happen to utter the same word simultaneously they must reach for something red (piase kokkino), hold hands by forming a kind of link with the small finger and then chant simultaneously a small verse whose last word is a choice of three words (flox, flax or flox). If the girls choose the same word and chant e.g. ena-dyo-tria flox = (one-two-three flox) at the same time, their friendship will not be spoiled by a quarrel. If their choice does not coincide this is supposed to be a sign of an imminent quarrel.

**Ena-dyo-tria kokkino fos (one-two-three- red light):** A different name for Ena-dyo-tria stop (see entry). The game derives its name from the formula “Ena dyo tria kokkino fos”, which the “it” figure must speak out quickly before turning round to face the approaching players. See Brewster (1953: 35). Ena-dyo tria kokkino fos was a less popular name of the game.

**Ena-dyo-tria moko (one-two-three shut-up)** A central person, unruly game (or game of order and disorder) played in the absence of teachers shortly before classes begin. It was usually preferred and initiated by boys of the older (5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>) grades. The game focuses on the theme of school discipline, which is mocked to varying degrees and sometimes gets the entire class in trouble, as it verges on mischief and disorder. School discipline is based on obedience to authority figures (teachers, school master/mistress), quiet, and standing still. All three rules are ruthlessly and openly mocked in this game, while pretending to observe them. The game is simple and short in duration, as it is usually played before the teacher arrives for the lesson after breaks, or during teacher’s absence for some reason. A central person, (Mana) shouts: Ena-dyo-tria moko (one-two-three silence), while the rest of the class ideally must remain still. What actually happens is that somebody starts giggling, as captains of mischief start pulling funny faces while remaining silent. The child who breaks the rule of silence first, receives a slap on the nape from the entire class (fatouro), which usually leads to varying degrees of turmoil, and sometimes



calls for a visit by the schoolmaster ( see chapters 4 and 5 for unruly games and chapter 6 on pretend play focusing on the theme of symbolic inversion of order)

**Ena-dyo-tria stop** (one-two-three stop): A central person racing game, (according to the Opies' classification)<sup>11</sup> based on the theme of approach and avoidance (see Corsaro 1997: La strega). The game is democratic in its structure, as it can involve a huge number of players that simply join in without any particular access ritual.<sup>12</sup> The person who is "it" stands against a wall turning his back on the players, who stand a few metres away in a line. As the "it" figure quickly mutters the formula "Ena, dyo, tria stop" the players sneak behind his/her back, aiming to strike it. Once the phrase has been spoken out and the "it" child has turned round all players must freeze, or else they are sent back to the starting line. The "it" figure controls their approach either by reciting the formula very quickly or by shouting "Oloi sti grammi" (all back to the line), an order that sends everybody to the starting point. When a player succeeds in striking the back of the "it" child, the latter starts to chase all players, who race back to the line for safety. Whoever is caught before making it to the line (which at this point is treated as "home", offering immunity) is "it" in the next round. Ena-dyo-tria-Stop was played frequently at school among all ages and both sexes, but was predominantly a girl's preference. The same game is also played as Ena-dyo-tria kokkino fos (See entry).

**Ena frango I violetta** (A drachma<sup>13</sup> for a violet): A singing and dancing game, played by pairs of girls. Two girls holding hands, crossed, so that each girl holds the opposite hand of the other girl, prance about singing: Ena frango I violetta, tsigoleletta, kokkina koufeta (one franc for a violet, tsigoleletta, red sugared almonds). At the word tsigoleletta (which is nonsensical) the girls turn round and then change direction again at the phrase kokkina koufeta). I only saw this game performed once, by two pairs of 10 year-old girls at school and it was not listed

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<sup>11</sup> Opie and Opie (1984: 186) classify those chasing games where players race to reach a fixed point , or where chase and race are interchangeable, as is the case in all games based on the approach – avoidance principle, e.g. Mother May I, Peep behind the Curtain and Colours, as racing games. I have followed their taxonomy, as far as the activity criterion for classification is concerned, so all Phocaeen games of the approach-avoidance cluster (which include a race of some kind) will be listed as racing games.

<sup>12</sup> Most central person chasing games, especially those based on the approach-avoidance principle, are democratic in their structure ( easy access, easy departure) and easy to learn, a fact which explains their great popularity among younger children ( see Gata-Gatoula for another example and tables 4.1 and 4.1.1, 4.1.2 in chapter 4).

under girls' preferences. It used to be popular among mothers of girls, contemporary to my research when they were of primary school age (mid 1960s – early 1970s).

**Erotiseis (Questions):** An indoor game of chance played by small groups of girls aged 8-11 with a fortune teller (“chartaki” = little piece of paper). A square sheet of paper is folded many times so that four small pyramids are formed at each corner of the quadrangle. The sides of the pyramids are numbered from 1-8 and a question is written on each external side, while an equal number of answers is written on the interior sides. As the “chartaki” holder moves the paper pyramids with the index finger and the thumb of each hand and the other players choose numbers, questions and answers are mixed producing nonsensical or funny outcomes. The same “chartakia” may be used to provide pejorative or flattering personal attributes, by inscribing a series of characterizations on the inner sides of the paper pyramids (e.g. *eisai gaidouri*, = you are a donkey, or *eisai omorfi* = you are pretty). See Brewster (1953: 37) under Cross Questions and Silly Answers for a similar game to *Erotiseis*, without the use of a fortuneteller. On fortunetellers in girl's culture in Sweden see Evaldsson 1993...).

**Football:** see *podosfairo*

**Fidaki (Little Snake):** An easy skipping rope game for junior participants (girls and boys under eight). The rope is wiggled at a low height by the turners. The game owes its name to these movements which make the rope give the impression of a snake. By the age of eight, when children have mastered the skipping techniques, they turn to *Kamara* (see entry). At the same age, however, skipping games acquire sharper gender distinctions and *Kamara* is classified by children as a girls' game, despite the fact that boys do participate. See also *Varkoula*.

**Fish:** See *Psaria*.

**Fivestones:** (see *Pentovola*)

**Frouta (Fruits):** A central person chasing game similar to *Tsigaropota* (Drinks and Cigarettes), where immunity from touch is achieved by mentioning any kind of fruit except Banana. Players must choose different fruit names or else they are “burnt” (*kaigontai*), i.e. they take the place of the chaser. The latter also happens if the chased children shout “banana”, as an immunizing device, for banana can only be

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<sup>13</sup> Although the provenance of this song and game is probably French, I think that the word *frango* must refer to the Greek currency (before the introduction of Euros in 2002) drachma, as drachmas in colloquial Greek were also called *franga* (= francs literally).

used by another player as a rescue formula. As soon as the fruit is mentioned, the chased player is immobilized and can re-enter the game when touched by another player shouting “banana”.

**Gata kai Pontikos (Cat and Mouse):** A mixed gender chasing game with the chaser at a disadvantaged role, played by seven-year-olds with their teacher during gym. It is played exactly like “Lykos kai Arni” (see entry).

**Gata-Gata or Gata-Gatoula (Kitty-Kitty):** See Corsaro and Evaldsson (1998: 388 la Strega), for a similar racing game among Italian preschoolers, and Opie and Opie 1984: 191-192 where a similar racing game is described (Colours). The Phocaeen version does not involve a race to any fixed point. It is a chasing game like Poison, where the start of the chase is controlled by the central person and immunity from touch is derived from wearing or touching a particular colour. The “it” figure (Gatoula = kitty) stands against a wall, while the rest of the players chant: “Gata – Gatoula ti chroma zitas? (Kitty-cat what colour do you want?). As Kitty mentions a colour, signalling the beginning of the chase, children who wear a piece of clothing in that colour stand still, while the rest run to touch something in that colour lest they are caught by Kitty. The player who is caught first becomes Kitty in the next round. Gata-Gatoula was a very popular game at school and in the streets of Phocaea among all ages and both genders. In fact it was considered as a mixed gender game *par excellence* (See discussion on Tomboys in Chapter 4).

**Gnomes:** (see *Kallikantzarakia*).

**Goutsas\*:** A kind of golf played by Sarakatsan pastoralists of the parental and grandparental generations, until the 1960s. The game was played with shepherds crooks and stones or rag balls, while tending flocks of sheep. The aim was to bat the stone into a hole or several holes in the ground.

**Gyro-gyro oloi (round-and- round we go):** Similar to Ring-a Ring o’ Roses (Opie and Opie 1988:220-227). A singing game for younger children of both sexes, usually introduced in school and played during the gym hour In Phocaea it was played by first grade and kindergarten children. Children hold hands and form a circle around the youngest player (or a volunteer), who stands in the middle. They begin to walk anti-clockwise singing:

Gyro-gyro oloi (round and round we go)

Sti mesi o Manolis (Manolis in the middle)

Cheria, podia sti grammi ( hands and feet in a row)

Ki oloi kathontai sti gi (everybody sits on the ground)

Ki o Manolis sto skamni (and Manolis sits on the stool)

As the last verses are sung everyone including Manolis must sit down

**Gyrizei-Gyrizei-i-Gi** (The earth goes round, goes round): A version of *Kamini*. (See entry).

**Hell**: (See *Kolasi*).

**Hide and Seek**: (see *Kryfto*).

**Hopscotch**: (see *Koutso*).

**Horse-Fights**: (See *Alogomachies*).

**(ta) Karydia (nuts)\***: A kind of marbles, popular among previous generations of children of both sexes until the early 1980s. Two versions of the game were described to me:

- a) The circle: A circle was drawn on the ground. The nuts were placed within the circle and children took turns in trying with a bigger nut called “manna” (mother) to knock the encircled nuts outside the circle.

The Bastakas (a name often given to steady targets in many tossing games) from the Italian word “basta” = stop, see Babiniotis 1998, entry bastakas). The nuts were placed in a line with the Bastakas at one extreme. Players competed in tossing other nuts, aiming to strike the nuts in the line. It was usually played around Christmas time, when nuts abound in grocery shops to provide for the local custom of making cakes filled with nuts, especially the New Year “pitta”. The peak of the game in Anavyssos was on the feast of St Nicholas (6 December) when grown ups and children played at the game. Some Phocean children in 1988-89 reported that they had played at *Karydia* (the second version) before New Year during my stay in Phocaea but the game did not have the popularity of other tossing games such as Marbles or Tzanes. I never witnessed a game of *Karydia* myself.

**Kallikantzarakia (Gnomes)**: A kind of Hide and Seek where the children hiding appear to make funny faces or in general act foolishly (“kanoun vlakeies”).

Kallikantzaroi are goblins or spirits believed to appear once a year – during the Twelve Days between Christmas and Epiphany. Kallikantzaroi pull pranks and engage in all sorts of mischief. On Kallikantzaroi see Megas (1982 33-36). The game was mentioned by one 7-year-old girl as one of her favourite games played at school.

**Kamara (arch)**: Kamara was the most popular form of Skipping Rope played by children over eight years of age. A girls’ game by definition, despite the

participation and declared preference of several boys (see Survey chapter 4). Skipping rope was the most preferred school game by girls of all ages in the Survey I conducted on play preferences. *Kamara* derives its name from the arch formed by the rope as it is turned. The following versions of *Kamara* were most popular among Phocaeen school girls:

- a) The simple, turn-taking form with an individual jumper in the arch jumping until (s) he missed and the rest of the children queuing for their turn. This version could be modified by counting ten jumps and then leaving the arch free for the next player.
- b) “Akanonisto” (rule free, irregular): Free entry and exit of an indefinite number of jumpers, until a miss. The child whose legs were tangled in the rope took the place of the turner, or was “out”, depending on the agreement. Some children liked to turn the rope “forever”.
- c) “Ta deka paichnidia” (The ten games): Jumpers skip in pairs entering the arch from the curved side (the “kali meria”, the normal, or “good” side), the hollow side (*anapodo* = upside down/opposite), on one foot (on each side of the arch) etc. A miss means taking the role of the rope turner.

**Kamini** (furnace): A popular, central person, mixed gender game (ages 6-14), combining physical skill and strategy, its outcome determinant based on correct distance calculation. It was usually played at crossroads. Children draw a circle on the street, and divide it in sectors named after various countries. Players choose a country and take their place in the appropriate sector, while one player, who is assigned the role of *Manna*, or *Gi* (= earth) stands in the middle. The child with the *Gi* role directs the game by ordering which country will remain in the circle. This is achieved by shouting: “Na meinei, na meinei sto trypio to Kamini kai na xeropsithei, e.g. i Afstralia !” (Remain, remain in the broken furnace to roast, Australia!) . The child who has chosen Australia, must remain in the circle, while the rest of the players disperse quickly. Australia controls the dispersal by counting “one two three, stop”. Players then “freeze” and Australia chooses a player and declares the number and the kind of steps needed to “take” her/him (i.e. to step on the player’s feet). If Australia succeeds the player gets a *pseira* (“lice”), i.e. a penalty point, marked in the respective sector of the circle with a piece of chalk. The player who receives most “lice” in the end is given a *fatouro* (i.e. is smacked on the nape by all players). Strategic moves in the game (e.g. bluffs or the choice of *Gi* (Earth) as the country to

remain in the circle), focus on minimizing the players' chances to remove themselves beyond calculation distance. The game was also reported as being played by the parental generation in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Brewster describes a ball game (*Nations*) popular among Czechoslovakian children in the 1950s, where players were similarly assigned the names of countries (Brewster 1953:84).

A similar version of the game under the name *Gyrizei, gyrizei I gi*, was described in interviews by Upper Neighbourhood children. It is a variant of *Kamini*, where the role of *Gi* is slightly diminished, as it is the players who rotate around themselves in the circle sectors representing the countries of their choice, chanting: *Gyrizei, gyrizei I Gi* ( the earth goes round, goes round) *kai poia chora tha dialexei?* (and which country will she choose? The "Earth" then chooses the country that will remain in the circle and the game goes on exactly like *Kamini*.

**King-oh King:** See *Vasilia-Vasilia*.

**Kitty-Kitty:** see *Gata-Gata*

**Kleftes kai astynomoi** (cops and robbers): Seeking game similar to *War*, where opponents must be captured.

**Klostes or Kouvaristres** (Threads or Spools): A mixed gender kind of *Tag*, with a small introductory ritual dialogue and an allocation of pretend roles. It was played by Upper Neighbourhood children aged 8-13. The game involves one chaser and one chased child at a time, but there is a quick interchange between the two roles. The chaser is the *agorastis* (buyer) who enters a pretend shop to buy thread from the *Mana*, who is the shop owner, the *politis* (seller), and retains this role throughout the game. The other children play the role of merchandise, i.e. the *kouvaristres* (spools) or *klostes* (threads) and choose a colour which they only tell to the *Mana-politis*. They then gather around the *Mana-Politis* and sit down, as the *agorastis* enters the "shop" and asks the *Mana*, whether a particular colour of thread is available. If no child has chosen the colour mentioned by the *agorastis*, *Mana* replies: "Sta skoupidia", (To the dustbin), or "mas to pirane" (they have taken it away), or simply "Den echoume" (We haven't got any), or whatever funny negative answer (s)he can come up with. "Sta skoupidia" was quite popular. When the *agorastis* succeeds in mentioning an existing colour in the "shop", the "spool"/ child who has chosen that colour becomes the chased person and must immediately rise, leave the circle and start running while the *agorastis* chases her/him. The *agorastis*

has to catch the “spool” before (s)he returns to the “shop”, where (s)he has the right to gain immunity by touching the *Mana*, sitting down and finally by choosing a different colour/identity. If the “spool” is caught before reaching the *Mana* (s)he takes the place of the *agorastis* –chaser. Because the roles of chaser and chased rotate quickly in this game, which means that all “spools” are potential chasers, colours should be kept secret from the other “spools” . In reality, children can’t help themselves from exchanging the secret, which causes conflict, because when a mate-spool becomes a chaser, other spools resort to cheating, by changing the colour in mid-course. Fun in this game seems to be derived mostly from the guessing part, which lasts longer, as children compete at choosing ‘difficult ‘ colours such as *asimi* (silver), *chrysafi* (gold), *diafanis* (transparent), *fystiki* (pistachio-green) and *sakkouli* (=“baggy”, the beige colour of paper bags used in fruit shops). When bossy children play the role of *Mana* and the spools are younger playmates, power games revolve around the choice of colours (e.g. the right to choose “difficult” colours may be disputed or the *Mana* may decide to allocate the colours herself). Whether disputes will break out or not, depends on the ability of the *Mana* to convince her co-players that (s) he “knows best”, or – when older children participate – that the particular version is played in another neighbourhood, provided that the rest of the players are willing to improvise. *Kouvaristes* is an example of the mixed outcome determinants used by many children’s games, as it simultaneously involves physical skill (running), strategy and cunning (in the choice of colours, or in calculating the range of the chase to avoid or achieve immunity) and chance ( in the guessing procedure). It is also a game with rules that has a high imaginative content (roles, dialogue). Further, like all games – cooperative or competitive in their structure – it involves manifold contests of power among participants. The dialogue used to be more elaborate at the level of the parental generation, according to Upper Neighbourhood mothers. See Brewster (1953: 180-183) for similar games played among Yugoslavian children, under Colours.

Mothers of children contemporary to my research described a different chasing game played during their era at school. The game had the same name and one basic character the seller –who was called the “merchant”, but it also included a ritualized dialogue exchange at the beginning of the game, between the “merchant” and a child, who acquired the role of chased by failing to pay the merchant for a spool of thread bought . The game itself was played like “Cat and Mouse” or “Wolf and Lamb” and

no colours were involved, i.e children formed a circle excluding the “merchant”-chaser and protecting the chased child. The dialogue went as following:

The merchant (outside the circle):

Otan charazei I Avgoula (When the day breaks)  
Kai vgainei o Avgerinos (And Avgerinos<sup>14</sup> comes out)  
Ki adiakopa fonazei I Poulia (and Poulia keeeps crying out)  
“Edo o Ploumistos (Here comes the bedecked one:)  
Dantelles, kouvaristres, velonakia, (Lace, spools and needles)  
O Emboras” (the merchant!)

A child, leaving the circle to join the merchant outside:

“Mou’ pe I mana mou (my mum told me )  
na mou doseis mia kouvaristra”: (you should give me a spool)

The merchant:

“Pou einai ta lefta?” (Where is the money?)

The child:

“Den echo, avrio tha sta doso” (I haven’t got any. I’ll give to  
you tomorrow)

The dialogue was then repeated as the child re-entered the circle and left it again to make the effect of the passing day. When the child left the circle again it was the following day, so the merchant asked:

“Pou einai ta lefta pou mou chrostas?” (where is the money you  
owe me?)

The child repeated

“Den echo lefta” (I haven’t got any money),

which signalled the beginning of the chase.

**Kolokythia** (the marrow-plant): A sedentary, forfeit game testing absent-mindedness, similar to the American game The Priest has lost his cap as recorded by Brewster (1953: 27). It was usually played at school by third grade pupils, with the participation of the teacher at the end of the gym hour. Players sit around the *Mana* (usually the teacher at school, or older child, or volunteer in the neighbourhoods), who allocates numbers to each child and begins the following dialogue:

“Echo mia kolokythia (I’ve got a marrow plant)  
Pou kanei deka kolokythia” (that makes ten marrows)

The child who has number ten must ask:

Kai giati na kanei deka? (Why ten?)

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<sup>14</sup> *Avgerinos* is the morning star and *Poulia* is the popular names for the Pleiades.



The *Mana* answers:

Kai posa thes na kanei? (How many would you like?)

The child number ten replies:

Na kanei tria (I would like three)

Child number three must be alert and after asking “Why three?” repeats the same dialogue which leads to the choice of another number etc. Absent-minded players who fail to react as soon as they hear their number must pay a forfeit, e.g. they must imitate an animal. Children love this phase of the game, because it is an opportunity for mischief and laughter, as children slither like snakes, imitate the voices of funny animals etc. *Kolokythia* is a traditional game that has been reported in many collections of Greek games since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as a family or adult game played during Carnival or the first day of Lent (Shrove Monday). When games were introduced in the primary school curriculum in 1899, *Kolokythia* was also included in gym teachers’ instruction manuals and anthologies, as teachers were encouraged to collect, teach and disseminate traditional games (Gougoulis 2000a). Teachers in Phocaea continued this policy and taught their pupils the games of their own childhood, some of which, (such as *Blousa*) were adopted by children in their neighbourhood play. *Kolokythia*, however, was also a local traditional game. It was played among grown ups and young children and some children included *Kolokythia* during interviews on the game repertoire of a *parea*, offering descriptions of the game as played in their *parea*. The popularity of *Kolokythia* in Greece used to be such that the game became proverbial. The phrase “Tora tin *Kolokythia* tha paixoume?” is used to indicate the tediousness of a negotiation process, which verges on ridicule or deception, when small amendments to regulations are sought by one party, or alternatively during a discussion to disclose the discomfort of an interlocutor by too many “why” questions. *Kolokythia* was not a frequently played game and it was not listed among children’s play preferences in the Survey (see chapters 4, 5).

**Kolasi** (Hell): A ball game similar to Domino played by an Upper Neighbourhood *parea* of children, without the initial count to ten. A child with a central role (*Mana*) aims at the rest of the children who seek refuge past a “home” line. The game was claimed as “their invention”.

**(to) Koroido** (Sucker) A ball game similar to *Mila*, based on the unequal encounter of one central figure, the *Koroido* (after which the game was named)

against the rest of the players. A minimum of three children is required to get the game started, whereby the two players facing each other at a reasonable distance exchange passes, while the *koroido*, stands in the middle trying to catch the ball. Should the *koroido* succeed in getting hold of the ball, (s)he assumes the role of the ball-thrower, while his/her role is taken up by the child who touched the ball last. When more than three players are involved, as in the case described in chapter 5, they form a circle around the *koroido*.

*Koroido* roles are frequently assigned to the youngest playmate. See Fool in the Middle or Pig in the Middle, as described by Opie and Opie (1997:74), for similar British versions.

**Koritsaki** (Little Girl): A form of Tag sharing some of the principles of *Dilitirio*. Not only do the players not know when the chase will begin in this game but they also have no idea who the chaser will be. The game begins with the assignment of the *Manna* role to a child. *Mana* stands with extended hands as all players gather around her touching one of her fingers. *Mana* proceeds to describe one of the players by mentioning outfit details: E.g. “Xero ena koritsaki pou foraei galazia blouza” etc. (I know a girl /child who is wearing a light blue shirt). When the description has moved far enough she suddenly mentions the name of a player, who immediately starts to chase, as the other players release their hands and disperse quickly.

*Koritsaki* came up only among girls’ play preferences as a school game. Boys did participate in the game but it was initiated by girls. I only observed elicited performances of *Koritsaki*, (e.g. as an example of a series of games that they knew but felt that they hadn’t played for a long time) in the neighbourhoods. As most girls often wore skirts, they did not like playing *Koritsaki* because, if they raised their legs, when caught, they would expose their pants. At school the only time I saw the girls playing *Koritsaki*, was when one of the players came up with the idea of using arms instead of legs to form the arch, like they did in *Dilitirio*. See ‘Stuck in the Mud’ for a similar game in Britain, as described by Opie and Opie (1984: 110-111).

**Koukouvagia** (owl): A kind of squat tag initiated by teachers and played at school by 7 and 8-year olds during break time.

**Koutso** (Hopscotch): A girls’ game played with pebbles or flat stones along a diagram in the neighbourhood streets or on the unpaved parts of the school playground during school breaks. The most popular diagram was an X with two

squares at the top and two at the bottom of the X respectively. The game is played in turns and requires a minimum of two players, the maximum being prescribed by the number of squares (or triangles). A stone is tossed in a square in a particular sequence and must be kicked out of the diagram by a girl who hops on one foot. Several rules regulate the style, pace and degree of difficulty in tossing, hopping, and kicking the stone. Regulations are discussed and negotiated during the course of the game, either by asking “Do we have such and such?” or by receiving a sharp remark “We don’t have such and such”. When a player succeeds in tossing and retrieving her stone through all boxes of the diagram she wins a territory (roumbos, i.e. a privately owned box) where she can rest her limp foot from hopping, while the same territory is an obstacle for the rest of the players that must be jumped over. The girls with the most rounboi ( boxes) is the winner. When girls played in the neighbourhood, they used chalk to draw the diagrams. At school they incised the diagrams on the ground with a stick or stone. Boys were both uninterested and unskilled in the game (they were not considered expert hoppers ) and did not usually participate unless invited by their sisters or cousins. More often than not, Hopscotch was an early afternoon game choice, so it frequently clashed with the major football sessions that the overriding majority of Phocaeen boys engaged in, before moving on to mixed gender games with their female relatives and friends who formed their regular *parea*.

**Kryfto (Hide and Seek):** *Kryfto* (= “hidden”, something that can be hidden) is the most popular hiding game among Phocaeen children of both sexes between 7 and 14 years of age. Crucial in the game’s language is the symbolic use of saliva which is employed in a polluting sense. The hunter and hunted compete in symbolic spitting.<sup>15</sup>

The hunt begins with the “it” figure counting-out loud up to a predetermined number (50 or 100) standing with his/her eyes shut on a agreed spot (tree, door, lamp post or other boundary). Once the It figure spots a hidden player a race starts between them to reach the base. The first person to reach “it” as to announce loudly “Ftou, so and so” (= I spit on so and so), to let the rest of the players know what is

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<sup>15</sup> Saliva in Greek culture is considered as an ambiguous essence. In its benign meaning, it is used against demonic forces and especially against the evil eye. People symbolically spit on those who are considered vulnerable to the evil eye (especially young children and babies). Spitting in another context may constitute an act of contempt, as an underscoring of a pejorative statement (Ftou den drepsai = ftou you should be ashamed of yourself). In children's culture it is used either neutrally (as in spitting on a stone to distinguish one side from the other, when tossing stones to start a game) or in a contaminating sense, as in the case of Hide and Seek, I think). For some boys, spitting on the ground exhibits their prowess. Phocaeen boys spit on the ground to show off.

going on. When the game is played after dark – which is best – and many players have joined in, there is the possibility of not recognizing a person correctly. Such a case is considered a *karafotia* (black fire) and the child who is “it” starts counting again.

The last hidden player can “free” his playmates if (s)he outruns the “it” figure to the base, shouting “Ftou Xeleftheria” (= I am spitting and I am freeing). *Kryfto* was one of the most popular games among all Phocaeen children and it usually closed the daily play sessions in the neighbourhoods. In neighbourhood play *Kryfto* was best enjoyed after dark, because darkness added to the game’s excitement, especially for the children hiding. However, it was also played at school, especially by younger cohorts of children (see chapter 4).

**Kryftokynigito** (Tag-and Hide and Seek): A popular combination of chasing and hiding. The children hiding have to be caught by the child who is “it”.

**Kynigito** (Tag): A simple form of chasing game played in two versions: a) as a central person game b) as a team game. In form a) the person who is “it” chases the rest of the players until (s)he catches someone who then takes his/her place. The game may involve security bases or several devices for gaining immunity, or alternatively the “it” figure’s touch may immobilize the player calling for rescue by another player. All these versions of chasing are considered different games by children and have been listed separately (see *Dilitirio, Koritsaki, Tsigaropota, Frouta, Klostes* or *Kouvaristres, Psaria*). In form b) the most popular version was the boys vs girls tag played at school and in the neighbourhoods of Phocaea when many children participated (as the presence of a large number of children often invited division along gender lines). In tag played between teams of girls vs boys, each team designated two areas as “home” (*spiti* = security base and resting area providing immunity from touch) and “jail” (*fylaki*) for the captives.

**Lakkakia or lakkouvakia** (holes)\*: A mixed gender ball game played by grandparents and parents of children contemporary to my research up to the mid 1970s. Two teams of children competed in throwing a ball into five holes dug in the ground. The 4 holes formed a square. The fifth hole, in the middle of the square was called “captain” (*kapetanios*) and hitting the captain granted more points to the team.

**Lasticho** (Elastics/ Elastic Skipping) cf. Factor (1988:131), Opie & Opie (1997: 198-202): A girls’ game usually played with cheap commercial elastic cord, either bought by the metre in haberdashers or found in the homes and restaurants of

Phocaea. Restaurants use it to keep tablecloths on tables on windy days. Most houses keep elastics for clothing repair. Two girls stand apart with an elastic loop wrapped around their ankles. A third girl (or several girls who take turns) proceeds to jump in and out of the loop in several patterns, each pattern being accompanied by a rhyme. The loop is raised after a set of patterns is accomplished, to the level of the knees, waist and shoulders of the players, according to the age and height of participants.

Popular rhymes were the following:

a) Tsaf-tsouf to treno perna- (Puff-puff, the train goes by)

mesa – exo – mesa, patita. (In-out-in, both feet on the cord)

b) 1-2-3 ( Players counted three jumps on the right side of the cord, then on the left side of the cord, with the cord between the feet and with open legs and repeat all patterns at different heights).

c) Fraoulitsa (little strawberry)

Peponaki (little melon)

Karpouzaki (little water melon)

Trapezaki ( little table)

Coca-cola

Pepsi-Cola

When more than 4 girls participated they usually played at *trapezaki* (little table), forming a pentagone etc, with the elastic cord.

**Little Girl:** See *Koritsaki*.

**Long Donkey:** See “Makria Gaidoura”.

**Loukaniko** (Sausage): A mixed gender chasing and capturing game sometimes combining Hide and Seek, played by 8-14 year-old children in the streets of Phocaea.. The description was provided by Upper Neighbourhood children (I didn't happen to observe the game myself). It is played by two teams: the team of chasers and the team of chased. Whoever is caught is tied to a lamp-post with a rope like a “loukaniko” (sausage). It is from the linguistic metaphor that draws on the preparation of sausages to indicate the tightness of the rope bonds that the game derives its name. The team of chased become chasers, when all their members are captured and tied up “like sausages”.

**Lykos kai t'arni** (wolf and lamb): Chasing game for young children taught by and usually performed in the presence of kindergarten and first grade teachers during gym. The chaser is in a disadvantaged position. Children form a circle after counting out, to decide which child will play the role of the lamb and who will be the wolf.

The wolf chases the lamb only when the latter leaves the protection of the circle. The lamb can enter the circle of children at free will, while the wolf is not allowed to break the protective chain of holding hands to chase his victim. When the lamb is caught, other players take the role of wolf and lamb, while the previous children in these roles become part of the hand holding players forming the circle. This game – like the identical game “Gata kai Pontikos” – belongs to a series of school games that were introduced by gymnastics manuals in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and have been part of the teachers’ training curriculum ever since. In Phocaea it was not played outside the school context. In other parts of Greece, however, it has been reported, under several names, as a game older children or grown ups play with younger children. See Opie and Opie (1984: 114-115; 239) for similar games in Britain (“Cat and Mouse”) and Germany (“Wolf and Lamb”).

**Machalas (?)** [neighbourhood]\*: A guessing game described by parents of children contemporary to my research, who were born in the adjacent village of Anavyssos, as a guessing game played before bed time among siblings. My informants weren’t sure about the name of the game however. The game involved one child describing a family in the village and the rest of the children trying to guess by repeating a ritualized dialogue. E.g.

S’ ena spiti einai agori, koritsi kai antropinaika ( In a house there are a boy , a girl and a couple).

The rest of the children asked:

Se poion machala ( In which neighbourhood?- machalas = word of Turkish origin denoting neighbourhood).

The boundaries of the neighbourhood were then described by mentioning the houses forming the borderlines.

Children contemporary to my research did not play at this game in Phocaea, but they did know about it and two girls told me that they had played at it a couple of times (the mother of one of the girls originated from Anavyssos).

**Makria Gaidoura** (Long Donkey): A leaping and exerting game played by two teams of 10-14 year old boys and older adolescents. The teams draw lots to determine which team will go under. The underdogs bend over forming a line facing a tree or lamp post. The rival team jumps over the backs of the underdogs until somebody collapses or falls over. If a climber falls over, his team changes places with the bending players. If one of the bending players collapses the team has to

endure another round in the same position. For a similar American game see Johnny on the Pony as described by Brewster (1953: 116-118).

**Marbles:** (see *Bilies*).

**(ta) Menta-menta:** A popular mixed gender exerting game played by two teams of children usually aged between 9 and 12 years in the crossroads of Phocaea (and occasionally at school during free play time). Children divide in two teams and form two lines facing each other at a distance of several feet. Players on each line hold hands thus forming a “chain” (*alysida*). The game begins with an invitation of a player of the rival team to come over by chanting the following formula (which has granted the game its name)

Ta menta, menta (mint, mint)

Ta melighistika (in honey)

Ki ego parageila (and I have ordered)

Me ton Costa (with ... e.g Costas ).

In the game sessions that I observed the children usually rushed into action by simplifying the introductory ritual. They made the same invitation as in *abariza* by calling out: *Kaloume* (we call) and immediately named the invited child (Costas, in our example).

As soon as Costas has been named he must leave his team and charge the other team, trying to break the link of hands at any chosen point. If he succeeds, he takes a captive with him back to his line of players. If he fails he is taken captive himself. The game involves a lot of action, suspense and disputes if the teams don't match in strength. Teams are usually of mixed genders but if more than twelve players participate, boys and girls may divide along gender lines. The division is not always unconditionally accepted, especially if boys have more strong players than the girls, a fact which may lead to a dispute and eventually to a girls vs boys chase, if girls fail to convince their male play mates to play fair. Girls and younger children thought the game was tough and there were many times when I saw players of both sexes retreat from the chains in tears, having hurt a knee or having received a hard blow on the wrist from an opponent's charge. The odds of getting hurt were increased for the attacking children if the attacked team suddenly released hands to avoid a hard blow. Younger children were intimidated by this game and only well-built youngsters were accepted in the chains. The youngest child I saw participating in Menta-menta was an eight-year-old boy. Menta-Menta was considered a girls' game by previous

cohorts of primary schoolchildren and high school boys told me that in their era the girls pleaded for their participation. The game was more popular among 9-11 year old girls contemporary to my research than it was among boys of the same age, but the latter did not characterize the game as girlish.

See Rover-Red Rover as described by Brewster (1953:179) and Opie and Opie 1984: 239 for similar games played by American and Scottish children respectively. In the Opies' version it is a girls' game.

**M' agapa, den m'agapa** (Loves me loves me not): A guessing game played mostly by girls 7-11 years. The petals of a daisy or of a chamomile flower are plucked to find out whether the girls' actual or potential fancy loves her. The same game is played by repeating a more detailed formula: "M' agapa, me paidevei, me misei, me koroideve (Loves me, torments me, hates me, makes a fool of me).

**(ta) Mila** (Apples): A ball game played by children of both sexes aged 7-11. Two children who are "out", face each other a few meters apart. The rest of the players occupy the space separating the two "out" players. The "out" players try to eliminate the "in" players by hitting them with a ball. The players who are "in" (*mesa* or *sti mesi* = in the middle) may gain "a Life" by catching *ena milo* (=an apple, i.e. by catching the ball before it bounces, or else they are out of the game. Players with many "lives" can bring children who are "out" back into the game, by donating one life to them. When only one player is left in the middle, twelve hits are attempted by the external players. If they are all avoided, the entire group of eliminated children is "saved" and takes position in the middle and the game restarts with the same players in the "out" position. In the sessions I observed, however, the "out" players usually refused to repeat the tiresome ball throwing task all over again, so the fate of the game relied on the presence of children with good will, who would volunteer for the "out" positions. If nothing of the kind happened, bids were made for another kind of game. Ta Mila was a popular ball game choice<sup>16</sup> and a frequently played mixed gender and age game played at school and in the neighbourhoods of Phocaea, probably due to its easy structure and democratic access rituals. New

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<sup>16</sup> If one looks at children's answers in the survey on play preferences the popularity of Mila is more evident among both sexes at school (second preferred ball game among girls, and tenth in all girls' school preferences – fourth most preferred ball game and twelfth in rank of all boys' school preferences, see table 4.1, chapter 4) than in the home/neighbourhood contexts, where children were faced with a much larger choice of games ( twelfth in rank of most preferred games among girls and boys, see tables 5.1 and 6.1 in chapter 5). Seven year-old boys were virtually Mila fanatics, (second



players were easily accepted “in the middle” or as “out” players (see Thorne for similarly easy access to Dodgeball in the two American schools where she did her research in the late 1970s and early 1980s). See Hot Rice, a version of Pig in the Middle, as reported by Opie & Opie (1997:74), also Dodgeball as described by Thorne 1993: 54.

**Moukos or tenekes:** An aiming game which used to combine gambling elements in the version played by Refugees from Phoces Asia Minor, where it was also played by boys only. The objective of the game among three generations of informants was to knock a tin (*Moukos*) off the bounds of a surrounding circle. Among the parental generation of my research it was a chasing game played among girls and boys. Children contemporary to my research transformed it into a hiding game. Girls entered the scene when the game appeared in a more “tamed” form, (see Sutton-Smith 1981:271-280 on the “domestication” of play) by losing the gambling element for instance. The version that elderly informants (born between 1896 and 1911) remembered and described as being played in Phoces, Asia Minor was a gambling game involving skill and chance. Coins were placed on top of the tin, while boys aimed at the tin with a pebble (*kaimaka*) or flat stone (*amada*). The coins that fell off the tin, when the latter was struck by a player, were granted to that particular player. Adults participated in this version of *Moukos* along with adolescent and pre-adolescent boys. I did not observe a session of *Moukos* during my stay in Phocaea, as the game had apparently lost its popularity. Children (aged 9-13 years) did describe it however as a game they knew and had played. See Duckstone (Opie and Opie 1997: 84-85) for a similar British game.

**Oh Mariam:** singing, clapping and elimination game played exactly like *Ababi*. The games are often played in a sequel by 10-12 year-old girls at school and in the streets of Phocaea.

The text goes as follows:

Oh Mariam, Mariam, Mariam  
Si,Do, Re, Mi, Makaro, makaro  
Leo, leo ti-ti-ti  
Leo, leo, ti-ti-ti  
One, two, three.

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choice in rank order of school games preferred by 2<sup>nd</sup> grade boys), as they had recently learnt the game from older children at the time I conducted my Survey on game preferences.

See Grugeon (2001: 105) for a similar version of the song in a clapping game performed differently by children in Bedford UK, in the mid 1990s,

**One-Two-Three Red Light:** See Ena –dyo-tria, Kokkino Fos.

**Owl:** See Koukouvagia.

**Pano- Kato** (Up and Down): A circle game played during gym by first grade pupils with the participation of their teacher, who plays the role of the *Mana*, giving commands. At the appropriate command children must stand or squat. As the teacher changes the sequence of commands children may make mistakes. Players who fail to follow the right command are out. The game was listed under the 6 year-old boys' school play preferences (see Table 4.1.2, chapter 4).

**Patito** (Treading, stomping game): A skipping game with a central person, usually played among girls between 8-11 years at school and in the streets of Phocaea. Younger children and boys may participate but boys never initiate the game. The game begins with the choice of the *Mana*. Children hold hands to form a circle and hop around chanting:

“Paizoume ena paichnidi pou to lene Pa-ti-to” (We are playing a game called Pa-ti-to).

As soon as the last syllable of the word Patito is uttered, the children release hands, make a big jump in an effort to gain distance from the *Mana* and stand still. The *Mana* chooses a player and repeats the word Pa-ti-to, hopping at every syllable, and tries to get the child by treading on his/her feet at the last syllable of the word, while the targeted child hops away in an equal number of steps. Only one step per syllable can be made, the technique in the game requiring good calculation of step size and good timing. The child who gets trodden on is out and the *Mana* passes the role on to another player – usually a close friend.

**Pentovola** (Fivestones or Jacks)\* : A girls' game of skill, popular among girls of previous cohorts of children (especially parents and grandparents of children contemporary to my research) up to around the beginning of 1980s. Five stones or pebbles were tossed in the air and then collected in several ways. A couple of elderly Saracatsan women, confided that they still played *Pentovola* as a solitary pastime, while tending their animals. Contemporary girls and boys did not know how to play the game and encountered it for the first time in their school primers. Despite the fact that they were shown how to play at it by a schoolteacher, who remembered the rules from her childhood, they were not particularly enthusiastic about it and after trying

out for a day or two, they abandoned the effort altogether (see chapter 4 for a discussion). See Brewster (1953: 139) under Jacks for different versions of the game among Czechoslovakian, Armenian, Jewish, Egyptian and Turkish children in the 1950s and Opie and Opie 1997: 56-72).

**Perna-perna-i-melissa** (The bee goes by-goes by): A singing game similar to London Bridge, as described by Opie and Opie (1988:61-67), played by girls aged 5-11. Two children facing each other form an arch with their clapping hands. The rest of the girls pass under the arch whilst the two hand-holders chant “Perna-perna I melissa me ta melissopoula kai me ta klossopoula, klossopoula, klossopoula” = The bee, the bee is passing with its beelings and its broodlings, broodlings, broodlings (which rhymes with beelings in Greek). The child who passes under the arch, when the last word is sung, is captured by the hand-holding girls who have previously agreed to be referred to by a secret password (usually variations of opposites such as the “moon” and the “sun”, gold and silver, or jewellery and precious stones). They whisper the two passwords in the captive’s ear without telling which represents whom, and ask her to choose. The captured girl then lines up behind the respective hand-holder. When the last girl is captured, the hand-holding girls rock the captive back and forth, chanting aloud: “Mia tou klefti, dyo tou klefti, treis kai ton tsakosame kai sti fylaki ton chosame. Ti theleis to chryso perideraio I to diamantenio dachtylidi? (One for the thief, two for the thief, three for the thief, caught and jailed. What would you like, e.g. the golden necklace or the diamond ring?)” The captive lines up behind the girl who represents the respective password and the game usually ends in tug-of-war. If boys decide to join the game, it usually ends in a general turmoil. Singing games are definitely girls’ territory however, and they never came up in boys’ play preferences, either in the survey or in interviews. I only saw boys pretending to join singing games, with the intention of changing the course of the game and initiating a girls vs boys tag (see chapter 4 on crossing gender boundaries).

This game was probably introduced in Greece by the school system in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. However, it was appropriated by children and has appeared in collections of folk games e.g. of Samos and Constantinople (Istamboul), as early as 1880 (cf. Stamatiadis: 1881: 243 and Pagounis, 1880-81: 135 respectively).

A French version of London Bridge (*trois-trois passera*) played by Greek children of Smyrna (before the exchange of populations in 1923, probably in 1905-1915) has been reported by Archigenis (1984: 88-89). According to him (*ibid*: 89)

the game spread to the Greek population through the schools run by French nuns in Smyrna at the time. The arch formed by the hand-holding children was referred to as “la porte de notre-dame” in the Smyrna version. I was not aware of this information at the time of my fieldwork, so I did not ask the elderly Refugees if they played at the game and how they came to know it.

**Petaei-petaei** (It flies-it flies): A sedentary, forfeit game for young children usually initiated by a grown up. Players are usually seated around a table with one hand placed on it. The person (grown up or older child) who has the leading role chants: “Petaei, petaei, petaei” (it flies, it flies it flies) lifting his/her hand from the table to imitate the flying movement. The players follow by moving their hands up and down until the leader mentions the name of an animal. If the mentioned animal is a bird or a flying insect (or technological device) all hands must stay up. If a non-flying animal or object is mentioned hands must quickly “land” on the table. The players who fail to observe either rule have to imitate the voice of an animal. See Feathers (Brewster 1953: 25) for a similar game played by American children

**Petropolemos (Stonewar)\***: A war game popular among previous generations (from the era of great grandparents in the beginning of the 20th century up to the mid Seventies) of boys. Contemporary to my research boys engaged in symbolic rather than actual physical group combat. Despite the fact that many boys did occasionally throw stones at each other- and two Upper neighbourhood children told me that they had once played at stone war, throwing stones was considered aggressive both by children and adults. It was also banned by the overriding majority of parents. In fact it was the same fathers, who had played at stone war when they were young that confiscated the sling shots and catapults from their own offspring to prevent accidents. Not only had the times changed, but it was their generation that brought these changes about.

**Plakakia or keramidakia (Tiles)**: A ball game played by two mixed gender teams of children aged 9-14. Seven flat stones, pebbles or tiles are piled on top of each other. Children divide in two teams and take turns in trying to knock the pile of plakakia off with the ball. When a player of one team demolishes the pile with the ball, (s)he then aims at the opponents – after getting the ball back – who immediately disperse. Players who are hit are out, granting a bonus point to the ball-throwing team, but if nobody gets hit, the dispersed opponents take advantage of the time used by the ball-throwing team to reclaim the ball, and try to restore the pile of *plakakia*.

If they succeed, they win a point and gain the ball in the next round. The game was also known as *Eftapetro* (Seven Stones) by previous cohorts of primary schoolchildren. See Cog Stone as described by Opie and Opie (1997:75) for a similar game played by English children.

**Plakoto** (Sticker game): A boy's tossing and gambling game played with collectible stickers, involving small groups of boys aged 7 to 14 years. Players toss their stickers from a low wall. Stickers that land on other stickers win and their proprietor collects both from the ground. A second version of the game consisted in holding a sticker between the thumb and the index finger and tossing it away. Stickers that landed farthest away were the winners in this contest and their owners collected all the rest. Only double stickers were gambled in *Plakoto* as in *Tzanes* (see entry). The latter game was more popular during my stay in Phocaea..

**Podilata** (Bicycles): While children of both sexes in Phocaea enjoyed bicycle rides, cycling for boys aged 8-13 involves various stunts (e.g. *souzes* = wheelies) and sometimes adds a degree of difficulty and suspense to other games. Frequent games played on bikes were: Follow the Leader, Tag and Hide and Seek, while Lower Neighbourhood boys told me that they also played at ball games, such as *Koroido* and football, on bicycles.

**Podosfairo** (Football): Children's version of football does not observe all rules of the formal version played by professional teams. Rules may be simplified, the number of players is usually less than eleven and some folk versions are also popular, such as the *Mono* (Single), and the *Amerikanaki* (the little American). *Mono* is played with one goalpost, when players are less than four, each player playing for himself simultaneously in attack and defense positions. Three shoots out call for a penalty. The *Amerikanaki* is a rudimentary form of football played when only two players are available. The roles of goalkeeper and player are not distinguished. The two players guard their goalposts and try to score without leaving their base, by performing long shoots. Football was a mixed gender game at school, where the competition was age-based (see chapter 4 for discussion). In the neighbourhoods of Phocaea football was usually played by smaller or larger groups of boys, often involving a competition between *parees* of the two major Phocaeen neighbourhoods (see chapters 4 and 5).

**Poison:** See *Dilitirio*

**Polemos (War):** A seeking game and simulation of warfare played by two teams of players holding toy guns. In 1988-89 weapons were makeshift and/or commercial. One team hides, while the other team who is “it” seeks. When a hiding opponent is spotted the seeker imitates a gun sound and the opponent is out. When all players have been spotted (and eliminated), seekers exchange roles with hiders.

**Prionaki (little saw):** A string game played by 9-11 year-old pairs of girls at school. A string is tied to a loop. The loop is passed around the wrists of one girl, while the other makes several combinations of the string until it can perform the movement of a saw. Other popular figures with string among Phocaeen girls were the *porta* (door), *paploma* (quilt, i.e. the diamond shape used in traditional quilted eiderdowns), *saita* (shuttle) and *potami* (river). Eleven year-old girls told me that they used rubber bands for making string figures when they were in the mood for playing – especially on cold winter days – and string wasn’t available. String figures used to be more popular among previous generations of girls. It was a tradition that was probably fading out. I only saw very few (elicited) performances of string figures by the 9-11 year-old cohort of girls but making string figures did not become a fad that would attract the attention of younger girls, and thus included in their repository of games. Girls younger than nine in Phocaea did not learn how to play with string throughout my stay. Brewster and Tarsouli (1945-1949) have published drawings and photographs of similar forms and names of string figures from Athens and other areas of Greece, as played Greek girls – and boys too – in the mid 1940s.

**Proti Elia (First olive tree):** A kind of Leap Frog played by high school boys, named after the verses chanted during leaping over other players. A player bends over, while a group of children line up and take turns in vaulting over him, following the instructions as chanted by the *Mana*; The first three chants refer to the style of vaults and the stance adopted by the stooping child e.g. “Proti Elia” (= First Olive tree: the first player vaults performing a simple leap, “Defteri me ta kladia” (= Second with branches, i.e. the bending boy sticks out his elbows like branches making the leap more difficult), “Triti me ta chasika prenane ta bagasika” (= Third with the special ones, the cheeky ones are jumping). After the third jump, things get tougher for the bending player, as the next orders refer to the style of hitting blows which the vaulting players are expected to perform e.g. *kolochtypiti* (bum-strike), *pirounato* (fork-blow), *faskelato* (nape-slap) *machairato* (knife-blow). If a jumper fails to perform a leap correctly he takes over the position of the bending boy. This

version was described during interviews with older siblings of my research participants as being played at high school. See Brewster (1953: 103-105) under Leapfrog for a similar game among American, Armenian and Italian children. Brewster (1953:104) also refers to the Greek game.

**Psaria (Fish):** A chasing game played exactly like *Klostes* or *Kouvaristres*, by some groups of Upper Neighbourhood children, The *Mana*-seller in *Psaria* is the *psaromanavis* (fish-monger) and the children to be chased choose the name of a fish which is secretly shared with the *Mana*-*psaromanavis*. Rule variations regulating the distance, timing and the odds of the chase were used by these *parees* of children, such as counting up to ten in English or Greek. The caught children were out in this game rather than taking the role of the chased, thus defining a time that the game would end, whereas *Kouvaristres* went on until participants were bored.

**(ta) Roumbala:\*** An aiming game played by Sarakatsans of parental and grandparental generation of children. Children, adolescents and adults (usually male) divided in two teams. Each team competed with the other in hitting a line of standing stones with smaller stones. Phocaeen primary schoolchildren with parents of Sarakatsan descent had been taught this game by their adult relatives but they did not like it, as it involved throwing stones really hard, and did not adopt it in their game repertoire. I was present during one of these instruction sessions. The children I observed, after watching their sixty year-old aunt perform the game for their sake, tried it for a while and soon gave up because they didn't want to get hurt (and be told off as a result of getting hurt).

**Sausage:** (see *Loukaniko*).

**Spin the Bottle:** (See *Boukala*).

**Spools or Threads:** (See *Klostes* or *Kouvaristres*).

**Statues:** (see *Agalmata*).

**Stone war** (see *Petropolemos*)

**Stratitakia akounita amilita agelasta, mera I nyghta?** (Soldiers standing still, silent and without laughing is it day or night?): A central person game similar to *Agalmata* (Statues). A child who is "it", stands against a wall with his back turned to his players and addresses them with the following question: "Stratitakia akounita , amilita agelasta, mera I nyghta?" The "stratitakia" (=soldiers), who are expected to perform a pantomime, answer "nyghta", if they are not ready or "mera", when the preparations for the pantomime have ended. As soon as the word "mera" is uttered,

the “it” figure turns round and the soldiers must “freeze” in a pose alluding to a chosen activity. They must remain virtually motionless, speechless and without breaking out in a grin, or else they are out. The child who is “it” approaches the “soldiers” one by one and grants them movement by “winding them up”, which enables her/him to see the selected activity performed. He then chooses the child who performed best, to replace her/him at being “it”. The “it” role in this game, as in Statues, is a coveted role. This version of the game was described by girls in interviews, but I did not see it played myself, as children usually preferred Statues to “Stratitotakia”. Furthermore, Stratitotakia was not listed among children’s play preferences in the survey I conducted (see chapters 4, 5), so it might have been in the process of fading out.

**Stroumfokynigito (Smurf tag):** A mixed gender, central person, racing (or chasing) game, similar to Gata-Gata (Kitty-Kitty) based on the same approach-avoidance principle, but drawing on the TV cartoon to assign the roles of the players (usually aged between 6 and 9 years). The child who is “it”, (Drakumel) stands against a wall turning his/her back to the players, who line up a few metres away, after having been assigned names of the Smurfs. When Drakumel turns round (s)he shouts simultaneously the name of a Smurf e.g. Lichoudis (Greedy) and a colour, and proceeds in chasing Lichoudis who runs to touch an item bearing the designated colour, which offers immunity from it. If Lichoudis fails to touch the colour before Drakumel reaches him, he becomes Drakumel in the following round. This version of the game was played by Upper Neighbourhood girls. Lower Neighbourhood girls used the same name for a form of tag. The chaser was Drakumel and the chased were immunized by his touch if they were able to name a Smurf, when caught or touched by Drakumel.

**Spools or Threads:** See Klostes or Kouvaristres.

**Sucker:** See Koroido.

**Tag:** See Kynigito.

**The bee goes by-goes by:** See perna-perna- i- melissa.

**The Ten Games:** See Ta Dekka Paichnidia

**The Ten Questions:** See Oi Dekka Erotiseis.

**Threads or Spools:** See Klostes or Kouvaristres.

**Ti tha kanei o kyrios stin kyria** (What shall the gentleman do to the lady):  
Mixed gender courtship game played by children aged 9-12 (and older children in



other contexts) in the summer evenings in the streets. Players form a circle around two children, one of which has previously secretly given each player a number. The number-giver asks the *Mana* “what will number X do to number Y” –usually opposite sexed children –. The choice is among a kiss, a slap, pulling of hair etc. The game acquires a more overt sexual character among older players.

**Tiles:** See *Plakakia* or *Keramidakia*.

**Toichaki –I (little wall)\*:** Gambling game played until the late 1970s among male preadolescents and adolescents with the participation of adults. Coins are tossed against a wall. The tosser whose coin has landed nearest to the wall wins and collects the rest of the landed coins.

**Toichaki II (little wall)\*:** Duelling game played at the old school by previous cohorts of schoolchildren of both sexes. Pairs of children competed in trying to push each other off a short stone wall. The game was considered dangerous, and teenagers reported that some children in their era got hurt while playing *Toichaki*.

**Tourkos i Ellinas? (Turk or Greek?):** A guessing game popular among young children and girls and played with mothers and grandmothers at springtime. A poppy bud is opened to find out whether its petals have acquired their red colour (Turk) or whether they are still white (Greek).<sup>17</sup> Other versions of the same game referred to Queen and King respectively.

**Triliza:** A sedentary game of strategy and chance played by 7-10 year-old boys and girls at school and at home on carved or drawn diagrams. A square diagram divided to 8 triangles by two vertical and two diagonal lines is carved on the soil, or on a brick or any surface that can be easily cut (see Appendix II, **Figures 4.11, 4.12**). Phocaeans children also had commercial versions of *Triliza* played on a cardboard. The game requires two players, each one equipped with three counters – usually stones, or commercial counters if the game is played indoors. Counters may be placed only on the points where the lines intersect. The child who succeeds in putting his or her counters in a straight line wins. Nine Men’s Morris is the closest British game to *Triliza* according to Brewster (1953: 127-129). A *triliza* variant using paper and pencil was SOS, which was played like Noughts and Crosses. A rectangle divided in an agreed upon number of squares was drawn on a paper. Each player

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<sup>17</sup> The association of the red colour with Turks refers to the *fez*, a felt cap which used to be the male head dress for subjects of the Ottoman Empire. After the Greek War of Independence and the

could fill a square with either the letter S or the letter O, the objective of the game being to form the word SOS in a horizontal, vertical or diagonal line of squares. SOS was usually an indoor game, often played in winter evenings, along with other paper and pencil or guessing games (see *Erotiseis*).

**Tsigaropota (Drinks and Cigarettes):** A chasing game where immunity from chaser's touch is achieved by naming a cigarette brand (e.g. Marlboro or Karelia etc). Immunity in this game, as in *Frouta*, also means immobility. The player who has chosen this immobilized immunity can reclaim mobility by mentioning a kind of Drink (e.g. Whiskey or orange juice). This interchange however cannot go on *ad infinitum*. Usually players agree on how many times a chased person is entitled to seek immunity.

**Tsiliki (tip cat)\*:** A tossing game played with two sticks. The short stick (*tsiliki*) is struck with the longer one, as players compete to strike their *tsiliki* the furthest. The game was played until the 1970s in Phocaea, when it gradually faded out, as both Phocaea's environment and ideas about children's safety began to change. Children contemporary to my research had tried some of the 'rough' games of their parents and grandparents (the latter especially were keen to teach their childhood games) but did not adopt them, either because their parents banned rough and dangerous games ( e.g. all games involving sling shots and catapults) or because they avoided games where they could get hurt. (cf. Roumbala). See Opie and Opie (1997:316-328).

**Tsoukalakia (Pots)\*:** An exerting game played by the parental and grandparental generations up to the mid 1960s. It was described by two women of Refugee origin as follows: Young children squatted forming a line of "pots". Two older children played the roles of buyer and seller. The buyer chose one "pot" at a time, by hitting the child on the head gently and carried it by holding the child-pot by the underarms. After carrying the pot for a short while s(he) dropped it gently. The last pot however was left more abruptly to "break" on the ground. The broken pot was unpleasantly surprised, while the older children laughed at her/his expense.

**Tug-of-war:** (see *Dielkystinda*)

**Tzanes:** A boys' aiming and gambling game with stones. Its name is derived from the verb *tzanao* (which denotes the striking of one stone by another and the

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formation of the Greek Nation-State in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the fez was gradually abandoned by Greeks as it reminded them of the Ottoman past and the fez eventually became a metonymy for Turk.

bouncing of a stone on the ground) and it was usually played by groups of 5-7 players but required a minimum of two. Each player aims to hit with his stone, the stones of the other players. Each time a stone is struck, its owner is obliged to give the successful stone-thrower a sticker. *Tzanes* was a seasonal game, whose seasonality was linked by some *parees* of boys (e.g. in the Lower Neighbourhood) to the launching of stickers, since the objective of the game was to win as many stickers as possible in order to complete the sticker album that was in vogue at that particular period. During my stay in Phocaea boys gambled their *Rocky* (stickers depicting Sylvester Stallone in scenes from the film *Rocky*), Football, Basketball and Olympic sports stickers at *Tzanes*. Upper Neighbourhood children, when asked why they didn't play at *Tzanes* in late spring, responded that the seasonality of the game was mutually exclusive to marbles. The marbles season, according to this version, started in the summer, while *Tzanes* succeeded Marbles in the autumn and winter. The Opies (1997: 2-3) suggest that children's ideas of seasons might differ from that of adults and that what British children mean by "season" is a reasonably lengthy stretch of time, where "everybody" plays at a particular game. While this might be the case for Phocaeen children too, still I did not have the impression that a "marbles" season would be mutually exclusive to a *Tzanes* season, since my observations did not conform this view. I soon discovered that there was more than seasonality involved in the performance of a game. *Tzanes* was not a very popular game with adults, because the tossed stones sometimes missed their targets and landed on someone's property, especially cars. The *Tzanes* season in the Upper Neighbourhood had been dramatically shortened by an infuriated owner (FB to one of the players) of a BMW whose front lamp had been smashed by a flying stone. It was adults rather than marbles that were antagonistic to *Tzanes* games in the neighbourhood.

**Up and Down:** (See *Pano – Kato*).

**Varelakia or Skamnakia (Leap frog)\*:** A jumping game, where the aim is to vault over other players who bend down at various heights. It was frequently played by previous generations of children (parents and grandparents) especially by boys, until the late 1960s. Children contemporary to my research rarely played the game but they did know it. Elderly Refugees (born between 1900 and 1910) referred to *Skamnakia* or *Varelakia* as a kind of athletic contest. In their era in Phocaea adolescents tried to vault over standing playmates.

**Varkoula** (Little Boat): An easy form of jump rope for younger players. The jump rope is turned in half circles enabling younger children to jump. Two versions of *Varkoula* were popular among Phocaeen children: Normal and on one foot (“kanoniko kai koutso”). See also *Fidaki*.

**Vasilia-Vasilia** (King-oh-King): This central person game is played in two versions: as a racing game and as a guessing game. As a racing game it is played like *Ena-dyo-tria Stop*. The King stands against a wall with his back turned to the rest of the players who line up a few metres away facing his back. The players have the same objective as in *Ena-dyo-tria stop*, i.e. to hit the back of the King and thus signal the chase back to the line. In this game however the King controls the approaching rate of the players by giving specific directions offered to the following question which the players address:

“Vassilia, vassilia me ta dodeka spathia ti ora einai?”<sup>18</sup> (King-oh King with the twelve swords, what time is it?)

The King responds by indicating how many and which kind of steps the players must make (e.g. a big one and two tiny ones). The player who is caught when the race back to line begins (as soon as the back of the king is touched) becomes King. See Opie and Opie (1984: 187-190) for similar games in various European countries and Britain, under “Mother May I?”. *Vassilia-Vasilia* was far less popular than 1-2-3-stop, probably because most dialogue games were in the process of being dropped by children contemporary to my research, who seemed to prefer to get into action as quickly as possible.

The second version of the game was played like *Statues* or *Stratitotakia Akounita*, *amilita*, *agelasta*. The King stands with his back against a wall, or sits facing the rest of the players who ask:

The players: *Vasilia, Vasilia me ta dodeka spathia ti douleia?*  
(King-oh King with the twelve swords, what kind of work? )

The King: *Tembelia* (Laziness)

The Players: *Pou douleveis?* ( Where do you work?)

The King: *Stin Athina* ( In Athens)

The players: *Posa pairneis?*

The King: *Ekato* (one hundred)

The Players: *Kai ta resta?* (and the rest?)

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<sup>18</sup> According to Upper Neighbourhood girls if a girl is “it” she is “Queen”, and she is addressed as the owner of twelve golden needles rather than swords (“*Vasilissa, vasilissa me tis dodeka chryses velones*”). I never saw this version performed however.

**The King: Pagoto (Ice cream)**

The players then proceed to mime an occupation without speaking or making sounds. The child whose enactment theme is discovered first, replaces the King in the next round.

This version of the game did not seem to be much in vogue during my fieldwork and was provided only in interviews. The last part of the dialogue combines elements from popular hand-clapping games.

**Vezyris (Vezyr):** A forfeit, sedentary game played with a lamb's knucklebone. It used to be very popular around Easter when lambs are slaughtered for the traditional spit-roasted lamb on Easter Sunday. Players form a circle and take turns at throwing the knucklebone on the ground or on a table. They pay a particular forfeit ordered by the *Mana* depending on which side the knucklebone will land on. Sides have names such as *Vassilias* (King) or *Vezyris* (= Turkish political authority during the era of the Ottoman Empire). Schoolchildren contemporary to my research knew about the game and some had played it with older children or adults but it was not popular anymore.

**War:** (See *Polemos*).

**Wolf and Lamb:** See (o) Lykos kai t' arni