

TRADITIONAL GAMES OF CHINA

Many popular games played today originated in China. Chinese checkers, dominoes and tangrams all have Chinese origins. Below is a listing of a few Chinese games. If you would like to read about or play additional games from China, go to www.chcp.org/games.html

Kites

There are many folk tales about the origin of the kite. A Sung Dynasty commentary puts their first appearance in the Warring States period. But Lin K'un of the Yuan dynasty believed that the kite was invented in the Han dynasty to unsettle the enemy by the eerie sounds of attached whistles. History records that the kite was also used to signal for help. One theory has the kite invented during the Five Dynasties period (907-959 A.D.) and brought to Europe by Marco Polo in the late 13th century.

In Taiwan, kite flying is associated with autumn. Split bamboo, which is light and strong, is the traditional material for making the kite frame. There are hundreds of kite shapes including the centipede and giant dragon kites.

Jump Rope

The jump rope goes back at least 1,500 years in China. It was called "jumping one hundred threads" because the rope looked like a hundred separate ropes as it circled in the air. It was popular during the Spring Festival in the South.

Jump ropes can be made of many materials including grass and cotton, and straw and cotton combinations coated with wax. Single and group jumping is popular in China as it is in the West.

The Top

The top in China can be traced back as far as the Sung dynasty (960-1279 A.D.), when its forerunner was a 4-inch ivory disc called the "ch'en-ch'ien which served as a pastime by court ladies. "Tuo-luo," the word for top, is first found in records of the Ming dynasty (1386-1644 A.C.), when it was played by children when "the willows bud in early spring."

Some tops are spun by means of a string wound around the base. The string is pulled sharply as the top is thrown forward.

A small whip is used with some to maintain a continuous spin.



Tops come in a variety of sizes and materials. Tops are equipped with a sharp metal end to tip other tops in top duels. In this century, giant top, over a foot long and correspondingly heavy, was developed in Ta-hsi village. A

rope is used to spin it instead of a string.

Tsoo! Tsoo!

Number of players: Four or more. Played outdoors.

Procedure

1. One player is blindfolded; the remaining players are "chickens".
2. The blindfolded player says "Tsoo ! Tsoo !" - (meaning, "Come and seek your mother.")
3. The chickens run up and try to touch the blindfolded player without being tagged.
4. The tagged player becomes the blind man.

Forcing the City Gates

Number of players: Ten or more. Played outdoors

Procedure

1. Two lines each with an equal number of players, 10'-15' apart. Each team has a captain.
2. Players in each line hold hands. A player runs out from one side and dashes with all her/his force against the hands of her/his opponents. If she/he breaks through, he has to join her/his opponents.
3. Then a player from the other side attempts to 'force the gates'. This continues until one side has no players left.

Round and Round

Number of players: The entire class forms a circle.

Procedure

1. A large circle symbolizing the moon-cake is drawn on the ground. This circle is divided into 12 sections, and each section is given a different number.
2. The class is then divided into three groups. Each group chooses a leader.
3. In turn, the leader of each group takes a member of her/his group into the center of the circle.
4. This member is blindfolded, spun around four times and then allowed to take four steps in any direction.
5. She/He is then given the score of whatever section in which she/he lands.

When all the players have had their turn, the team with the highest score wins.

Fingers Out

Number of players: Two. Can be played anywhere.

Procedure

1. Two players face each other.
2. They count, "one, two, three!" and on "three" they put out their right hands, closed or with one or more fingers extended and at the same time shouting out some number.
3. The player who guesses the correct number of the sum total of fingers extended, or the nearest to it, scores a point.
4. Five points may constitute a game.

Compare these Chinese games to American games. How are they similar?

- Tsoo Tsoo = variation of Blind Man's Bluff
- Forcing the City Gates = Red Rover, Red Rover
- Round and Round = variation of Blind Man's Bluff
- Fingers Out = variation of Scissors, Paper, Stone