



Cyprus National
Commission
for UNESCO

TRADITIONAL EASTER GAMES OF CYPRUS



Cypriot postage stamp of 1989 featuring
an illustration of the traditional Easter game Ligrin
(Κυπριακά Γραμματόσημα 1880-2014 Ιστορία και Πολιτισμός)

The undertaken research and the data documentation was an initiative
of the Folklore Association of “ΚΤΙΜΑ” in 2017

Traditional Easter Games of Cyprus

INTRODUCTION

The Folklore Association "KTIMA" is a non-profit association that has been founded in 2011, in Paphos. The aim of the Association is to preserve and promote the Cypriot tradition and our cultural heritage. Our association has been involved and engaged in the cultural activities of our country since its foundation. In this context, our research team has decided to deal with the traditional Easter Games of Cyprus. Consequently, the Traditional Easter Games ICH element was inscribed on the National Inventory of ICH in 2017.

The traditional Easter games are a valuable part of our cultural heritage. These games excite and encourage the younger generation to come closer to their roots and traditions while they have brought together previous generations. It is noteworthy that many of the traditional Easter games in Cyprus have ancient Greek and Byzantine origins or influences. This demonstrates the importance of socializing and collective amusement at major festivals and events, since ancient times.

Usually, the day of Easter, or on Easter Monday or even on Easter Tuesday, locals and visitors of villages gathered at a central area of the village, often at a square or at the courtyard of the church after Easter's lunch. There, in an overjoyed atmosphere, individual and group games were organized, in order to entertain participants and attendees of all ages. Often the traditional games were explained to the audience by older people, who had experienced a multitude of similar events. The attendees expressed their interest to participate in the game which appealed better to one's preferences or skills. There was no award or prize for the winner of each game. Thus, participants and attendees spent pleasantly the afternoons of Easter days.

The Folklore Association "KTIMA" has been organizing activities aiming to safeguard the Easter games for a few years now. Its first action was to form a research team. The research team collected information from residents of communities in Paphos district, who experienced and enjoyed Easter games while growing up. Moreover, the research team collected information from valid surveys on the games, as well as webpages that provide useful audiovisual material on traditional games taking place throughout Cyprus.

In addition, workshops were organized where hosted speakers, who deal with the value of the traditional games, explained the rules of the games.

At the same time, as mentioned before, several communities in Paphos district participated in this effort. Each year these communities successfully organize Easter traditional games, as to preserve the Cypriot culture. Thus, members of our team visited these communities during the Easter period and recorded useful information. Finally, we have collected old photographs, which focus on traditional Easter games and provide valuable insights into the way the games were played in the past and survived in time.

After gaining insight information on the subject it was time to take action and 'KTIMA' association has successfully organized an event of traditional Easter games in Miliu village on the 9th of April 2018. The participants were players from the communities that helped 'KTIMA' in the research for the traditional games. Children, young and elderly people spent their time pleasantly by playing the traditional games of their ancestors.

MAP OF PAPHOS



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IMPORTANCE OF SUSTAINING THE TRADITION OF EASTER GAMES

Undoubtedly traditional Easter games are a valuable part for our cultural heritage since they promote the respect to our tradition and reveal habits and customs of our ancestors. In addition, they provide valuable insights of the ways that our forefathers used to celebrate Easter, the most important celebration of Orthodox Christianity. Young people live in a society of alienated people, they get carried away by modern behaviors and habits that may prove harming, therefore it is even more crucial for them to socialise in such events so to learn and respect their cultural treasures.

Foremost, traditional games promote values and ideals. Thus, young people acquire valuable knowledge and skills by playing traditional games. Among other excellent behavioral skills they gain discipline, respect to the rules of the games, appreciation between their co-players and opponents, collaborative and team spirit. In conclusion, we are convinced that if young people continue playing traditional Easter games, they will foster our cultural heritage and develop their social, moral and emotional intelligence.

ACTIVITIES OF 'KTIMA' FOR THE SAFEGUARDING OF THE TRADITIONAL EASTER GAMES

The Folklore Association KTIMA has already organized the 1st Festival of Easter Games on April 28 and 29 2019. This festival involved 14 communities of Paphos District (Pomos, Neo Chorio, Miliou, Yolou, Stroumbi, Letimbu, Tala, Kissonerga, Chloraka, Kouklia, Panagia, Tsada, Holetria and Mesa Chorion) and 7 cultural associations.

During the Festival 19 traditional Easter games, which were registered in the National List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2017, were presented in all 14 communities that were mentioned before.

The goals of the Festival were:

- The preservation of the traditional Easter games that were listed in the National Intangible Heritage List in 2017
- The spreading of the traditional games to younger people
- The registration of the new games that may occur
- The inclusion of other communities in Paphos in the 2nd Easter festival
- The organization of traditional games on Easter Tuesday, 2020 in Paphos with the participation of all 14 communities and finally
- The attraction of foreign visitors

For the better organization of the Festival, the Folklore KTIMA Group held a seminar - briefing on March 21, 2019 with the participation of the representatives of the communities involved and guests - cultural associations.

Our solid commitment to safeguarding the tradition of Easter Games is evident by the fact that preparations for the organization of the 2nd Festival of Easter Games have already begun, scheduled to take place on Tuesday, April 21, 2020. The festival will be held in the Public Municipal Garden in the center of Paphos and will bring together several communities that will present various Easter games.

List of traditional Easter Games
of Cyprus recorded
in the National Inventory of Cyprus ICH

Avgoulodromies



We start by setting a route, with a start and a finish. Players put a spoon in their mouth, or hold it with one of their hands with an egg (cooked) placed on top of the spoon. The concept of the game is for the players to finish without dropping the egg. If they drop the egg, they must stop, pick it up and continue. The player that reaches the finish first, is the winner.

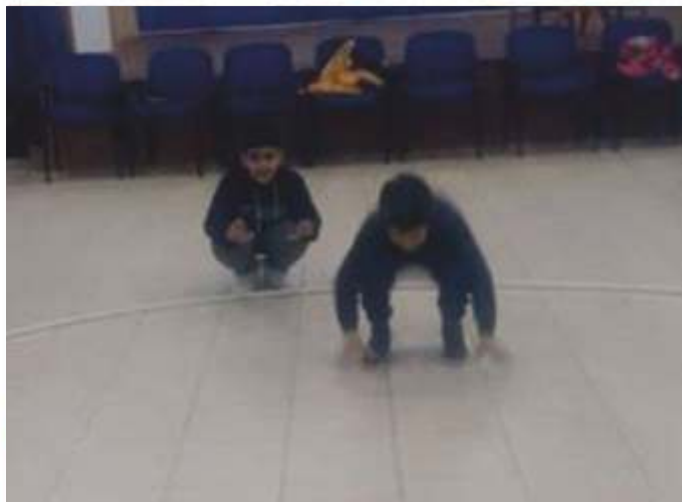
Appiisen o kamilos

(the camel jumped or tris enteka tris dodeka)



Participants are divided in two teams and a leader is chosen for each team. The leader of team A sits on a chair, with the rest of the team players leaning forward in front of him/her, one behind the other with their back in a vertical position. Everyone should hold the legs of the player in front placing their head as low as possible, forming a human bridge. The players of the opposing team (team B), jump and sit on the backs of the team A. When all the players of team B jump, the leader of team A, says “tris enteka tris dodeka...”. This saying is the signal for players of team A to start moving, trying to make the players of the opponent team fall off from their backs. If they succeed, they win and they swap roles with the opponent team for the next round of the game. If they do not succeed, they start over!

Vatrahos (frog)



For this game a frog shape is drawn on the ground and in front of the shape, a line. This game is only played by men or boys. Participants sit in a position similar to a real frog. He who manages to go furthest is the winner

Gaourodromies (donkey races)



Every participant rides a donkey. The race starts from a certain point in the village and finished at the village square, where the games are taking place. First who reaches the finish line is the



Stamna (jag)



This game is only played by females. The participants start 50-70m away from the village's water fountain (where they used to supply water for their homes) with empty clay jags. At the signal given, they run to fill the jags. One who fills the jag and returns to the start point first, is the winner.



Dijimin



This is a game is played by participants who want to show their strength and willpower. One can say it resembles the widely known sport of 'weight lifting'. Dijimin is a big stone/rock weighing approximately 100ounces. It is placed in the church's yard and its size is a big as human hug. The players participating should lift the stone as high as possible and make as many steps as possible while holding it. He who manages to throw the stone furthest is the winner. Some players used to throw the stone at the back of their head in an effort to throw it further. There is an expression that we use locally saying “he threw it off his shoulder” and metaphorically means when you do something fast, or being efficient.

Ziziros with a hat



This game is played by three persons. They stand next to each other facing the same direction with their legs wide open and their feet touching the feet of the person standing in the middle, who is wearing a hat. The persons on the left and right side cover their faces with one hand with the palm facing away from their face. With the other hand they try to drop the hat of the person standing in the middle. The person wearing the hat tries to avoid the moves of the other two while making sounds like cicada zzzzzzz...at the same time he/she also tries to hit the others so that they get distracted. Whoever manages to drop the hat is taking the middle place and the procedure is repeated.

Ziziros - Cicada:



This is a group game. A player -the main player- stands upright with his left palm open under the right armpit and with his right hand covers his eyes. The other players stand behind him and one of them slaps the left palm of the main player. After the hit, the main player immediately turns to face the other players and tries to guess who hit him. Then all the other players together, in order to confuse him, start making the familiar sound of the cicada zzzzzzzzzzz and they wave a finger in circle. If the main player does not manage to guess correctly the one who hit him he must maintain the same role for the next round of the game. If he guesses correct, the person who hit him stands in the middle taking his place. This is one of the most popular traditional games.

(The) Ligrín.



A competitive game played by two or more players. Ligrín, where the game took its name from, is a very strong piece of wood approximately 30cm long and 2-3cm wide. Ligrín is placed on top of two stones of the same height (about 25cm) placed with a distance of 20cm between them. The stones were called 'niskia' (hearth), referring to where the food was cooked in old days. Participants are lined in a queue resulting from a draw or an agreement between the players. In order to play, the players hold another piece of wood named 'ligra'. Each player places 'ligra' under the 'ligrín' and with a strong hit they try to throw 'ligrín' as far away as possible!

Mantili (Handkerchief):



Initially, the players stand in a circle. Then one of them is chosen to stand outside the circle. This player has to hold a handkerchief and run around the circle. He then chooses another player from the circle to give the handkerchief to, so to take this player's place in the circle. The new player holding the handkerchief, starts hitting the player standing to his side with the handkerchief. Finally, they end up running around the circle and trying to get their spot back in the circle.

Potamos (river)



All the players stand in line leaving 2-3 metres between them, leaning forward, holding their knees with their hands and placing their head as low as possible. One player runs and jumps over the others and at the end he/she stands in line in the same posture as the others. The procedure is repeated until the players get tired and start to give up the game.

The dog and the bone:



This game is played by two groups. The players of the game choose someone that will hold “kurupatsi” (a handkerchief) and then they are divided into two teams. The two teams stand in a straight line facing each other. The person holding the handkerchief stands in the middle separating the two teams. The leader of each team numbers his players secretly. Then the person who holds the handkerchief calls out a number and the 2 players with the specific number from each team run to take the handkerchief. If the one that takes the handkerchief returns to his team without being touched by the opponent, his team earns a point. If not, the other team gets the point. The winner is the team with more points.

Sakulodromies:



This game can be played by two or more players. The players stand in a large cloth bag and tie it with a knot around their waist. When all the players are ready, the race starts at a signal given. The players hop and try to reach the finish line as fast as possible, without falling down. This is a fun game, because almost everybody falls down!

Susa:



This traditional game is played by the single ladies and single men of the village. They form groups of two. The girl sits on the swing and the boy sings 'tsiattisto' (Cypriot rhythmic song). The winner is the couple with the best 'tsiattisto'

Skoupa (broom)



This game is only played by females and the aim is to prove they are good housekeepers and worthy of having a household. The girls/women stand in a circle and one of them holds the broom. Then music starts to play and they start to move the broom around very fast until the music stops. The girl who has the broom in her hands, when the music stops playing, leaves the game. The procedure is repeated and the winner is the last to stay in the circle. Apart from the prize, she also gets the broom.

Skatulika:



This is a group game. To play this game you need eight to ten flat stones that are called 'skatulika'. Their size is smaller than the palm of an adult. 'Skatulika' are placed in a pile (one on top of the other). One player (called 'Skatas'), agrees to be the guard of the stones. The other players stand about 3 meters away of the stones. They try to throw down the whole pile of skatulika using one flat stone each. When a player manages to demolish all the stones, 'Skatas' has to place them quickly in pile and run back to catch the player who demolished them. If he manages to catch him this player will be the new guard of the stones. If 'Skatas' does not catch anyone he has to maintain the same role in the game during the next round.

Shini:



This game is played by two teams. The players take a long and thick rope. The rope is marked with a sign in the middle of its length. One team holds the rope from one end and the other team holds the rope from the other end. There is a marked line on the floor and the middle part of the rope must be placed above this. The players have to pull the rope on their side, with all the strength they can put. Each team pulls the opponent until one team gives up or pulls the other team over the line!

Sitzia:



A 2,5meter rope is tied from one end on a tree. The main player has to hold the rope from the other end and protects the tree by not letting anyone get close. The main player has to touch whoever comes near him. Just for fun, the other players get close, trying to touch the back of the main player and run away quickly before the main player manages to catch them. When the main player manages to catch one of the others, then they swap roles for the next round of the game! And this is how the game is played! It is admirable how simply children can have fun!

Faratzis:



This is a group game. The main player - Faratzis, chooses another player to stand with his palms on his knees pretending to be a “horse”. There is a starting point from where Faratzis has to make a jump over the “horse”. The “horse” has to move to the spot where Faratzis jumped. Faratzis stays away and the rest of the players have to jump over the “horse” from the point Faratzis jumped in the first place. To do so they have to speed from a distance behind the starting point and then make the jump. The game continues until someone cannot jump over the “horse” and then, this player takes the role of the “horse”.

OTHER ACTIVITIES OF KTIMA

'KTIMA' was originally founded to promote traditional folklore Cypriot dancing, in an effort to revive the way locals used to have fun in social gatherings in the past. Later on, a folklore music band was created to accompany our dancing group in major events it participates. Apart from being invited in various gatherings, our association organizes its own festival. This year, the *5th Folklore Festival of KTIMA* took place in Paphos for three days, with great success. Apart from the entertaining program, the festival hosts demonstration of various traditional items, professions, food and habits which are fading away in time. We are very proud to say that our festival, held every year during the last weekend of August, has become an institution.

Through the various activities we organize as Association, we realized that people showed remarkable interest in events promoting our tradition and culture. Seeing this, the next step was to establish a folklore competition of writing, drawing and any other form of art, with the element of tradition being the core subject of it. The participants of this competition are students of all levels of education, from all over Cyprus. The competition is conducted in cooperation with Neapolis University of Paphos. This year, we held the *3rd Folklore Competition of KTIMA*.

