



Toys, play, culture and society

An anthropological
approach with
reference to
North Africa and
the Sahara

Jean-Pierre Rossie

Foreword by Brian Sutton-Smith

Stockholm International Toy Research Centre, KTH

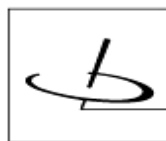


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J e a n - P i e r r e R o s s i e

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SITREC

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The black and white photographs of the 2005 version have been replaced by the original color photographs. At the same time some minor linguistic and formal adaptations have been made but the content remains unchanged.

*To the Saharan and North African children
To my children Tania, Ben , Ruben and Pia
To my grandchildren Linde, Camille, Ilona, Thilda, Oona and Alvin*

The Bank of Sweden Tercentenary Foundation supported the publishing of this book

Cover photograph:
Moroccan girls at dinner play, Midelt, 1997, taken by the author

Cover design: Johnny Friberg

With 144 photographic and other illustrations

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The books published on the CD included in the 2005 printed book are available on <http://www.sanatoypplay.org> and on <http://www.scribd.com> (search: Jean-Pierre Rossie)

The volumes of the collection:

Saharan and North African Toy and Play Cultures

- Children's dolls and doll play, 2005, 328 p., 163 ill.
- The animal world in play, games and toys, 2005, 219 p., 107 ill.
- Commented bibliography on play, games and toys, 2005/2011, 72 p.

The volumes of the collection:

Cultures Ludiques Sahariennes et Nord-Africaines

- Poupées d'enfants et jeux de poupées, 2005, 344 p., 163 ill.
- L'animal dans les jeux et jouets, 2005, 229 p., 107 ill.
- Bibliographie commentée des jeux et jouets, 2005/2011, 72 p.

Information on Saharan, North African and Amazigh (Berber) play, games and toys and on Jean-Pierre Rossie's publications and activities are found on <http://www.sanatoypplay.org>

Jean-Pierre Rossie was born in Gent (Ghent), Belgium, in 1940. After studies in social work and later on in African ethnology at the State University of Ghent, he became a doctor in African history and philology at the same university in 1973. His thesis in Dutch covered the theme of “Child and Society. The Process of Socialization in Patrilineal Central Africa”.

Following fieldwork among the semi-nomadic Ghrib of the Tunisian Sahara, he devoted himself, since 1975, to research on Saharan and North African play, games and toys.

In 1967, he was proclaimed prizewinner of the Belgian Foundation for Vocations, Brussels. From 1968 to 1978, he was a researcher of the Belgian National Foundation for Scientific Research, Brussels, which supported his research and publications till 1992.

Between 1980 and 1990 he worked as social worker and socio-cultural anthropologist in the social services for, especially Turkish and North African, migrants of the city of Ghent.

A first research trip to Southern Morocco, in February 1992, followed by yearly sojourns in this country give him the opportunity to supplement, verify and actualize the information on Moroccan children's play, games and toys.

In 1993 he was one of the founding members of the International Toy Research Association (ITRA), from 1997 till 2001 he was a member of the Nordic Center for Research on Toys and Educational Media (NCFL), and from the start in 2002 till the closing in 2011 he was a member of the Stockholm International Toy Research Centre (SITREC).

On October 29th, 2004 the Lennart Ivarsson Scholarship Foundation awarded him the BRIO Prize 2004.

In July 2005 he became an associated researcher of the Musée du Jouet, Moirans-en-Montagne, France (<http://www.musee-du-jouet.com>). The author is donating to this museum all the visual and written documents he has gathered on Saharan, North African and Amazich (Berber) children's toy and play cultures.

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Foreword by Brian Sutton-Smith

As soon as one enters into this fabric of North African and Saharan children's play and games one catches a resonance of the author's Flemish predecessor Pieter Bruegel the Elder (1525-1569) painting a multitude of children at play. But in that case they were all drawn scrambling together at one place and at one time. And their vigour was an iconic protest against the imperial Spanish hegemony. Whereas the Flemish Jean-Pierre Rossie is dealing with small scattered groups of children who are sometimes battling and sometimes enjoying the hegemony of the modern toy industry, and whose seductive enemy is no longer the Spanish Queen, it is the Barbie Doll.

Rossie is of course not the first to analyse the current historical changes which render some of the older forms of world play less important. Before him were the massive works of Lady A. B. Gomme (1898), Iona and Peter Opie (1959-1995) and multiple others on a smaller scale. All of these were usually describing forms of play life that they felt were sadly disappearing in the modern world. Their major contribution to our apprehension was thus nostalgic. These were works of regret for the childhood times gone by, usually accompanied by some insistence that some of these games should be kept alive or revived for the good of the human species.

What Rossie has done is to start likewise by showing us the same processes of children losing their older forms of play in rural and urban parts of Africa. But what makes it especially more touching is that he shows that one part of what is being given up are a great variety of intricate toys carefully crafted by the children themselves and reproduced here with some hundred photographic illustrations of these child made toys. But more important he has spent his life not just putting these abatements of tradition on record, but has been also active with others in developing pedagogies within which the children's ancient toy achievements can be made to still have continuing success.

On the one hand he argues that as early education should begin with reference to the children's own experience, following Rousseau and Dewey and others, the children's ancient toy creations should be brought into the classrooms for further discussion and further classroom projects in the areas where the local toys are threatened. And secondarily modern children elsewhere who do not know about these toys, can be introduced to them with showings of photos and films so they can come to empathize with these more ancient ways and become more sensitive to these cultural differences.

What amazes one here is the life long energy and persistence that Rossie has put into seeking such arrangements. But what is perhaps even more useful is his personal accounts of his struggles to get to places where he can observe all of the different kinds of play and the different kinds of cultural contexts within which they occur. There is a mine of information here on the materials from nature that get employed in the children's play and there are further details in his 37 other publications. He discusses toy design, toy safety, signs and meanings, creativity, sex differences, generational differences, rituals and festivals but most importantly the general processes of change that are occurring in his Moroccan and Saharan settlements and neighbourhoods. He is indeed our anthropological Bruegel.

1 Introduction

This book introduces the reader to the unknown but exciting world of Saharan and North African children's toys and play and this not only in words but also through many photographs and designs. It offers an overview of the available information to scholars as well as to other people interested in childhood and children's culture.

Another purpose of the book is to link the data gained through my fieldwork and my museographical and bibliographical research to the Western debate on children's toys and play. This link is exemplified by the texts I wrote in relation to my participation in thematic congresses and that form the basis of most chapters of this book, a link that is explained at the start of such chapters. Three chapters have a different origin. The chapter "Toy design: reflections of an anthropologist" was prepared for a workshop of designers whom I wanted to confront with examples of the relationship between toys and the material and socio-cultural context in which they are created. The chapter "Using North African and Saharan children's toys and play culture" mentions my efforts to find concrete pedagogical and cultural applications for this rich heritage. The chapter "Toys, play, rituals and festivities" was especially written for this book and refers to a traditional theme in cultural anthropology.

However, if one is looking for theory building or for testing hypotheses scientifically based on research in North Africa and the Sahara this will not be found. Reaching this level in the concerned regions will necessitate the involvement of local scholars with a clear interest in childhood and children's culture and such scholars have not come forward as far as I know.

This publication contrasts with my books in the collection: *Saharan and North African Toy and Play Cultures* and in the collection: *Cultures Ludiques Sahariennes et Nord-Africaines* analyzing the play activities, games and toys of the children from these regions and offering a descriptive approach. Here the approach is more synthetic and the description of the examples concise. For more detailed information one should look at the volumes published or to be published in the

mentioned collection: *Children's dolls and doll play – Poupées d'enfants et jeux de poupées*; *The animal world in play, games and toys – L'animal dans les jeux et jouets*; *Domestic life in play, games and toys – La vie domestique dans les jeux et jouets*; *Technical activities in play, games and toys – Les activités techniques dans les jeux et jouets*; *Games of skill – Jeux d'adresse*. For financial reasons these books are published on the Internet.

As already indicated the discussion is linked to some aspects of the debate on play and toys such as gender differences, adult-child and child-child relationships, conformity and creativity, tradition and change, signs, meanings and communication. To do this I regularly refer to the work of other scholars mostly doing research in a Western context. I also hope that the data on these children's toy making and play activities as well as those of other non-Western children, e.g. the data on toys and play of Indian children found in the publications of Sudarshan Khanna or of Turkish children found in the publications of Bekir Onur and Artin Göncü, will more and more be taken into account by scholars developing theoretical viewpoints. This way, those elaborating theories on play and toys could try to overcome the limitations described by Marie E. Bathiche and Jeffrey L. Derevensky in their article "Children's game and toy preferences: a cross-cultural comparison" as follows:

The impact of culturally different family values and child-rearing methods is likely to influence the toys and games with which children play. Very few studies have examined and compared the game and toy preferences of children living in different societies and cultures. Most of the knowledge concerning the game preferences of children has been generated from research on children in Western settings. The extent to which children display gender differences in their game preferences and the types of toys which children favor is likely to vary significantly across cultures (1995: 54).

At the same time, it can help to overcome the limitations pointed out by Brian Sutton-Smith (1997: 218-219) when writing that play:

Should not be defined only in terms of the restricted modern Western values that say it is nonproductive, rational, voluntary, and fun. These are not concepts that can prevail as universals, given the larger historical and anthropologic evidence to the contrary.

Therefore, I hope that the information given here will help to promote a less Western oriented approach to children's play activities and will stimulate research on childhood, play, games and toys in non-Western communities.

Four sources of information lay at the basis of my research ¹:

- The collection of Saharan and North African toys of the Département d'Afrique Blanche et du Proche Orient of the Musée de l'Homme in Paris, supplemented with data from the index cards and through a personal analysis of the toys. As this collection will be transferred to a new museum that opens in 2006 one should contact the Musée du Quai Branly in Paris (<http://www.quaibranly.fr>).
- The ethnographic, linguistic and other bibliography of the geographic area concerned, which I have analyzed in a commented bibliography.
- My research on the games and toys of the Ghrib children, between 1975 and 1977, that since then and up to now has been followed up by Dr. Gilbert J.M. Claus.
- My since 1992 ongoing research in Morocco, more specifically in rural areas and popular quarters of towns, which has yielded interesting information.

Two maps, one of North Africa and the Sahara (p. 249) and another of Morocco (p. 251), make it possible to locate the geographical and ethnic specifications.

¹ My research and publications have been supported by the Belgian National Foundation for Scientific Research, Brussels, from 1975 till 1992.

When speaking of toys and of the games in which they are used in North Africa and the Sahara an enormous territory as well as a complex socio-cultural area is evoked. So one should beware of hurried generalizations. One reason for this lies in the diversity of physical, economic, social and cultural environments creating a real difference between a small Amazigh-speaking semi-nomadic Saharan settlement and an Arabic-speaking large Moroccan town with an old urban tradition.

Another reason to be suspicious of general statements is found in the almost total lack of previous as well as of contemporary research on play, games and toys in this region. In my quite exhaustive *Commented Bibliography on Play, Games and Toys* in North Africa and the Sahara, published on the included CD, only some 200 titles of books and articles are mentioned and in a lot of these publications these themes are only marginally touched upon.

This great diversity in communities and the lack of adequate information are the reasons for my not knowing how to give a satisfactory answer to one of the remarks made by Sudarshan Khanna and Sonya Dhruv of the National Institute of Design in Ahmedabad, India, in their comment on the first draft of this book. In a letter of June 25th, 1998, these scholars rightly mention that the description of the link between the toys and play activities, on the one hand, and the value systems, philosophy and social organization of the concerned communities, on the other hand, remains at surface level. I think that before one could try to elaborate these links a more detailed interdisciplinary analysis of the play activities and toys of North African and Saharan children, of the ecological, cultural and social environments of the concerned families and societies, and of their inter-relationships will be needed.

Up to now, I used the term *Berber* to refer to the culture and language of the North African and Saharan populations that lived in these areas before the coming of the Arabs, still live there and continue to speak their own languages. Due to the pejorative meaning of the term *Berber*, related to the word barbarian, the concerned North African cultural movements put forward the local term *Amazigh*, a term I shall use in my scientific publications henceforth. Yet, I continue to use the term

Arab-Berber for the descendants of these populations who have lost their original language and speak Arabic.

The used research methods belong first of all to the ethnographic research tradition based on a participant approach with participation in children's playgroups, observation, informal talks, open interviews, use of informants and interpreters, making slides and doing some ethnographic filming and making a few videos. Additionally the human ethological method was used in the Tunisian Sahara, especially the minute-to-minute recording of longer observation periods and indirect filming.¹ It will be clear, I think, that I am using a detailed descriptive approach with a qualitative perspective when analyzing specific children's play activities and toys, and the socio-cultural context in which these take place. Afterwards, the data of my own research and the information gathered from the relevant bibliography and from the study of the toy collection in the Musée de l'Homme are used for a comparative analysis. Finally, I try to build a comprehensive description of the play, games and toys of Saharan and North African children. Yet, this description should by no means be seen as a finished study. On the contrary, it is only when other scholars will verify and supplement my data and the interpretations that I have elaborated, that a more objective and representative view can be worked out and I hope my publications contribute to make this happen.

Although I do not want to oppose a local perspective to an approach directly linked to Western cultural, psychological and sociological theories on play, toys, childhood and socialization, I have tried during my fieldwork and in the analysis of the data not to rely on presuppositions and to avoid a Western biased approach.

¹ In 1975 I had the opportunity to go to the Arbeitsstelle für Humanethologie of the Max Planck Institut für Verhaltenswissenschaft in Percha bei Starnberg (Germany), where Irenäus Eibl-Eibesfeldt introduced me to human ethological research and lent me the necessary film equipment. The filming among the Ghrib resulted in a 16 mm black and white film of about one hour on relations between children and between adults and children filmed according to the human ethological and ethnographical method (1975) and an ethnographic 16 mm color film on the making of a doll by a girl (1975). There also exist some videos on Moroccan dolls and doll play of which a summary is given in *Saharan and North African Toy and Play Cultures. Children's Dolls and Doll Play*. These unpublished films and videos have been transferred to the Musée du Jouet de Moirans-en-Montagne, France.

Even though the topic under discussion is more centered on toys than on play, one should always remember that there are no toys without games, yet there are games without toys. Unfortunately, there exists more information on toys than on play activities, and I must admit that in my research in Morocco I have not always been putting the play activity in the first place as it is easier to get information on a toy than on the play activity for which it is used.

A limitation not to be overlooked relates to the expressed point of view. Do the data express the point of view of the children, of the parents and other adults, of the community or of the researcher? I have tried to make a distinction between these different points of view, among other ways by using detailed observation and by distinguishing between what the children do, what the adults say about it, what the normative agencies stipulate and how I am interpreting this information.

I am convinced that the information on North African and Saharan children's toys and play given here has its value, on the one hand, as testimony of a partly outdated and partly fully alive reality, on the other hand, as a contribution to a more holistic study of children's toys and play from all over the world. So, even if it is impossible to develop in relation to the toy and play cultures of North African and Saharan children the same kind of "search for the meaning of toys and play" as Brian Sutton-Smith has done in his book *Toys as Culture* for the Western toy and play culture, I do hope to have brought forward some material for constructing one day such a synthesis for the regions I am talking about.

It is also necessary to draw the reader's attention to some limits and problems that hinder the analysis of the data on North African and Saharan play activities, games and toys. The first problem is related to the bibliographic and museographic sources as the authors and collectors did not always proceed with the same scientific attitude. Precision at the ethnic and geographic level is sometimes lacking when an author or collector attributes his information to a certain population or region. An unfortunate restriction lies in the fact that the toys are too frequently described as objects and not as instruments of play. So, the play activity is not analyzed with the same care as the toy itself. Finally, one notices here and there terminological inaccuracies regarding the

terms and expressions describing the toys and the games in which they are used.

A limitation regarding children's age is directly linked to my fieldwork as the gathered information only refers to children between three and thirteen years, for boys possibly a somewhat older age. So one will look in vain for information on infants. The reasons for this are multiple: it is difficult for a male researcher to enter the indoor female domestic world in which the very young child grows up, outdoor play is an activity of the already somewhat older child, little children in need of a toy often transform an object into a representative toy whereas making oneself a toy comes later. Still another problem is related to the almost complete lack of research on play, games and toys done by researchers that have lived their childhood in the concerned regions. So much more remains to be done in the field of Saharan and North African children's toys and play and its evolution than is achieved here.

I also need to stress that it is impossible to claim any representativeness and completeness of the gathered information on Saharan and North African children's toys and play. This information describes existing toys and play but it cannot be used to prove the non-existence of other games and toys in these regions, among other reasons because the research fields and the involved families and children have mostly been found through the chance of fortunate contacts. I here want to express my sincere thanks to the children who accepted to share with me their games and toys as well as to many families and individuals, especially primary and secondary school teachers, who offered me their hospitality and collaboration. In the volumes of the collections: *Saharan and North African Toy and Play Cultures* and *Cultures Ludiques Sahariennes et Nord-Africaines* one will find at the end of the introduction detailed references to those who freely helped me during my fieldwork.

Moreover and in relation to this book I wish to thank Gareth Whittaker for his help in improving the English text, Shlomo Ariel for his comments on the final draft, Brian Sutton-Smith for writing the foreword, Johnny Friberg for designing the cover and Krister Svensson for publishing the book.

Concerning my contacts with children, the ethical rules put forward by the European Council for Scientific Research have been followed. Thus, the paternal or maternal authorization has been obtained when collecting information from children or when photographing them. Certainly, it would have been difficult to do it other ways, the research being done in families or in public spaces. Still, there is one exception to this rule, namely the observations or photographs of children occasionally made in streets or public areas in Moroccan urban centers whereby only the permission of the children themselves was obtained. On a few occasions the photograph was taken from a distance without asking the involved children for their permission. Yet, in these cases adults were present in the area and I encountered no negative reaction when photographing these children.

June Factor in “Three myths about children’s folklore” rightly links her research to her personal experience (2001: 24-26). She starts her autobiographic description by quoting Paul Valéry who wrote in one of his essays:

I apologize for thus revealing myself to you; but in my opinion it is more useful to speak of what one has experienced than to pretend to a knowledge that is entirely impersonal, an observation with no observer. In fact there is no theory that is not a fragment, carefully prepared, of some autobiography.

Being convinced that my work on Saharan and North African children’s play, games and toys is influenced by my own life, I thought it could be useful for the reader to be able to trace it back to my own development. I therefore added some autobiographical notes in a second appendix.

Siegfried Zoels states boldly “Play follows Culture”, just as “Form follows Function” (1996: 2), and Brian Sutton-Smith writes “Playing games for the sake of games is always playing games for the sake of games in a particular social context with its own particular social arrangements” (1997: 120). As far as I have experienced this in my own Flemish environment and in some Saharan and North African environments, I certainly do agree with these points of view. The play activities of children, as well as of adults, and the toys or other objects used in them are directly related to the natural, social and cultural

reality in which these children and adults live. However, this does not mean that these play activities and toys are immutable, even in so-called traditional or supposedly static rural communities in isolated regions.

Chapter 2, 'Toy design: reflections of an anthropologist', mentions some reflections relating to the local Saharan and North African attitude towards traditional and imported dolls such as Barbie and Brownie the gnome. In this chapter I also give examples of toy design with natural and waste materials and I try to relate the topic of toy design and safety to the toys made by the children themselves. Chapter 3, 'Toys, play, signs, meanings and communication' offers a semiotic analysis at a descriptive level. Chapter 4, 'Toys, play, socio-cultural reproduction and continuity', deals with the relationships between toys, the socio-cultural reproduction and the continuity of toy design, play, attitudes, behaviors and values in successive generations. Chapter 5, 'Toys, play and creativity' looks at the evolution of individual and collective creativity in toy making and play activities. Chapter 6, 'Toys, play, girls and boys' looks at differences and similarities between boys and girls in making toys and playing with them. Chapter 7, 'Toys, play and generations', reviews the adult-child and child-child playful relationships. Chapter 8, 'Toys, play, rituals and festivities', discusses the possible relationship between these cultural manifestations. Chapter 9, 'Toys, play and change', tries to define the evolution of Saharan and North African toys and play activities. Chapter 10, 'Conclusion', gives a few additional comments. Chapter 11, 'Using North African and Saharan toy and play culture', offers examples for developing countries and in a western context. In the first appendix the reader will find a scheme for a detailed description of play activities and toys that can serve as a research guide.

2 Toy design: Reflections of an anthropologist

In this chapter I propose a tentative analysis of some relationships between toys, toy design and the socio-cultural environment. Therefore, I shall place the Barbie doll and the Brownie or gnome doll in a Saharan and North African context, analyze the topic of toy design with natural and waste material, and reflect on some aspects of safety in toy design related to the material used by Saharan and North African children in creating their own toys.

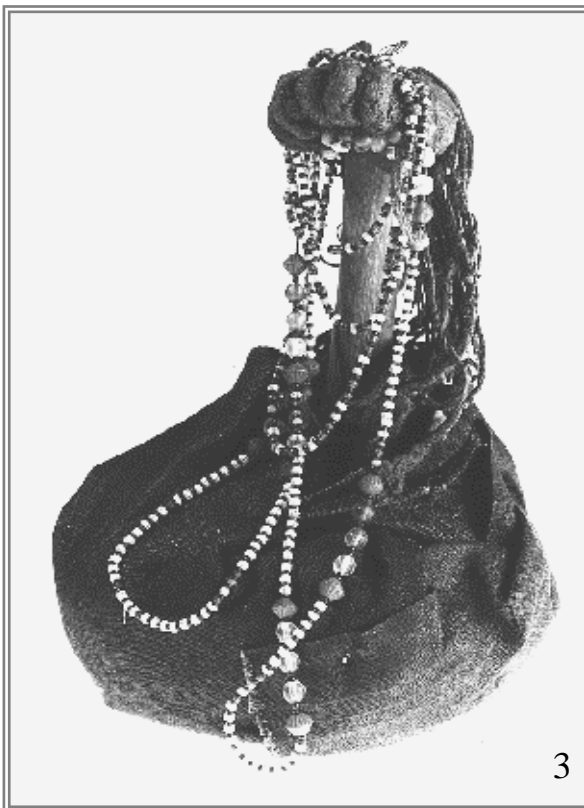
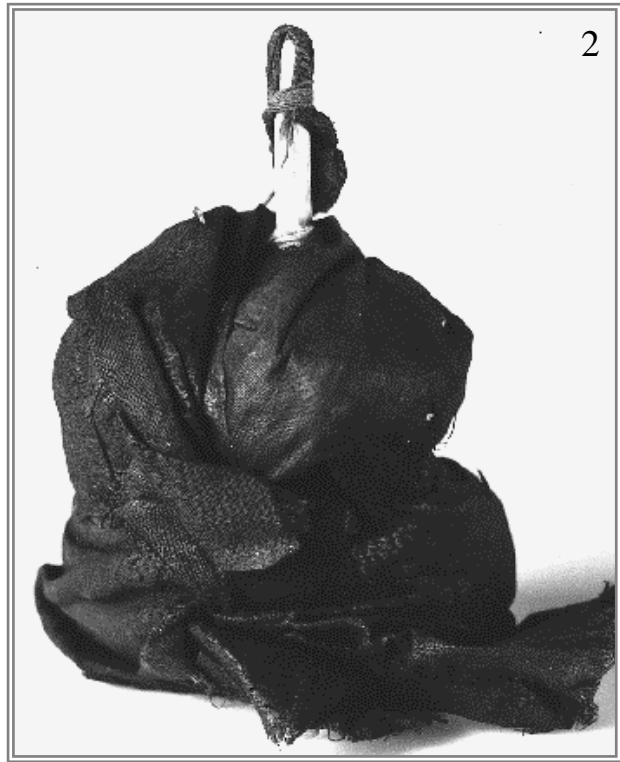
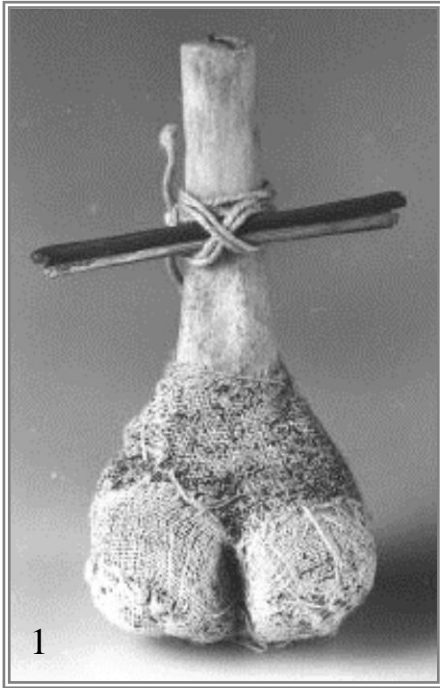
2.1 Who is Barbie?

Several studies have been totally or partially devoted to Barbie in a North American and European context (e.g. Brougère, 1992; Pennell, 1996. Maincent-Hanquez, 1999; Mitchell and Reid-Walsh, 2002) but I have not yet come across one looking at what happens to this important and quickly spreading object of a globalizing children's culture when transposed into a non-Western setting in its original form or in one of its more or less faithful imitations. Trying to formulate a few answers to the maybe somewhat strange question *who is Barbie in a Saharan and North African context?* leads me to my first example of the multiple relationships between toys, toy design and the socio-cultural environment.

In the actual Western context I see Barbie¹ as an idealized model for young girls as well as boys of all classes of what a young woman should look like, what she should strive after and how she should behave.

¹ Brougère Gilles & Manson Michel (1989-1990: 73): This type of doll (the adult female doll Barbie)... is in fact the remake of what the doll has been during the greatest part of its history, before the success of the representations of children and then of babies... The effect of novelty reposes on an interesting historical amnesia: during the 18th century and in the eyes of the educationalists, the doll still was the symbol of female coquetry, and it is only in the 19th century that it becomes a symbol of maternal instinct. Brougère Gilles (1992: 16) adds to this: a lot of (French) adults hesitate to call Barbie a doll. The referent to the doll remains for them the representation of a baby and the doll plays refers to mothering.

Except probably among the upper class, most men and women of present day Saharan and North African communities still have a different viewpoint on the Barbie model. The ideal female model in these communities is a decently dressed well fed, even corpulent, young woman as symbolized in the female dolls made by the girls of these regions (fig. 1-5).



The first two dolls, an undressed and a dressed one, have been made about 1935 by Tuareg girls of the Algerian Sahara. A girl from the Mauritanian Sahara created the third doll in 1960. The fourth doll and the fifth doll, shown on the next page, were respectively made about 1930 by a Moroccan girl and a Tunisian girl.



The self-made dolls from the Tunisian Sahara in the 1970s and almost all self-made dolls I did find in Morocco since 1992 have cross-shaped frames in reed or wooden sticks. This basic structure of the dolls therefore could give them a lean appearance but by using several rags a more corpulent doll is created as seen on figures 61 (p. 68) and 85 (p. 94). The Barbie-like woman is in real life associated with what is called in Morocco *un squelette vivant*, a *living skeleton*. Still today, a woman with such a figure is often viewed as a very lean woman whose appearance is to be attributed to one of the following pitiful conditions: poorness, sickness, having problems, if not a combination of them. So it is not surprising that some women take pills to thicken, just as they do it in the West to grow lean. That this canon of female beauty is still prevalent at the end of the twentieth century is attested in an Amazigh song on a cassette of Uskûr el-Husseyn, released in 1997 in Morocco by *Voix Ain Ellouch*. In this song on the modern girl and modern life in the Moroccan Moyen Atlas, the custom of taking pills to thicken is stated by the male singer and repeated by the female chorus, where after the male singer gives an evasive reply saying that it is God who gives health and not the pills.

However, there is a puzzling fact about six out of the seven dolls remade by the three Laabib sisters of the village Ksar Assaka near Midelt in Morocco, as they are rather lean than corpulent and Barbie-like at the waist (fig. 87-92, p. 96-99). When questioning these young women, in November 1997, they stressed that the actual form of the doll, with its dresses tightened at the waist by a belt, was not to be viewed as a sign of being thin but as part of the customary dress of a bride in which the belt is an important item. They also unanimously stated that a nice bride should be somewhat corpulent.

Nevertheless, a thin female doll with a locally crocheted Andalusian flamenco dress is finding its way into the Moroccan houses (fig. 6). But according to several female informants, these dolls do not function as



children's dolls. They are used as house decoration and found especially on television sets. However, my recent observations show that cheap lean dolls mostly made in China do find their way into the doll play of rural girls. This was the case in the Central Moroccan village Zaïda in September 1999 where two girls used each one such a doll with a self-made dress as bride doll, the lost arms of one of them being replaced by a piece of reed pushed through the arm openings (fig. 119-120, p. 164). The same kind of cheap lean dolls is seen on the first video of doll and construction play I made in the Sidi Ifni region in southern Morocco in the beginning of 2002. A six-year-old girl uses a few of these Barbie-like dolls she received from her mother but this girl still

makes at the same time the traditional dolls with a cross-shaped frame of wooden sticks (Rossie and Daoumani, Video 1). As I wanted to document in some detail the possible reactions and attitudes towards a real Barbie doll I bought one in Ghent dressed in summer attire and showed it to a few girls and women of the Laabib family in Midelt in September 1999. Helped by Souad Laabib, the sister or maternal aunt of

these persons, their reaction to the Barbie doll was questioned. All the Midelt women and girls whose reaction is given below said they never saw such a doll nor heard the name Barbie and all of them found the 100 dirham (10 Euro) I paid for it very expensive.

Thirty-seven-year-old Hurriya gives Barbie the age about twelve-years adding that it is a nice doll but only to be used as decoration. Together with Latifa she laughs for a while with Barbie because she is so thin and long. Both Hurriya and Latifa say that the way she is dressed would be indecent in Midelt but not so in Rabat especially during the vacation period in summer.

Twenty-nine-year-old Latifa advances the age of twenty-four years for Barbie explaining that she gives this age to the doll after examining more closely her face that looks older than her body. Her attention is then directed towards Barbie's breasts saying "she has big breasts maybe she will have a baby". Latifa also states "it is not a problem that she is so thin because when married she will become bigger anyhow".

Twenty-seven-year old Najat says Barbie's clothes are very nice for summer but that her attire is provocative. Her brilliant hair is also beautiful. Barbie's body suggests she is unmarried yet Najat estimates her age at about twenty-three years. According to her Moroccan men would consider Barbie too thin. Najat compares Barbie to the models showing fashion as seen on European television channels. She is convinced that this doll can only be used as decoration and think that it would sell well in Midelt. However, mothers would not buy such a doll for their daughters to play with. Nevertheless, twenty-six-year-old Sabah could see herself buying such a doll for her three-year-old daughter.

The two teenagers and daughters of Hurriya gave their point of view also. Both fourteen-year-old Aïcha and eleven-year-old Summiya find Barbie a really nice doll, give her the age of about eighteen years and call her *munica* using the Spanish word for doll, a term used for imported plastic dolls. They both agree that she is not married because of her summer attire, Summiya adding, "one could see a woman dressed like that in Midelt but then it will be a young European woman". Both girls think local men would find such a Barbie-like woman too thin to marry her and they wanted to be fatter but not too much according to Summiya.

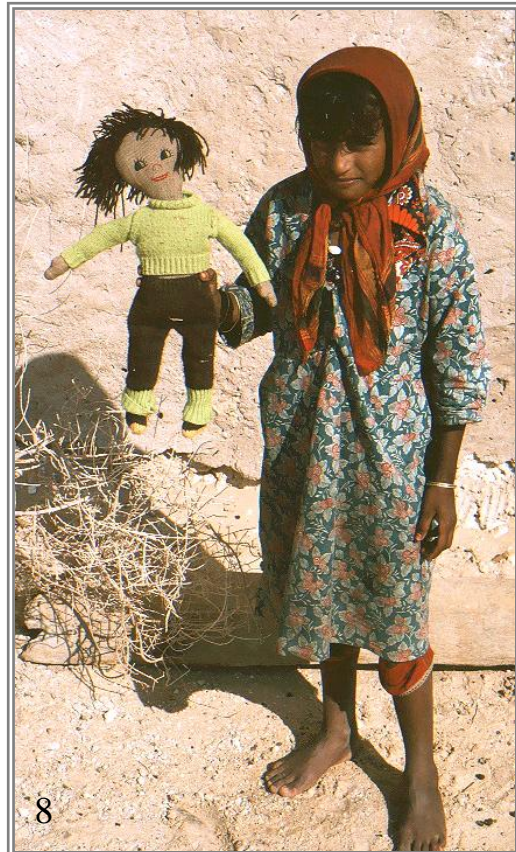
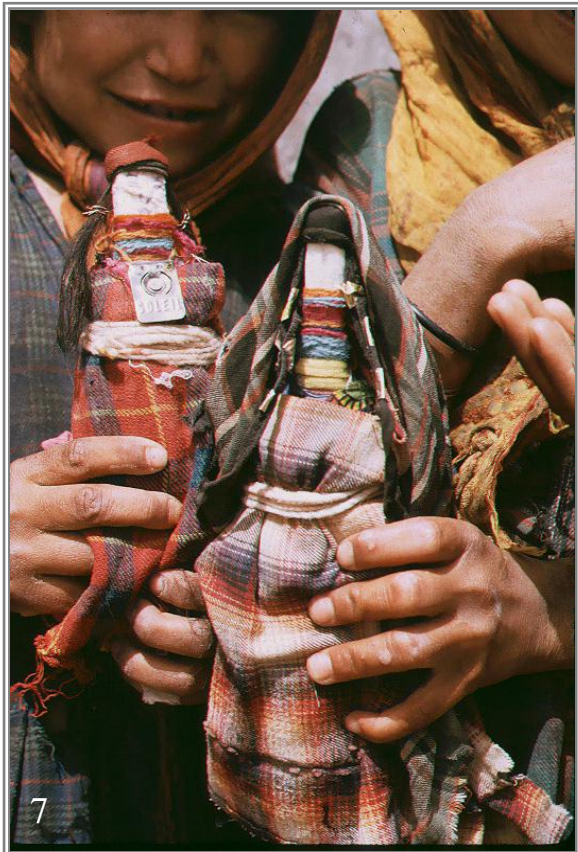
Although for Summiya a Barbie doll could only be a decorative object, her older sister Aïcha would like to play with it for example to brush the hair or change clothes, but such a doll could not be used as a *tislit* or bride doll for playing wedding, the locally most common type of doll play. Both girls believed their mother might buy such a doll as a decorative item.

It certainly is possible that in a more or less near future the Barbie model may surpass the traditional model as it has already succeeded to do among the upper class. A special number of the Moroccan review *Enjeux* on the toy trade, published in 1993, shows that this upper class, stimulated by the audio-visual media, undoubtedly wishes to emulate whatever is the fashion in Europe. One reads in this review that a contagion similar to a cultural transfer exists of which the best example is that of the famous Barbie doll. Nowadays, a little Moroccan girl of good family needs to have the whole outfit, the Barbie house with its furniture, the complete set of Barbie dresses, Barbie's Ferrari and her fiancé; something with which to create a world conforming to the Western (European or American) cultural stereotypes. The same phenomenon exists among the boys but the fashions are different. At this moment robots of the Terminator kind are the best sold ("le Marché du Jouet", 1993: 35-36). The first *Salon de l'Enfant* held between 16 and 26 December 1993 was also aimed at the parents and children of more fortunate urban families.

But Barbie can already dethrone the local dolls among some middle class families as exemplified when I video filmed in 2002 two sisters of six and nine years playing with several Barbie dolls, some of them received from regular tourist of the Suerte Loca hotel-restaurant in Sidi Ifni that is run by members of the girls' family (Rossie and Daoumani, Video 3).

2.2 Who is Brownie the Gnome?

The second example of the direct relationship between toy design, culture and society comes from my personal experience in the Tunisian Sahara¹. When I did research among the semi-nomadic Ghib in the Spring of 1975, I received some female dolls from several girls (fig. 7, 83-85, p. 94).



When I returned there for a second research period the same year, I brought with me several dolls made by my wife. As in Western Europe Brownie is a popular figure, sometimes made as a doll by mothers or grandmothers for their daughters or granddaughters, my wife thought that such a Brownie doll, or a more or less similar female doll, would be a nice personalized gift for those girls who gave me their own doll.

¹ My research among the Ghib lasted for three periods of three months in spring and autumn 1975 and in spring 1977. This research was facilitated by my friend and colleague dr. Gilbert J. M. Claus who was already doing research among the Ghib, a research that he continues there till today.

Because in our Flemish cultural background Brownie is a nice, gentle and helpful older man who lives in the woods of our fairy-tales, I did not see any objection to this. The more as such a personage and its representation were unknown among the Ghrib and they therefore were not linked to local traditions or beliefs about spirits.

So, I went back with these precious gifts and handed them over to the girls in question who, although somewhat astonished, seemed to be pleased with their present (fig. 8, p. 25). However, what happened then with these dolls is still a secret to me. Once the girls returned home with their Brownie, I never saw them again nor did anybody mention their existence anymore, something that was confirmed by Gilbert J. M. Claus when I talked to him about this event some years later. But even if I do not know what really happened to these Brownies, the information I found since then on foreign dolls imported in more or less isolated Saharan and North African traditional communities point in the same direction. Such strange dolls were viewed with much suspicion and felt to be possibly dangerous especially for pregnant women and babies. Pregnant women who would look at these deformed figures could have deformed babies, a popular belief that also existed in Europe decades ago.

These two examples, of Barbie and Brownie, underline the fact that without situating the toys, games and play activities into a particular socio-cultural context it is impossible to describe and understand them, to see their significance and to feel their influence and importance. The examples also show that the introduction of toys, especially dolls, in cultures quite different from the one where these originated can be a distorting experience.

2.3 Toy design with natural and waste material

With some specific examples given here and by referring to other toys and play objects shown in this book, I shall highlight the use of natural and waste material by North African and Saharan children creating play objects.

Without trying to give an exhaustive list of the natural material taken from the local environment and used to make toys, these items can be grouped as follows:

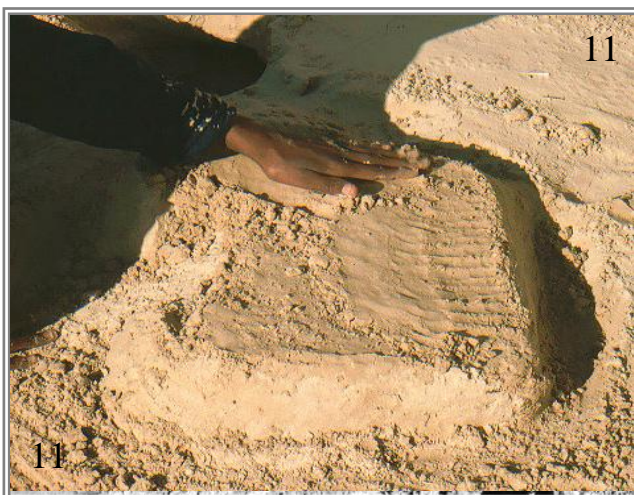
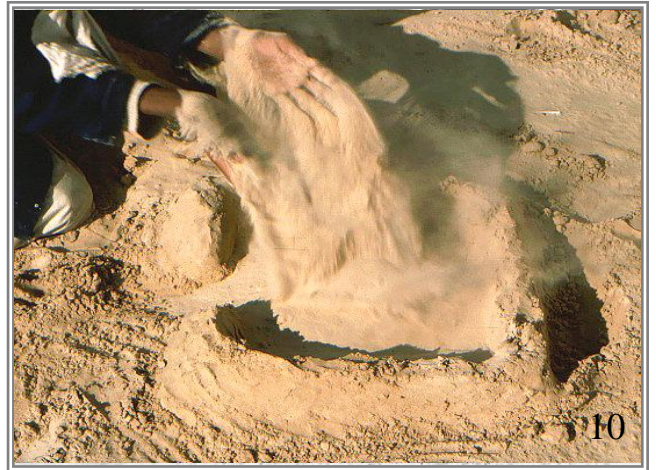
- Material of mineral origin: sand, clay, paint, stones, pebbles...
- Material of vegetal origin: cactus, flowers, palm or reed leaves, reed, sticks and branches, bark of cork-oak, sap, glue, paint, ear of maize, nuts, dates, summer squash, potatoes...
- Material of animal origin: bones, horns, snail shells, hair, skin, intestines, dung...
- Material of human origin: hair, parts of the body or the whole body.

Children are masters in the re-utilization of waste material they find in their human environment. So it is obvious that they also use this material for creating toys. An incomplete list contains the following items:

- Earthenware material: pieces of pottery, pearls, buttons...
- Glass material: pieces of glass utensils, bottles, pearls...
- Wooden material: pieces of timber wood, spoons...
- Fibrous material: cotton, woolen or synthetic threads and rags, pieces of carpets...
- Metallic material: pieces of aluminum, copper and tin, wires, tins, cans, nails, needles, safety pins, parts of bicycles and cars...
- Paper material: paper, pasteboard, cardboard...
- Plastic and rubber material: tubes, tires, pipes, flasks, cans, bottles, bottle stoppers, plastic toys or parts of it...
- Other material: pencils, ballpoints, ink, paint, glue, candle, make up products...

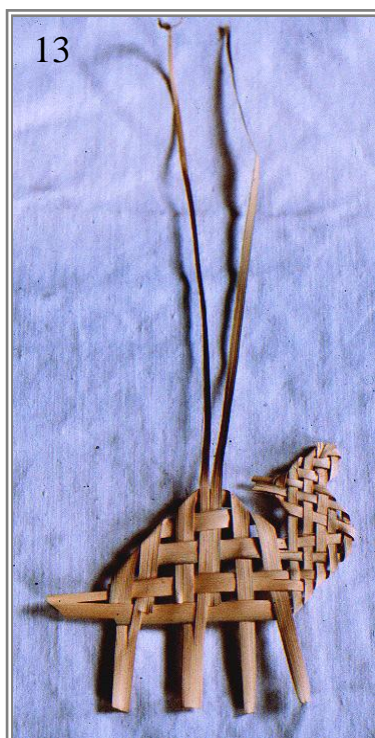
As different material often is used in combination the same toy often exemplifies the use of natural material of different origin as well as the use of different kinds of waste material. In the next pages and illustrations some North African and Saharan toys and play objects are described and shown to give an impression of the use of natural and waste material. Yet one should also refer to the toys and other play objects mentioned in the following chapters.

One example of a toy, or if preferred a self-made object to be used in play activities, is made with sand, sand of different qualities: very fine dry powder sand and heavier wet sand. With these two kinds of sand only, Ghrib children from the Tunisian Sahara could make a fine miniature oasis-house (fig. 9-12).



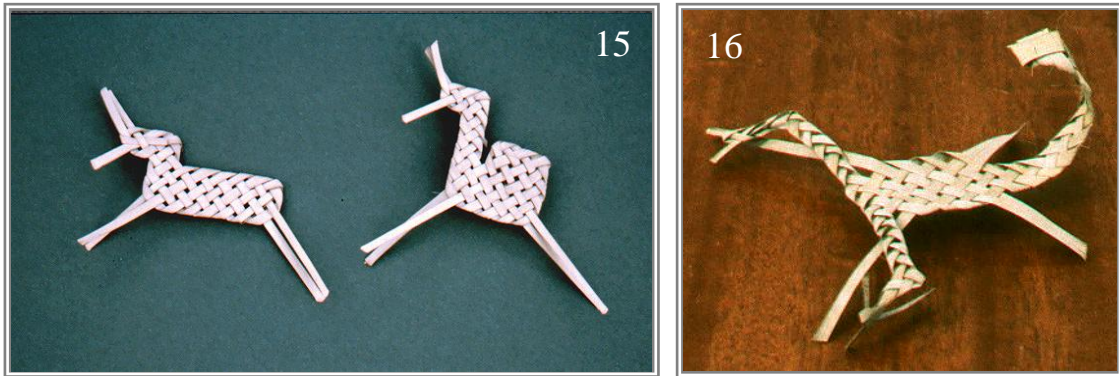
Through this at first simple play activity children learn a lot about the specific characteristics of sand because if the dry sand is not fine enough it will not slide out through the opening in the front wall of the house and if the sand used for the roof is too wet or not wet enough the roof will fall down. Moreover, one should be attentive not to tamp the sand too hard or too light or the roof will not last also. A lot of experience is needed to make such a nice house and even then it is not always a success.

An example from India, mentioned to me by Sudarshan Khanna, points in the same direction and even if the material used is limited to wet sand a lot is to be tried out before a child is able to create a dome-house in the following way. To make such a dome-house one puts his naked foot on the sand and then covers it with wet sand, then this sand must be tamped in the right way so that it clings together. When the foot is slowly and carefully removed the dome will not fall down and eventually it will be possible to make the inner space larger by pulling out some sand. In a quite different environment, the North of Sweden, children use the same technique for making a dome-house but this time with snow¹.



¹ Verbal information given by Eva Petersson in May 1997 at the Nordic Center for Research on Toys and Educational Media, Halmstad University, Halmstad, Sweden. Other Swedish adults have confirmed this information during a trip to the North of Sweden in May 1998.

Leaves, especially palm and reed leaves, serve to create different kinds of toys, such as whistles, little windmills, animals, cars. In the oases of Meski and Tineghir in Central Morocco, the boys make with palm leaves dromedaries (fig. 13, p. 29), mules (fig. 14, p. 29), gazelles (fig. 15) and scorpions (fig. 16) and possibly sell them to tourists.



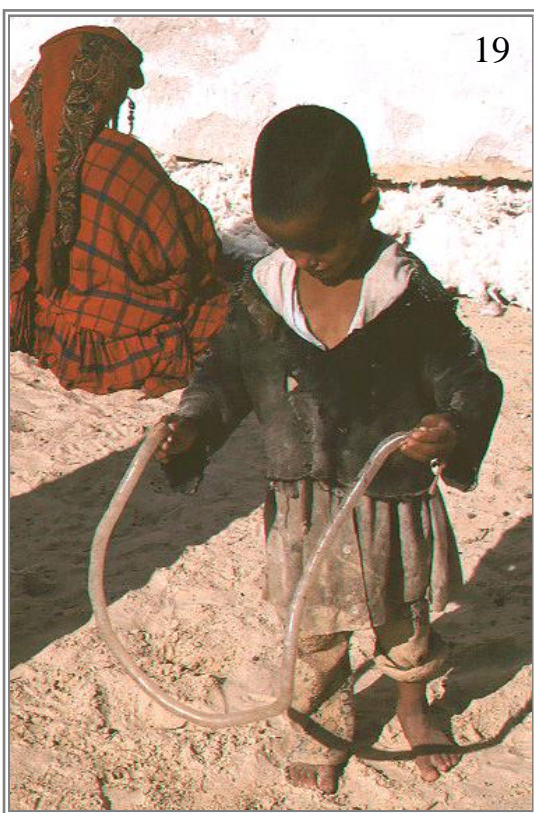
A cup-shaped flower is used by a Moroccan girl as a whistle (fig. 17).



But also vegetables, like summer squash and potatoes, can be used to create toys as a ten-year-old boy from the little mountain village Aït Ighemour in Central Morocco did (fig. 18). The male doll in question not only is remarkable because of its height and its head of summer squash but also for the play activities in which it is used. According to the boy

who created this male doll, it is used by the boys to imitate the young men who assist together with the young women at the nocturnal *ahwash* dance of the Amazigh of the Ouarzazate region. The frame of this male doll consists of a branch of about 1 m to which is fixed in the shape of a cross a reed of about 40 cm. Then a big summer squash is put on top of the vertical branch. In the summer squash the boy cuts incisions for the eyebrows and little holes for the eyes, nose and mouth. The incisions for the eyebrows and the hole for the mouth are blackened with *khol*, a beauty product. In the holes for the nose a yellow piece of the fruit of the *iqurran* tree are placed. A red plastic disk used for counting at school sticks into the mouth to represent the tongue. This male doll wears a red undergarment and a white hooded upper garment that in other situations is worn by a boy. A long piece of fabric envelops the head and the neck. Another toy, a mule and its driver, is also made with the same vegetables by another boy of this village (fig. 41, p. 52).

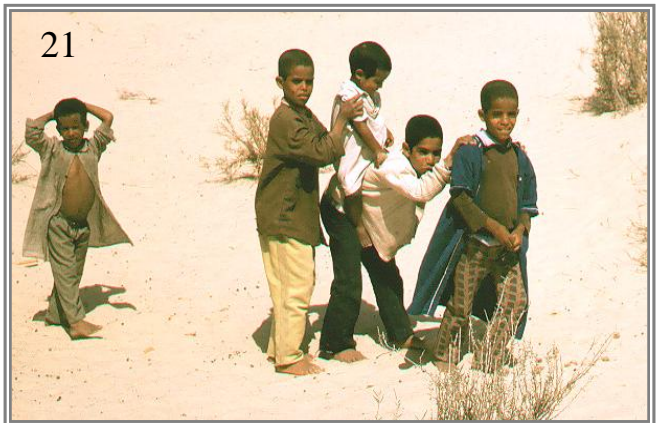
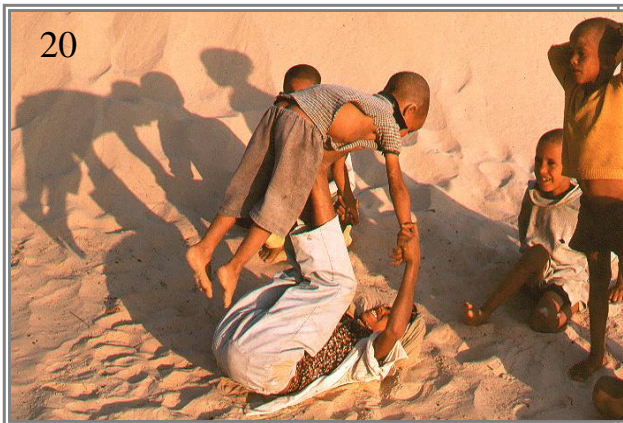
The intestines of a goat or a sheep might become an exciting toy for young children as among the Ghrib from the Tunisian Sahara during the



1970s (fig. 19) or the Moroccan children from the region of Midelt during the 1980s. In the region of Midelt in Central Morocco, little girls as well as boys played with the intestine of a sheep especially during the Aïd el Kebir, the feast of the sacrifice of sheep. A very thin part of an intestine is well cleaned and closed at one side. Then it is inflated, closed with elastic and given to the little ones as a balloon. As among the Ghrib, a bit of water is sometimes poured in the intestine so that it runs through it. In front of an isolated house about 10 km from Sidi Ifni in Southern Morocco I found a girl and her brother using

snail shells as dolls for their doll and construction play in 2002 (fig. 134, p. 175).

If one looks at the human body as a self-evident means for playing, one's own body and the body of others become major toys for babies and infants (see Sutton-Smith, 1986: 101-102). But even at a more advanced age the human body is more than once a resourceful instrument for playing. A few photographs, all taken in 1975 or 1977 among the Ghrif children in the Tunisian Sahara, will illustrate this much better than words: lifting up a little one (fig. 20), being a mounted dromedary (fig. 21), spinning around (fig. 22), becoming the taxi and the driver (fig. 23) and a more acrobatic exercise (fig. 24).



As seen on the foregoing page, just a lost piece of timber wood could become a highly valued dromedary in the hands of a Ghib toddler (fig. 25, p. 32). This way a waste object of the child's immediate environment has been recuperated and transformed into a representational toy, something often done by young children in these regions. The same object can be easily transformed into several toys within a very short time as I could observe in November 1997 when a Moroccan boy of about six years first walked around with a half of a plastic can as his toy hat, then attached it to a rope and used it as a football before changing it into a drum to accompany his singing, all this in less than five minutes.



Sound-making toys, such as whistles (fig. 17, p. 30), flutes (fig. 26) or drums (fig. 106-107, p. 131), are made with natural as well as waste material. Pieces of paper easily replace leaves when a whistle is to be shaped.

About such paper whistles Sudarshan Khanna (1996: 43) writes:

Each of these sound-making toys can be played for hours together without spending any money. But this is just a small part of the story. By making these toys from just a single tiny paper, the child can learn many things. This would include understanding material (paper) properties, the specifications of paper and its relationship to the quality of sound produced, the method of rolling and folding paper properly and precisely, the ways of holding and blowing air. Besides, while making such toys, children will try different sizes and different dimensions and the quality of sound will be different. Now sometimes these toys will not make a sound. This will be a blessing in disguise because this can make the child curious as to why a sound is not heard. The child might try to make some necessary changes, blow

hard, stretch the paper, examine the toy, remake it, change the paper, etc. If it still does not produce a sound, perhaps she might consult a friend or an adult well-wisher. Now this is indeed the best part of such toys. Often, children go through this process, touching the fundamentals of Science, Technology, Design and Art. The learning does not stop here. Such simple paper toys would break as fast as these are made. The child will make them again and most likely will make these in the company of friends and, in turn, would help others to learn to make and play with them. Can there be a more enjoyable, more worthwhile and more efficient way of self-learning and sharing one's knowledge with others? There would be still many more things taking place around these tiny paper whistles. Children would compare the quality of sounds, discuss many related and relevant issues and would gain some understanding of why sound is being produced. This is possible because nothing is hidden. The child feels at home with the simplicity and directness of such things.

Flattened metallic bottle caps become multiple purpose toys. They are used as a disk to toss up, to make a spinning wheel, to throw them on a line or in a little pit (fig. 27).



A boy from the Saoura Valley in the Algerian Sahara has changed some lost plastic-covered electric wire into a beautiful dromedary and dromedarist (fig. 28).

Playing household offers a good example of the use of different types of waste material combined with some natural material (fig. 29-32).

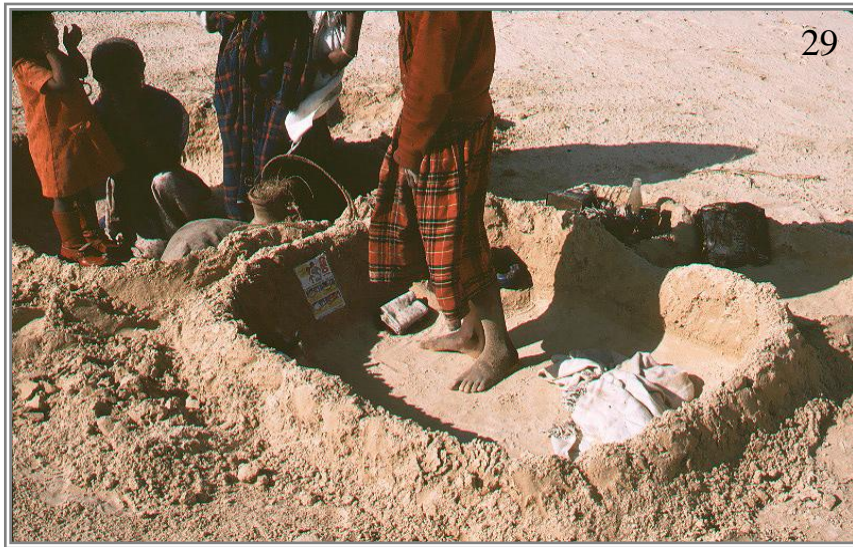


Figure 31
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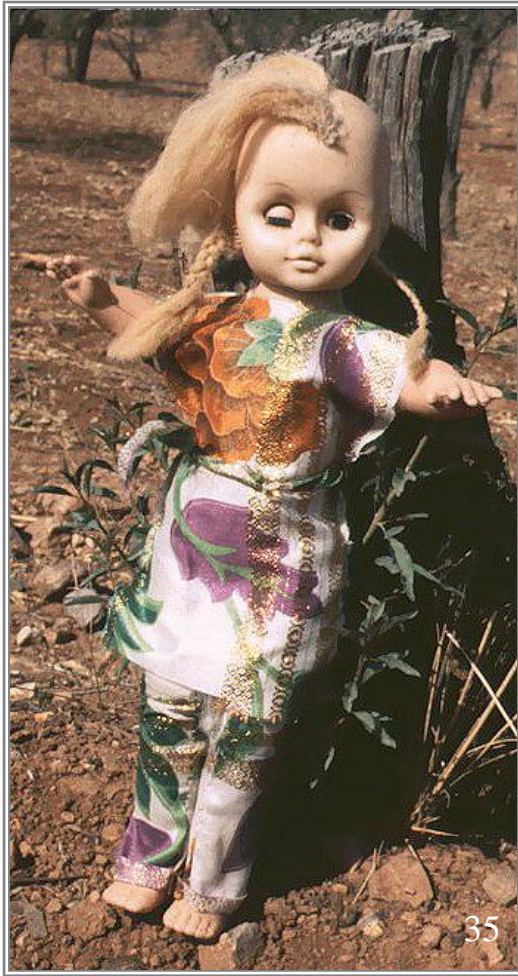


In small houses delimited by stones or little walls of sand, like those shown on the foregoing page, North African and Saharan girls use pieces of pottery and glass utensils; metallic caps, tins and cans; plastic ropes, flasks, cans, plates and bottle stoppers; pieces of paper, cardboard and wood; rags of all kinds and a lot more waste material; but they also use water, clay, flowers and herbs, little branches and reed.

A fine example of how children find opportunities to use in a creative way waste material one might easily disregard is given by small girls from a mountain village near Sidi Ifni in 2002 who sometimes use as dress for their self-made doll the wrapping of a candy (fig. 138, p. 179).



Even an imported plastic doll can be totally or partly transformed by a Moroccan girl to represent a local bride from Marrakech (fig. 33-34) or a young woman from the village Ignern at the foot of the Jbel Siroua Mountain in the Anti-Atlas as shown on the photograph on top of next page (fig. 35, p. 37).



That imported objects were already used to make toys a long time ago is exemplified by one type of dolls from the towns of the Mزاب region in the Algerian Sahara, a really exceptional doll in the whole North African and Saharan region (fig. 36). These dolls, already made in the 1920s by older girls and mothers, have a European pasteboard head that the fathers, almost all tradesmen, brought with them from the North of Algeria.

The above mentioned examples of toys made by children with natural and waste material offer just a glimpse of what these children experience and learn about materials, techniques and structures. This creation of toys and the playing with them also offers children the possibility to develop all their senses. According to Sudarshan Khanna the “experience of trying out, learning from each other, figuring out errors and correcting these, provide not only joy and fun but this activity can help children to learn many significant things” (1996: 41).

So, it is not the finished toy itself that is important but, on the one hand, the process of searching for the material and of creating the toy and, on the other hand, the play activities in which these self-made toys are used. This can explain why I could observe several Moroccan children showing a real indifference to their self-made toys once they have finished to play with them and why some Moroccan girls or young women stressed the fact that once their doll play was over they just abandoned their self-made dolls and dollhouses or even deliberately destroyed them for fun. This non-durability of the self-made toy has also been observed among children in Papua New Guinea by Florence Weiss (1997: 138) as she writes:

But the objects they use at play are made specifically for the occasion... And when they organize a fete, the girls make skirts from grass and the boys make masks from twigs and leaves. When the festivities are over, they leave the skirts and masks behind them in the forest.

2.4 Toy design and safety

An aspect closely related to toy design is toy safety and even if it is inconceivable to apply for example the *European Union Directive for Safety of Toys* to toys made by children themselves, the aspect of safety and lack of safety in self-made toys should not be overlooked. As I am not familiar enough with the safety requirements for toy design and as I did not conduct in regard to North African and Saharan self-made toys any research on this topic, my reflections remain very limited.

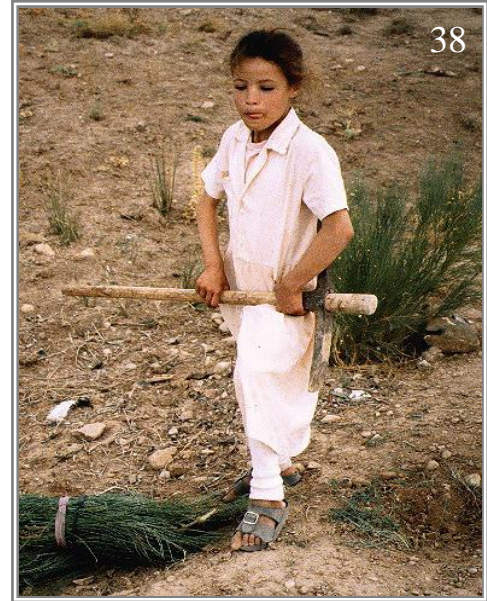
The girls and boys of these regions use in the elaboration of their toys a great variety of natural and waste material. Almost always this material is of local or domestic origin: stones, clay, bones, dried dung, leather, hair, wool, vegetal material, threads, rags, metal scraps, pieces of plastic... The part of material of non-local or non-domestic origin is insignificant.

But even if these materials are part of the everyday environment of the children, there can be no doubt about it that making toys with natural and waste material creates some physical danger for these toy makers. Although I do not know of any study of eventual accidents or injuries that happened to these toy making North African and Saharan children and even if I never witnessed such events they surely must happen.

At least one attitude towards making toys with natural and waste material in these societies, I can think of, can partially explain the fact that I never was told about injuries caused to children while making toys. Parents and other adults, as well as the children themselves, find it so obvious that children make toys with these materials that minor injuries are seen as insignificant and so as quickly forgotten as they happen. It is only when I insisted on this topic, that I got two examples from the Laabib family in Midelt. Once when playing in a fig tree Kamel, the youngest son, had a wing of his nose transpierced by a little branch and in the second case Souad, one of the older girls, cut her finger at an old sardine tin she was playing with. In both cases their mother scolded them at that moment but without any further consequences. Others have also noted “the seeming lack of concern for children's safety on the part of village people” because of “great reliance on the children's inherent motivation to imitate adults” (Lancy, 1996: 146). Information I got from Mhamed Bellamine, a man born in Ksar Assaka near Midelt in 1968, also shows that children are wounded during play. When explaining in May 2000 the game of skill for which a wooden disk with two holes put on a thread and spinning around is used, he said that one of the play activities opposes two boys each one making his spinning wheel to rotate very quickly. Using the power of the rotating disk the boys must try to break each other's spinning wheel. It is then that it can happen that a piece of the rotating disk breaks off and wounds a boy in the face. According to Mhamed and in Ksar Assaka about 1980 this risk was seen as part of the game and when the injury was not too bad the parents of the child who caused it gave a sugar bread of one kilo to the parents of the injured child, but it could also be necessary to offer a little goat or a sheep. When necessary an old man was asked to mediate the affair in order to preserve good neighborliness in the village. But Mhamed concluded by stressing that although this way of arranging injuries inflicted between players is still common in Ksar Assaka in 2000, the same event happening in the

nearby town Midelt may lead to a complaint before the police authorities or possibly even end before a court of justice.

One can also argue that children from rural and popular urban populations are well acquainted with their material environment and that for example Ghrib parents let their small children handle what Western parents would see as eventually life threatening tools. My observations of adult-child relations in the Tunisian Sahara in 1975 show a few such cases. In the spring desert encampment the sniveling two and a half-year-old Bechir not only gets from his mother a big piece of colza but also the sharp knife to peel it. He tries to cut in the colza but as he cannot he runs to his fifteen-year-old brother. Five minutes later the little boy is playing with the colza and the knife whilst his brothers and his father sit near him. Another five minutes later Bechir tries to make a hole in the colza but he pricks his hand. Gilbert J.M. Claus, the other researcher sitting in the tent, attracts the other's attention to this and then the twenty-four-year old oldest brother takes the knife away. Bechir now starts to tell everybody how he pricked his hand with the knife. Seven minutes have past and Bechir is weeping after the colza and the knife and his eighteen-year-old sister gives them back to him. He runs round with them, then sits down at his father's feet and swings around the knife. During the following ten minutes the small boy kept the knife with him manipulating it now and then before giving it to his sister, as he now wants the lid of the pot she is cleaning. Half an hour later Bechir got hold of the knife and the colza once more. He plays with them but soon he loses interest in these objects. The whole time no adult or adolescent of Bechir's family showed any fear for this small toddler handling a sharp knife nor did they see any necessity to take any precaution whatever or to warn Bechir for a potential danger. They all seemed totally confident in two and a half-year-old Bechir's ability to manipulate the knife. In another Ghrib household also temporarily living in a 1975 spring encampment a two-year-old girl plays for some time with a peeling-knife while sitting next to her mother. In the Tunisian Sahara as well as in Morocco I have seen children using eventually dangerous adult tools like the pickaxe used by some girls on the photographs on top of next page (fig. 37-38, p. 41).



The making of toys teaches children to become careful in handling potentially dangerous objects and tools. Sudarshan Khanna (1992: 2) uses the same argument in relation to Indian children:

Children usually make these (toys) from discarded materials which they handle in any case. Tools such as knives, scissors, needles etc. are also available at home... In fact, the making of these toys provides an opportunity to handle materials and tools with due care and adequate precautions.

In his study, the *Quality of Life and Child Development*, José Juan Amar Amar (1996: 17) writes about Colombian children from disadvantaged families:

The security felt by these children came across very strongly in our study. This suggests that they know and trust their natural environment and do not see it as a threatening or dangerous setting - it has even enriched their daily lives... Equally, we can conclude that children seem able to confidently manage in an environment that outsiders perceive as characterized by limitations and risks.

Another possibility is that making toys most of the time is a collective activity so that older girls or boys have some preventing influence on younger children trying to manipulate objects they do not master yet.

However, I need to call in question this eventuality as at the same time these young children can have access to objects used by the older ones they otherwise would not have at their disposal.

Andrew McClary (1997: 238) answers the question “Are homemade toys safer than machine-made toys?” as follows:

It's impossible to know for sure, but some educated guesses can be made. With the exception of shooters, it seems likely that the homemades of Dorothy's world (USA, early 1900s) were safer than machine-made toys. Homemades were well understood by their makers and users - no hidden parts to cause unexpected trouble. Also, generation after generation had used the same kinds of toys and their potential hazards were well known.

These few remarks bring to the foreground the question of safety and lack of safety of making toys in such situations. Surely a very problematic question as a discussion on these topics will reveal opposing viewpoints: the ones stressing the creativity and developmental advantages of self-made toys, the others underlining the inherent danger of doing so and arguing for actions in this respect, e.g. by warning parents and teachers possibly through radio and television programs. Thus, what is needed are case studies on the problems of toy safety in communities where children still make their toys themselves so that, at the one hand, developmental benefits of creating toys would not be sacrificed for fear of possible injuries and, on the other hand, the major risks might be prevented through an adapted sensibilization.

One should not forget that some play activities are inherently linked to *vertigo* and do contain a playful relation to danger. In an e-mail on children's perceptions of risk in play Mark Gladwin stresses “that children's need to engage in conscious risk taking is a fundamental play behavior” (Ukplayworkers@yahoogroups.com, June 16, 2003). So not only research on toy safety is needed but also research on non-Western children's attitude towards danger and risk especially in playful situations, research totally lacking in North Africa and the Sahara as far as I know.

3 Toys, play, Signs, meanings and communication

I looked more closely at these topics for the first time when writing the article “Symbols and Communication through Children’s Dolls. Examples from North Africa and the Sahara” published in the collective work *Play, Communication and Cognition* I edited for the international review *Communication & Cognition* in 1994. My second attempt is directly related to Theo van Leeuwen's lecture during the Toy Center Workshop on Toy Design organized by the former Nordic Center for Research on Toys and Educational Media in 1997 as he then introduced me to social semiotics and the book *Reading Images. The Grammar of Visual Design* (Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996). The document “A social semiotic approach to North African and Saharan toys” prepared for the Second International Toy Research Conference held in June 1999 at Halmstad University, Sweden, shows my early effort to use a social semiotic approach (Rossie, 2003).

3.1 Toys, Play and Communication

It is only for analytical purposes that the theme of communication has been separated from the one of signs and meanings as all three are always interconnected, the signs and their meanings being transmitted by communicative processes. So, toys can only really be understood through the play activities for which they are used, a common sense statement too often forgotten when describing, collecting or displaying toys. Theo van Leeuwen (2000: 1-2) underlines this when writing about toys that their meanings:

Are not only read but also enacted, not only perceived, but also 'grasped', explored, and incorporated in physical action. This is the point: 'using' is also a semiotic act. As seeing and doing fuse, so do meaning and function, symbolic value and use value.

Although most of what will be said here refers to object-related visual communication it certainly is not the only form of non-verbal communication that is at stake as other forms such as gestures and movements have their place in Saharan and North African children's play activities. For example, a gesture can express a radical change in the relationship. This gesture, as done in the Tiznit and Sidi Ifni regions of southern Morocco decades ago as well as today, is executed with the right hand in the following way. A child touches with its slightly bended little finger the little finger of another child it becomes angry with and then quickly pulls away its little finger as if unhooking it. The angry child, however, can also execute the same gesture from a distance. In both cases this gesture signifies the disruption of all verbal communication and friendly contact until the reconciliation ritual is performed. This reconciliation ritual is more complex and necessitates the agreement of both children. To reconcile a series of six gestures must be performed: (1) push each other's thumb that sticks out of the closed fist, (2) stretch one's four fingers and shove the opening between thumb and index in the same opening of the other child's hand, (3) pull back one's hand, bend the serried four fingers and hook these in the bended fingers of the other child while exerting some pulling pressure, (4) shake hands in the normal way, (5) grasp each other's wrist, (6) clap each other's flat of the hand loudly so that the other children know that the reconciliation has taken place. These gestures for disrupting and restoring communication are not limited to play situations and little children also use them when being angry with their mother.

The verbal communication through monologues, dialogues and songs is also very present as clearly demonstrated in Moroccan girls' doll play. In an article "How to Change Words into Play", Gilles Brougère (1994: 284-285) stresses the importance of verbal communication:

Play is from the outset a situation which makes communication necessary as soon as one wishes to play with someone else. There has to be agreement not only initially but in pretend games throughout a play process, which is characterized by a series of decisions. These decisions have to be communicated by the players to become acts of play on condition that they are agreed with the other player(s).

Consequently, play forces the child to make use of a variety of complex

abilities in the area of communication, particularly, but not exclusively, those of verbal communication. In addition to the freedom that dominates play, is it not also a place for specific verbal experimentation? Language is the raw material of some play activities: children convert words into play. We have to listen to children playing.

Unfortunately, there is as good as no information on Saharan and North African children's verbal communication in play. Yet, the protocols of the videos made in the Sidi Ifni region in the beginning of 2002 show that it can be an important aspect of the concerned children's play that offers basic information (Rossie and Daoumani, 2003).

As in North African and Saharan rural areas and popular quarters of towns children play with the same kind of toys their similitude facilitates the elaboration and communication of shared signification, this elaboration and communication of shared signification eventually being strengthened by the fact that the children make the toys themselves. Thus the toys and play activities can be viewed as an efficient tool for transmitting conservative messages and for keeping up of the socio-cultural system. Through dolls and doll play for example a lot of symbols, significations, esthetic, social and moral values are transmitted from one generation to the next and interiorized by the children in a playful way. The information given in the other volumes of the collection: *Saharan and North African Toy and Play Cultures on The Animal World in Play, Games and Toys* and on *Domestic Life in Play, Games and Toys* points in the same direction. Not only the example of the three-legged clay animals made for centuries by children from the southern Sahara and described in the next chapter but also many other traditional toys and games still made and played today by especially rural children show that the intergenerational communication of the local toy and play culture functions well. Although the interaction between children and adults plays a role one can ascertain that the interaction between older and younger children largely predominates in this context. Yet, it is also undoubtedly clear that one cannot speak of petrified and unchanging toy and play cultures as the section *Toys, Play and Change* will demonstrate (p. 149).

Toys, directly related as they are to the social and cultural background in which they evolve, form part of the visual communication system of the community in which a child grows up and whereby, through conventionalized signs, an exchange between the child and its environment takes place. Or to put it in another way toys belong, as D.S. Clarke Jr. would say, to a “set of significant sign elements used to communicate between members of a society” (1987: 96).

Jeopardizing the social and cultural differences, one could compare the traditional North African and Saharan self-made dolls to the Barbie and Ken dolls as they all represent young adult women or men in tune with their socio-cultural environment. Some symbols conveyed by the girls' bride dolls can be compared to those identified by Marie-Françoise Hanquez Maincent in relation to Barbie dolls (1998: 76-77). The symbols attributed to Barbie but according to me also conveyed by the bride dolls are the ones of opulence, beauty and popularity. Other symbols conveyed by Barbie dolls but certainly not by bride dolls refer to finding happiness through entertainment and consumer goods, superfluous expenses and individual success. Would it be too hazardous to argue that both types of doll serve the same symbolic and communicative function, namely the promotion of the interaction between the world of the child and the world of the adult? Nevertheless, it becomes clear that a totally different situation prevails in North Africa and the Sahara when reading the following statement of Gilles Brougère originally written in French (1992: 17):

Barbie is the independent adult, its way of life is far away from the daily experience of most of the children. It is therefore an image bearing no relation to the present and the future of the (Western European) child and it is embarrassing for a lot of parents that it permits the child to express its desire of becoming an adult through a way that seems to break away from more acceptable images.

In North Africa and the Sahara, even today for most of them, the children have to take part in adult activities from a young age onwards. This way, adult life forms part of their daily experience especially for the girls. Notwithstanding recent exceptions, the dolls and the doll play in these regions do refer to the local reality of the children as well as the parents.

The recent exceptions are among other factors caused by European dolls brought back as a gift for Moroccan children, and probably other North African children as well, by family members living all over Europe.

In the concerned region the doll play and the dolls often refer to an idealized and socio-cultural esteemed vision of adult roles and situations, yet this does not mean that the child only passively comes into contact with such roles and situations. What takes place in these children's games is their interpretation of the adult world, of female and male activities, of festivities and eventually also of rituals. "The themes of toys speak of the major cultural preoccupations of their period" writes Theo van Leeuwen about industrial toys (2000: 5). The same can surely be said of North African and Saharan children's self-made toys. This is for example the case when playing at wedding and the bride doll then refers to 'traditional' preoccupations. However, it happened in 2002 that in their wedding play two Moroccan village children use a toy mobile phone thereby referring to very recent high tech preoccupations (see chapter 9.2, p. 161).

In their article on the global distribution of toys like Ninja Turtles, Barbie and Transformers, Stephen Kline and Peter K. Smith (1993: 186) argue:

It must be kept in mind that these character toys are not simple natural objects transformed in use by imaginative children. They are sophisticated products and as such different than traditional toys because they are intentionally designed to be extremely potent symbols for children and promoted as such using sophisticated strategies. They are carefully researched with specific identities and traits pre-tested in games of social pretending among targeted peer groups.

Although I do not have, as someone much more acquainted with traditional dolls than with the above mentioned character toys, any real objection to this statement, I nevertheless feel that in one point the distinction between the sophisticated and industrially designed dolls and the traditional self-made dolls of for example the North African and Saharan children should be relativized. My research has clearly shown that the children from these regions, especially the girls, make typical types of dolls representing young adults in socially esteemed roles. So,

one could write that these dolls also are intentionally designed to be extremely potent symbols for children. Intentionally designed for children by children, very rarely by adults. Moreover, and although I do not know of any research on the contents of fantasy play of Saharan and North African children, the rare information I could gather on this topic seems to confirm what Brian Sutton-Smith writes about play: “It is the primitive communication system par excellence through which you can express and communicate all the longings, future wishes, glorious dreams, hopeless fears, that cannot be expressed in everyday arrangements” (1986: 252). The doll play of Saharan and North African children, as well as their other play activities, could offer a lot of insights when analyzed as a particular strategy and content of communication. In this light, it probably is not the games and the toys themselves that are the most important but what they offer as signs and messages to the players, the onlookers, the community.

This chapter should not be closed without remembering what Claudia Mitchell and Jacqueline Reid-Walsh write on “the dangers of ascribing a single meaning to a doll or Barbie”, on the need to look for “socially prescribed ways” as well as “unconventional ways” of playing with dolls and on the fact that the same doll can be used in different roles because it is through play use that dolls achieve meaning (2002: 192, 195, 199). I have been recently confronted with all this when recording on video children's doll play in Sidi Ifni as the self-made dolls, the Barbie-like dolls and the real Barbie dolls represent children during most of the play activities (Rossie and Daoumani, video 1 and 3). Up to then I thought that Moroccan female dolls always represented brides in wedding play.¹ This interpretation was based on the information forwarded by girls and by women but also on the generic names given to the self-made dolls or to the plastic dolls replacing them, i.e. *tislit* and *arûsa* the words for bride in Amazigh and Moroccan Arabic respectively.

¹ For a detailed description of the wedding play with a bride doll and eventually a bridegroom doll I refer the reader to *Saharan and North African Toy and Play Cultures. Children's Dolls and Doll Play*, chapter 2.14 Female dolls of Morocco and especially to pages 114-116 and 124-129. The same chapter as well as the other chapters on female dolls contain other descriptions of doll play staging wedding related events but these remain more fragmentary descriptions.

3.2 Toys, signs and meaning

As already mentioned this chapter has been directly inspired by social semiotics as developed by Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen. These authors see social semiotics as “an attempt to describe and understand how people produce and communicate meaning in specific social settings” (1996: 264). In this context toys can be seen as semiotic resources used to produce meanings, meaning being understood “as cognitive *and* affective, as a matter of the mind *and* the body” (van Leeuwen and Caldas-Coulthard, 1999: 1). So why is 'social semiotics' not used in the title of this chapter as I have done on other occasions? The reason is that my efforts are limited to the descriptive level without reaching a more theoretical level. Referring to this situation Theo van Leeuwen wrote to me (e-mail, January 29th, 2002):

You actually use semiotic terminology only intermittently, and in ways I have no problem with at all, but you seem to have a certain hesitation about generalizing, and semiotics aims of course at a general theoretical framework within which to make interpretations (the bit on schematized representation is an example of introducing some generalization).

There are two main reasons for my hesitation about generalizing, first I have not been trained as a theoretician and secondly I have seen several theories built too hastily or based on too one-sided information.

In my attempt to define some signs and their meanings only the Saharan and North African toys, especially the dolls and toy animals, have been analyzed leaving aside the games in which they are used and this because the information on toys is a lot more detailed than it is on play. Furthermore, as toys are objects their semiotic analysis is made easier by having at one's disposal the toy itself or a photograph. Analyzing play activities on the contrary will necessitate much more specific observation if possible recorded on video. Still, I want to stress that I fully agree with Marie-Françoise Maincent-Hanques' statement “it is not the plaything that creates the fantasy but definitely the fantasy that uses the plaything” (1999: 4).

To be able to structure my remarks I more or less arbitrarily divide them in three parts, looking first at Saharan and North African children's toys through their material aspects, then their technical aspects and finally their cognitive and emotional aspects.

3.2.1 Material aspects

Four topics are developed: the used material, choosing specific material in relation to particular meanings, color, and non-durability versus durability.

The used material

A fundamental aspect of self-made toys is the material used by children to create them. In a North African and Saharan context, these material items are those easily available in a familial setting in rural areas or popular quarters of towns and as such they reflect the environment and the socio-economic situation of the children's habitat and social group. The children almost always use natural and waste material as described in chapter 2.3 Toy design with natural and waste material.

There is no doubt about the importance of materiality both in creating toys as in analyzing these toys from a semiotic point of view. Yet, with the available information it is difficult to bestow semiotic meaning on the children's choices of the material they use to make toys, except the meaning of conformity with the ecological and socio-cultural environment in which they live. But, even if an answer seems hard to find, Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen's question: "What, then, is the meaning of material?" still holds (1996: 240). Can one stick to the idea that almost all North African and Saharan children's toys are made with non-durable material just by accident? Or is it not more so that at its basis lies the common practices of making each time a new toy whenever the children need one for their play activities. This practice certainly is fundamental as even when the toys easily do last for some time they only seldom are used again for a next play activity. Instead, they are often

deliberately left behind or even destroyed as happens to dolls, the making of a new doll being one of the funs of the play activity.

Theo van Leeuwen (e-mail, June 14th, 1998) stresses the importance of materiality when writing:

It is interesting that you foreground the semiotic role of materiality. This is an issue I am trying to take further and your work is full of fascinating examples. I was wondering whether the people who, you say, mainly use conventional materials from their environment would nevertheless see their choice of materials as meaningful, and if so what kinds of meanings they would attach to it, or, more broadly, what kind of reasons they would give for choosing this or that kind of material. After all, as soon as there is choice, there usually is meaning, even though of course many meanings are never explicitly articulated by those whose meanings they are. And it would seem that the meanings of materiality in the toy making practices you describe are not only on the level of broad cultural values, as maybe in the case of a preference for the non-durable, but also on the level of representational meaning, as in the case of the use of excrement you describe.

These excrements are used to give large buttocks to a Tuareg doll (fig. 63, p. 70).

Choosing specific material in relation to particular meanings

Trying to analyze the reasons for the choices of material made by Saharan and North African children when creating toys, the first aspect coming to my mind was shape. When one looks on top of next page at the shape of the jawbone of a goat or a sheep it is not so difficult to imagine the appeal this object can have for a child when wanting to represent a dromedary (fig. 39, 40, p. 52).



Moreover, the possibility of holding this 'dromedary' in the hand by the elongated part of the jawbone makes it easier to imitate the movements of a dromedary. There is also the hollow on top of the jawbone that is very useful to put a toy saddle and a rider on. The dromedaries of stone offer another example, stones often chosen because of their shape and serving after a possible carving to represent a dromedary, she-dromedary,



pregnant she-dromedary or little dromedary. The oval shape of the summer squash does fit nicely to give a body and a head to a mule and its driver (fig. 41). Other aspects that can be put forward are the availability and

facility of manipulation of the material chosen to make toys. Sometimes it is the specificity of the object or part of the object that provokes the child's choice as when it takes a reed with a well-developed beard to figure the horse's mane, a little feather for the horse's tail as done by a young female servant of the Moors (fig. 73, p. 82) or the eyes of a clay rabbit for which a boy has chosen to use grains.

Analyzing how specific material has been chosen to represent specific features of dolls, I have found some useful examples as when I observed in November 1997 how girls from a Moroccan village near Midelt gave their doll exceptionally long hair, hair three to four times as long as the doll itself. In order to represent the highly valued long hair of a woman, the girls intentionally look for the upper part of a reed with long green leaves, leaves they split with their fingernails into small strips (fig. 42).



To continue with the use of particular material for representing hair on Moroccan dolls, reed leaves have intentionally been selected to give a traditional hairdo (fig. 92 right, p. 99), hemp to create long locks of hair (fig. 92 left, p. 99), the beard of an ear of maize to give long hair (fig. 91, p. 98; 61, p. 68). Tuareg children chose colored cotton threads to give their male dolls the typical male hairdo (fig. 52, p. 63). In order to create a relief for the nose Tunisian doll makers put a grain at that place under the fabric (fig. 5, p. 21) as was done by some Moroccan girls from Fès and the nearby region of Moulay Idriss. Other examples of doll-making

children choosing special material or objects in view of a specific representational meaning are the use of rags with brilliant motifs as festive attire (fig. 43, p. 53; 87, p. 96; 89 right, p. 97), a fresh unpitted date as head (fig. 46, p. 60), summer squash for the body and head or pieces of potatoes for the feet (fig. 41, p. 52), and a shampoo flask as head for some recent Ghrib girls' dolls (fig. 86, p. 95). This intentional use of material is not limited to making dolls and toy animals. It is also important in the creation of other toys, for example when children use all kinds of round, cylindrical and oval objects to make wheels for their toy carts (fig. 70, p. 75), bicycles (fig. 44-45), cars (fig. 128, p. 171), trucks (fig. 129, p. 171; 130, p. 172) and tractors (fig. 93, p. 101).



Although it is sometimes possible, as in the examples above, to relate the choice of a particular material or object to a specific representational meaning, this will be much more difficult if not impossible in other cases. What is the reason for using reed, sticks or little branches for most Saharan and North African dolls in a standing posture? It surely is not because the brides are always staying upright during the wedding ceremonies whereas the female dolls of the Tuareg (fig. 1-2, p. 20; 62, p. 69) and the Moors (fig. 3, p. 20; 64, p. 70) are designed in a sitting

posture, representing women sitting in the tent, and therefore have buttocks shaped with more plastic or round materials such as clay or dromedary excrement. It certainly would be interesting to ask children why they prefer to use one kind of material instead of other kinds; yet, they probably quite often will find this a 'stupid' or 'nonsense' question. So, the answer to Theo van Leeuwen's question "What kind of things would they say, if anything, when asked why they have chosen this or that material?" (e-mail, June 14th, 1998) could just be 'it was always like that', 'everybody does it this way', 'that is the way we learned to do it' or 'that is what we can use'. But even such general and evasive answers can be revealing.

Color

The meaning of color is often studied in a semiotic analysis of objects and images but as the Saharan and North African children use natural and waste material to create toys their colors are very diverse and with many nuances. The doll's facial features, sometimes being the only part of the dolls that is painted, show a combination of natural and artificial colors based on conventions and available painting material, such as tar, natural or chemical paint, nail varnish, beauty products. Almost all the toy animals of these regions have not been painted, the exceptions being partially or totally painted toy animals modeled with clay. The examples I have found up to now are a toy ram collected before 1889 (see *Saharan and North African Toy and Play Cultures. The Animal World in Play, Games and toys*, fig. 61, p.103), the clay toy animals made in the 1930s by female servants of the Moors of Oualata (fig. 72-74, p. 82), two clay toy animals modeled by children from the Moors of the Northwestern Sahara collected in 1938 and 1956, and some clay zebus created by children of Mopti on the Niger River described in 1977. The toy animals made decades ago by Moroccan woodworkers were also painted, often in vivid unrealistic colors. I have not been able to give a social and cultural meaning to the colors of the Saharan and North African dolls and toy animals. Yet, an anonymous author mentioned the use of a clean white rag to give a toy dromedary the look of a Tuareg chief's mount (*Vie des Touaregs. Enfance et Jeux*, p. 93). Moreover, two authors writing in the

1950s indicate the role of color in relation to the female dolls modeled in clay by female servants of the Moors (fig. 64, p. 70). The first author mentions that the clay dolls painted yellow represent a noble lady and the ones painted red a female servant (Gabus, 1958: 163). The second author adds to this that when the clay dolls are figures of children they represent children of free descent if painted white or children of servant descent if painted ochre (Béart, 1955: 96). For more details and photos I refer the reader to the volumes of the collection *Saharan and North African Toy and Play Cultures*.

Non-durability versus durability

Theo van Leeuwen (e-mail, June 14th, 1998) wrote to me:

The emphasis on non-durability is semiotically very interesting. Despite our propensity for artifacts we still retain something of it, for instance in our appreciation of theater, which is a non-durable semiotic production. But clearly for the cultures that make new dolls for every instance of play it is foregrounded more. There is cultural investment in such material characteristics as non-durability, hardness or softness, etc.

The non-durability of for example self-made dolls contrasts with the greater durability of imported dolls, mostly plastic dolls. The few examples, I know of, that a Moroccan girl had an imported plastic doll, she had it for at least some time, possibly using it later on when a leg or arm was missing or when she had to give it a self-made dress to replace the original one (fig. 35, p. 37; 119, p. 164). But can one conclude from the difference between the short living self-made traditional doll and the longer living imported plastic doll that for the girls themselves the last one is more important than the first one? I do not think so, especially when looking at the play activity itself in which a traditional doll more adequately represents the bride, the central figure of most doll play. Nevertheless, the imported plastic doll is gaining importance through factors lying outside the girls' play activities: because it is purchased and as such has a financial value, because it is imported and thus belongs to

the outside world, because it still is a rare item in villages and among children from popular milieus and therefore brings prestige to those who have it and longing to those who do not have it. Slowly, to make a doll oneself becomes an activity for poor, rural girls (backward girls they say in town), something urban girls do not want to do or should not do.

3.2.2 Technical aspects

Making toys necessitates material but also technical know-how. From a technical point of view I can put forward the use of the technologies of the hand, the aspect of movement and the construction of doll frames. The North African and Saharan children are restricted to what Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen call the “technologies of the hand, technologies in which representations are, in all their aspects, articulated by the human hand, aided by hand tools” (1996: 233). For the children of these regions the hand tools are more often than not objects they find themselves, not tools of adults, such as stones or other heavy objects to hit with, the child’s own teeth or other sharp objects to cut or make holes, etc.

One technological aspect to be solved by toy making children is movement, movement of parts of the toy or movement of the whole toy. Some North African and Saharan toys such as toy vehicles, windmills and toy weapons have movable parts. Nevertheless, I found until now only two references to toy animals with movable parts: a mule with movable legs pulling a plough collected in the 1930s and two indications of putting small wheels under a toy animal so that it can move. The first indication refers to a wheeled toy horse made by woodworkers from Marrakech in the first quarter of the twentieth century. A Moroccan boy described the second wheeled toy animal, a mule, to me (see *Saharan and North African Toy and Play Cultures. The Animal World in Play, Games and Toys*, p. 83 and 93). In relation to dolls I have not found yet a self-made doll with movable parts; this in contrast to the imported dolls. However, the fact that the self-made dolls and toy animals do not have movable parts should not be attributed to a lack of technical know-how as the North African and Saharan children undoubtedly demonstrate this know-how when making all kinds of toy vehicles. So these children

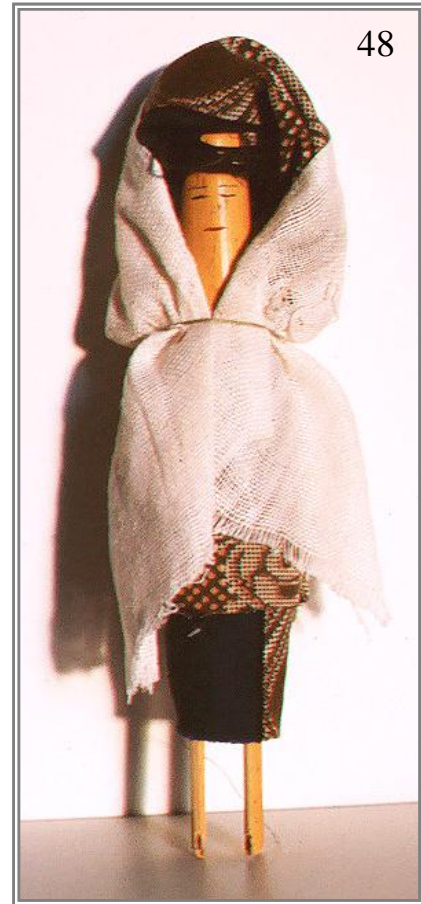
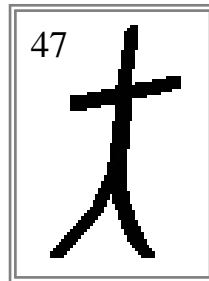
could have given movable parts to their dolls and toy animals if they wanted. A simple explanation for this situation could stress the fact that the children see no need to do this as they themselves are assuring the mobility of the doll or toy animal through their manipulation of it and because it is a very short living toy. An ideological explanation might be found in the argument that a doll with moving arms and legs is more like a human being than a rigid doll, this way possibly falling more directly under the Islamic prohibition of creating images of living beings (Rosenthal, 1982: 616).

The movement of the rigid doll or toy animal is under the direct control of the child who manipulates it. The movements are not naturalistic but conventional and based on a simplification of reality, on movements that the playgroup members find adequate to symbolize the necessary spatial displacement. What is important is the meaningfulness of the movements, not their realism. Three sisters from Ksar Assaka in Central Morocco explained that they and the other girls from their playgroups moved the bride doll by holding it at the lower end of the reed and making with the doll held upright, back and forward, left to right and up and down movements. The doll was also twisted around especially while singing and imitating the wedding dances. When moving the doll this was clearly done at eye level, which according to Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen reflects a relation of equality between the 'bride' and the playing girls. An argument for the plausibility of this interpretation can be found in the fact that when the same girls used another self-made doll for a ritual to obtain rain, the special status of this representational figure, once a North African female deity, became visible because the girl wearing this doll held it high up above her head while walking around the village (see *Saharan and North African Toy and Play Cultures. Children's Dolls and Doll Play*, p. 191).

I mentioned that several North African and Saharan toys could move. So let us look at some examples of different technological solutions used by children to give a possibility of movement to their toys by using wheels and axles: an axle made of a little branch with a wheel cut out of a piece of rubber (fig. 93, p. 101), an axle of a tin can with a wheel consisting of several sardine tins tightened around it (fig. 45, p. 54), an axle and wheels made out of one piece of iron wire (fig. 130, p. 172). The elaboration of such axles and wheels certainly necessitates a specific

technological apprenticeship whereby older children serve as models for the younger ones.

Except when made of wet sand or clay (fig. 123, p. 167; 125, p. 169), self-made toys are mostly constructed from different parts, such as the frame, the clothes, the hair, some ornaments in the case of a doll; the cabin, the steering wheel, the axles, the wheels in the case of a toy car; the pickets, the threads, the shuttle in the case of a toy weaving loom. Yet, once they have been assembled they are not taken apart again, e.g. for changing the dolls' dress or the hair. This is an interesting aspect, as nothing in the elaboration of the dolls would have prevented the girls from changing the dolls' dress or the hair, a doll play popular among Western European girls. Could this be somehow attributed to the stability of the role the doll plays, being most of the time a bride or is it the already mentioned ease with which the Saharan and North African girls make each time a new doll that is at stake? There where the available information shows that a doll can represent different types of women, as among the Teda of Tibesti in the Chadian Sahara (fig. 46, p. 60), this difference is expressed through a series of dolls with each their own dress and ornaments (see *Saharan and North African Toy and Play Cultures. Children's Dolls and Doll Play*, p. 98-101). There are other puzzling aspects in relation to the self-made dolls. For example, what could be the reason that most self-made dolls do not have legs? One reason could be that legs are unnecessary as in the case of the sitting Saharan female dolls. But is this also the case for dolls with a cross-shaped frame of reed or sticks that only exceptionally have legs? Referring to these dolls I can only document four cases in which the legs are distinctively worked out. These four examples, are a Moroccan doll of Moulay Idriss from the 1930s (fig. 57, p. 66), the Teda dolls of the early 1960s (fig. 46, p. 60), a type of dolls of a village near Taroudannt made in 1962 (fig. 47, p. 60) and six out of twelve bride dolls from a mountain village near Sidi Ifni made in 2002 (fig. 48, p. 60). About the typical way to give shoulders and arms to the dolls I obtained the following explanation from some young central Moroccan women: the little stick or piece of reed fixed cross-wise to the vertical stick or reed is not to be seen as representing the arms but as a means to hang the clothes on.



3.2.3 Cognitive and emotional aspects

Two major topics are presented here based in the first case on a study of Saharan and North African self-made dolls and in the second case on a study of the self-made toy animals of these regions. First the expression of femininity and masculinity in self-made dolls is discussed by referring to such characteristics as the doll's clothes and ornaments, its hairdo, face and posture found in both female and male dolls and two other characteristics particular to female dolls namely the representation of the breasts and the haunches or buttocks. The second major topic compares the self-made toy animals with a simple, a schematic or an elaborated shape. Then follows a brief comment on the analytical character of these figurines, the possible semiotic reinterpretation of these toys and finally the children's relationship to their toys. Due to the available partial and qualitatively unequal data the statements made below must be seen as hypothetical and need to be verified by further research.

The expression of femininity and masculinity in self-made dolls

Before analyzing some aspects of the visual expression of femininity and masculinity in self-made Saharan and North African dolls it is necessary to mention the difference between the great frequency of female dolls found among all the concerned populations versus the rarity of male and child dolls. Most female dolls represent brides. Sometimes they represent a mother, a child, a married woman and exceptionally an old or divorced woman. Girls make these female dolls and very seldom also boys. With an exception for Morocco, I have noticed the existence of male dolls only among children of populations living in the Sahara, especially the Tuareg, the Moors and the Ghrib. Those male dolls are also made by girls but, somewhat more often than in the case of female dolls, also by boys. They represent dromedarists, horsemen, herdsman, mule riders, warriors, notable men or bridegrooms.



Child dolls seem to be very rare in the whole area and if they exist they closely resemble adult male or female dolls. Nevertheless, the Chaouia mother doll carrying a baby doll on her back, made by a girl of the Aurès region in Northeast Algeria during the 1930s, is there to show the relativity of every absolute statement (fig. 49).

Since I started my research in Morocco in 1992 I have found twice a baby doll on the back of a mother doll. The first example was made with little branches and rags by a nine-year-old girl from a village near Taroudannt (fig. 50), the second example was modeled in clay by a girl of about ten years from the village Lahfart near Sidi Ifni in 2002 (fig. 51). Both villages are located in the Anti-Atlas at a distance of about 170 km as the crow flies. This rarity of a local doll representing a baby or an infant contrasts with the situation in Western Europe where, until recently and from the beginning of the nineteenth century onwards, the children mostly played with baby or infant dolls.



Clothing and ornaments

Looking at all the Saharan and North African self-made female dolls I know, the most important visual representation of femininity is expressed through the elaborate clothing of the female dolls, regularly supplemented with some ornaments. Important items of the clothing of most female dolls are the belt, the scarf, the under-dresses and the upper-dress that when having brilliant motives signifies a dress for festive occasions. This elaborate clothing of the female dolls is so prominent that

only few exceptions are found. In relation to the male dolls, and according to the available information, a distinction must be made between the male dolls of Saharan children and those of Moroccan children, a comparison with other North African regions being impossible, as no male dolls from these regions have been documented as far as I know. What is peculiar to Saharan children's male dolls is that their clothing and ornaments are as elaborated as those of the female dolls in the case of the Tuareg girls and boys (fig. 40, p. 52) or almost as elaborated in the case of the Ghrib, the Chaamba and the Belbala girls. The Tuareg, Ghrib and Belbala male dolls normally carry a sword. The importance that this sword had in the mind of the Tuareg boy who made the doll of figure 52 is easily deduced from its length, a sword symbolizing virility and nobility. In the case of the bridegroom dolls of the Ghrib girls a pointed stick represents the sword, this distinctive object that the bridegroom wears all through the wedding ceremonies. For a detailed analysis and photographs of the Saharan male dolls see *Saharan and North African Toy and Play Cultures. Children's Dolls and Doll Play*, p. 49-71.



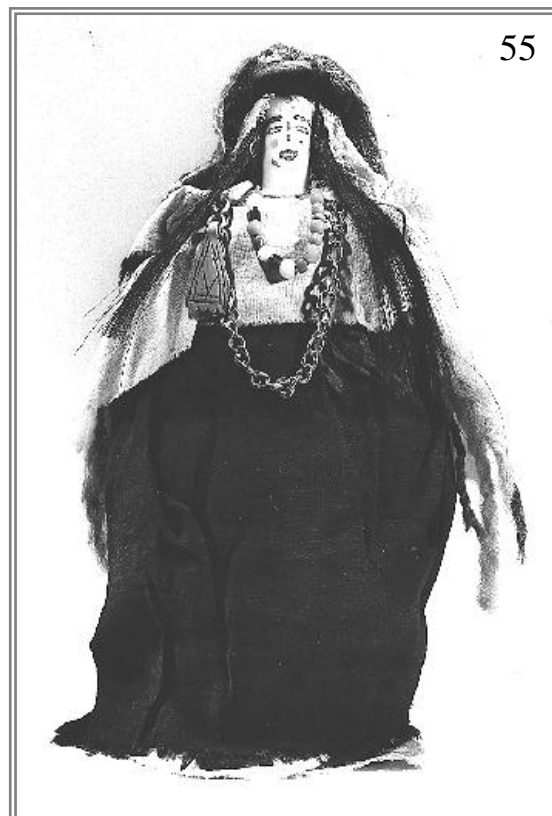
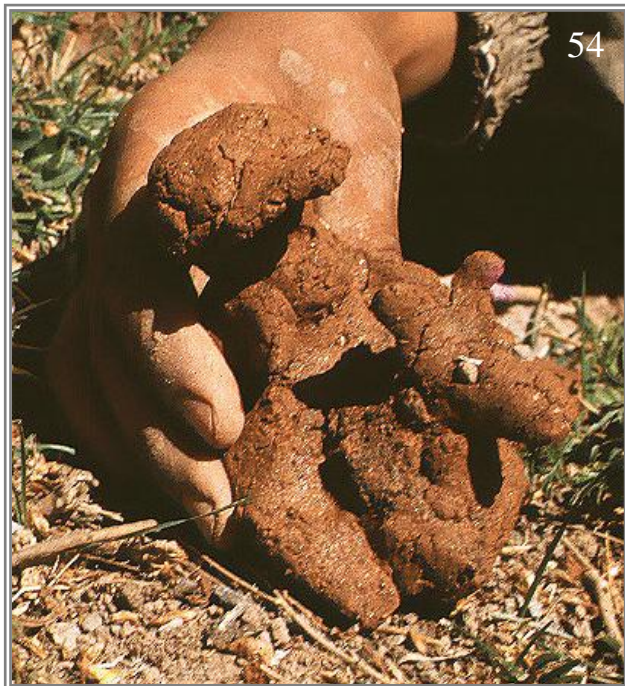
In contrast to these more or less elaborated Saharan male dolls, the few Moroccan girls' male dolls are in comparison to their female dolls really rudimentary and made in a hurried way. The male doll at the bottom left of figure 53 on the foregoing page only has a transparent rag as dress. Other male dolls of Moroccan girls have one or two rags as dress, possibly a turban and once a belt but nothing else (fig. 89 left doll, p. 97).

Hairdo

As indicated when discussing the material aspects the creation of the hairdo of most female dolls is a basic part of the doll making process. Yet, there exist a few female dolls without hair. Material such as leaves, hemp, wool, hair of a goat or a girl and the beard of an ear of maize is used to represent the highly valued long hair of a woman. On the contrary the male dolls might have a turban, a hat or the cap of a cloak as headgear but not one has a hairdo. Once more the Tuareg male dolls form an exception as several have their head winded with the same threads as those used to represent the bandoleer (fig. 52, p. 63; 40, p. 52). By winding the threads around the head of the male dolls in this typical way the children symbolically represent the specific hairdo of a Tuareg man with the plaited hair brought back.

Facial features

The face is an important feature of almost all Saharan and North African dolls. So one could learn a lot about signs and meanings by looking at how the dolls' faces have been worked out. Except in two cases, all the male dolls of these regions I have seen or read about have no facial features. Both exceptions are due to boys and I do not know one single male doll made by girls that has facial features. The first exception comes from the isolated Moroccan Haut Atlas Mountain village Aït Ighemour where three boys made three different types of male dolls having facial traits (fig. 18, p. 30; 41, p. 52; 54, p. 65). These dolls were used in play activities.



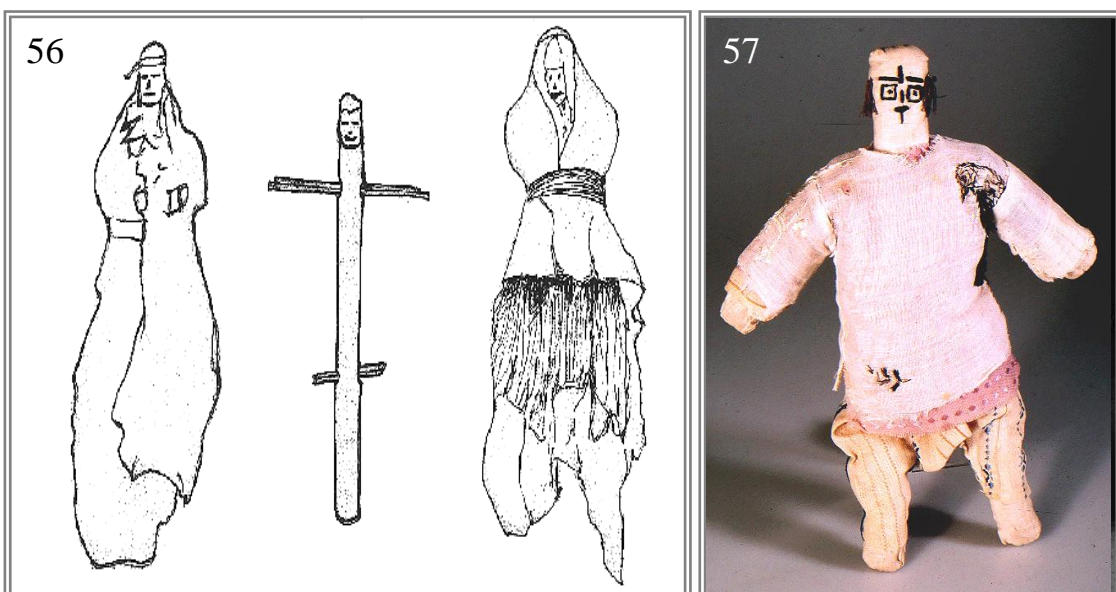
In the Anti-Atlas Mountain village Lahfart near Sidi Ifni a seventeen-year-old boy who started primary school real late made the second exception in 2002. However, this doll is a decorative doll not made to play with. Its head and neck have been cut out in a piece of Isomo taken from a package protecting some electronic equipment. Its facial features with round eyes and pupils, eyebrows, triangular nose, ears and a smiling mouth are designed with a blue ball-point (*Saharan and North African Toy and Play Cultures. Children's Dolls and Doll Play*, fig. 151, p. 178).

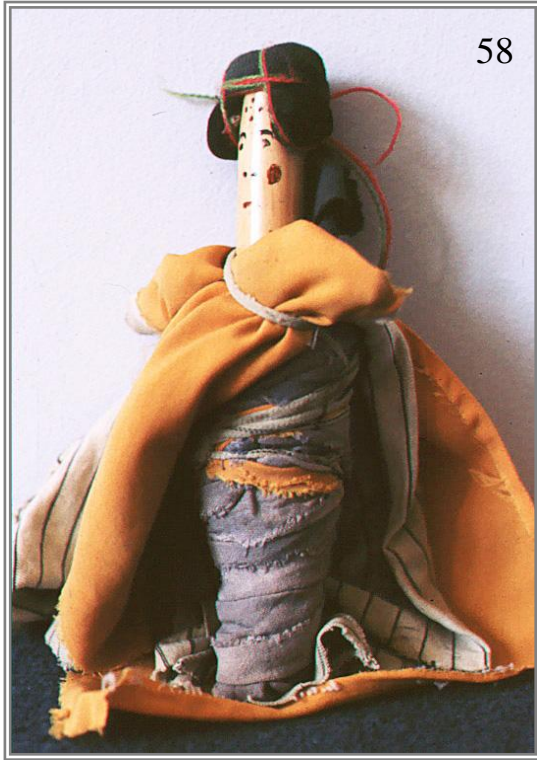
Among the Tuareg, the Ghib and the Moors¹, three formerly nomadic Saharan populations on which a more or less detailed information exists, the dolls traditionally had no facial features. The same cannot be said of the sedentary Saharan populations, for example the Belbala living in the oasis of Tabelbala in the northwestern Algerian Sahara. The facial features of the dolls made by Belbala girls in the 1960s are painted on the upper part of the bone forming the structure of the doll (fig. 55).

¹ However, one of the three types of female dolls of the Moors, known to me, forms an exception. This doll from the urban center of Boutilimit in the southwest of Mauritania, described by Jean Gabus in 1958, has a face with a small triangular mouth, a nose, eyes and eyebrows. See *Saharan and North African Toy and Play Cultures. Children's Dolls and Doll Play*, fig. 52, p. 96.

A unique type of dolls shows the most realistic representation of a female doll's head. It was found among the Mozabites living in the seven cities of the Mzab Valley in the northeastern Algerian Sahara in the 1930s. The Mozabites, who found refuge in this area during the 11th century, belong to a puritanical non-orthodox Islamic sect. One of the three types of the girls' dolls is a doll with a pasteboard head, a head imported by Mozabite fathers from the North of Algeria. The make-up and tattoos are painted on the face of the pasteboard head (fig. 36, p. 37). Between a total lack of facial features and their more or less realistic representation, one finds among the Teda of the Tibesti in the southeastern Sahara a more fancy elaboration of these features. The head of these dolls is an unpitted fresh date put on the two branches forming the body and the neck. Their fanciful facial features are created with little varicolored pearls encrusted in the heated date (fig. 46, p. 60).

My data on Moroccan female dolls do not permit me to say that dolls without facial features are more traditional than those with facial features and this applies following information on female dolls of former times as well as on those made by girls since 1992. On the contrary, the oldest photo of a Moroccan doll found in the article of J. Herber published in 1918 shows two female dolls and a doll's frame all three having facial features with eyes, nose and mouth (fig. 56). This author observed these kinds of dolls in the small urban center Sidi Kacem founded in the North of Morocco in 1915. That dolls from decades ago can have facial features is confirmed by the three Moroccan dolls of the Musée de l'Homme's collection all collected in cities: in Fès before 1932 (fig. 4, p. 21), in Rabat before 1935 (fig. 57) and in Moulay Idriss before 1943.





Maybe it is not by coincidence that these Moroccan dolls with facial features made during the first decades of the twentieth century all come from urban centers, as dolls with facial features made by Moroccan rural girls seem to be less frequent. In 1999 I could still write that in rural areas most self-made dolls lack facial features. However, information gathered in rural areas since 1997 shows that this statement must be relativized. Not only the female dolls created by girls living near the sand dunes

of Merzouga in the Zagora region in 1997 often have facial features (fig. 58) but also nine out of twelve female dolls made by girls from the small village Imou Ergen in the Anti-Atlas near Sidi Ifni in 1998 (fig. 59).



Moreover, Boubaker Daoumani received in February 2002 several dolls made by children from the school where he teaches, a school located in the small mountain village Lahfart in the Sidi Ifni region. Of these dolls twelve were made with reed or sticks and rags, and three with clay. These fifteen dolls all have facial features. One clay doll represents a mother carrying a baby on her back. Both this mother doll and the baby doll have facial traits incrustated in the clay (fig. 51, p. 62).

This aspect of facial features dolls becomes even more puzzling when one looks at two other dolls. A girl and her thirty-five-year old mother from the small village Ignern at the foot of the Jbel Siroua Mountain in the Haut Atlas, a region where the flowers producing saffron grow, created these dolls in 1996. Looking at both dolls one remarks that the doll remade by the mother and representing the dolls she played with in the beginning of the 1970s, has facial features designed with a kind of tar made from herbs (fig. 60). However, the doll made by the girl has no facial features (fig. 61).



This example shows that there is at least in this village no linear succession in time of dolls without facial features and with facial features.

Posture

With the exception of the Tuareg, Moors and Sahrawi female dolls all other Saharan and North African dolls are characterized by a standing posture. Among the Tuareg a sitting or a standing posture is a straightforward sign of femininity or masculinity as the most striking difference between Tuareg children's male and female dolls is a standing versus a sitting posture. The male Tuareg doll of figure 52 (p. 63) and the female Tuareg doll of figure 2 (p. 20) illustrate this difference. An author notes in this respect that as the Tuareg women traditionally always sit under the tent, the female doll is represented sitting never standing up, in contrast with the male doll who is always in an upright position and standing near his dromedary (Balout, 1959: pl. LXVII). Another author offers a unique information about the male dolls of the Moors when writing: the longer the stick used for the doll's vertical frame the higher the social importance of the represented personage (Gabus, 1958: 163).

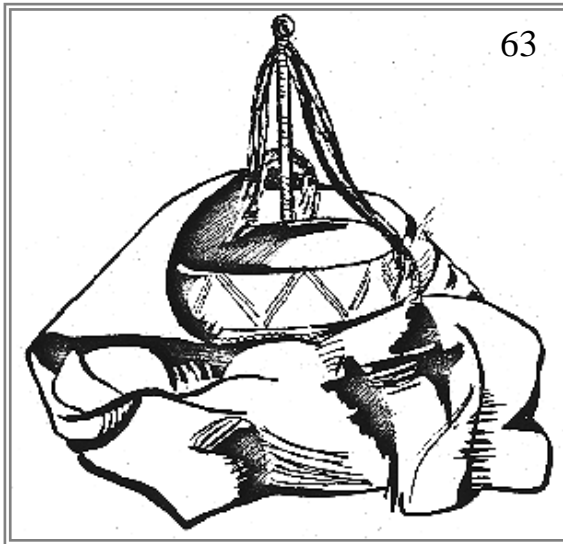
Before discussing two visual aspects that only are relevant in relation to female dolls, namely the dolls' breasts and buttocks or haunches I want to close this comparison of female and male dolls by stressing the clear cut difference between the Moroccan girls' female and male dolls. First there is the difference in number between the very common female dolls and the really rare male dolls. Then there is the much smaller size of these male dolls when compared to the size of the female dolls made by the same girls. Finally, these male dolls are poorly dressed, have no ornaments and always lack facial features. All this reveals the importance of the bride doll and the lack of importance of the bridegroom doll in Moroccan girls' doll play.

Breasts

Some Tuareg female dolls show a symbolic representation of the breasts as on the doll of figure 62 where one remarks a geometrical pattern elaborated with red cotton threads.



Figure 63 shows another geometric pattern also representing the breasts. A Tuareg Kel Iforas researcher from Kidal in the Sahara of Mali, Ekhya Ag-Albostan, whom I met at the Département d’Afrique Blanche et du



Proche Orient of the Musée de l’Homme on July 7th 1981, gave me some specific information on these typical dolls. The *tamet n-meshlan* dolls, meaning toy woman, have a body made with excrement of a donkey wrapped in a piece of fabric. This excrement represents the obese buttocks of a wealthy woman. Well-elaborated dolls have stylized patterns representing the breasts. These

patterns are made with varicolored cotton threads entwined around little thorns pricked in the excrement. The simplest form of this type of dolls, consisting of a thorn pricked in a piece of excrement but without clothes or geometric patterns representing the breasts, represents a young girl. The miniaturized clay dolls of the girls of the Oualata Moors in Mauritania show the same kind of geometric patterns (fig. 64). They are used, along with miniaturized household utensils, in true copies of the Oualata houses. These dollhouses, as the real houses, are decorated all over with symbolic geometric patterns (fig. 65). The female servants modeled all these toys in clay and painted them.



Besides the geometric symbolization of the breasts on female dolls among the Tuareg and the Moors, those who wrote on North African and Saharan dolls and I myself only seldom noticed a more realistic representation of the breasts on the dolls of these regions. Concerning Morocco this is the case in Imi-n-Tanoute on the road from Agadir to Marrakech where it happened that a girl introduced two rabbit droppings under the doll's dress to give it breasts or near the sand dunes of Merzouga where girls use two little textile balls to do the same (fig. 58, p. 67). One of the dolls remade by an about sixty-year-old woman from a village near Midelt has breasts made with two little stones shoved under its dresses. The breasts of the mother doll with a baby on her back consist of two little rag balls (fig. 50, p. 62). The consulted documents offer another example, namely that of the Teda female dolls in the Tibesti area in Northern Chad whose breasts are made with an unpitted date cut in two, the two halves being heated before they are modeled on the part of the branch serving as chest (fig. 46, p. 60).

Haunches and buttocks

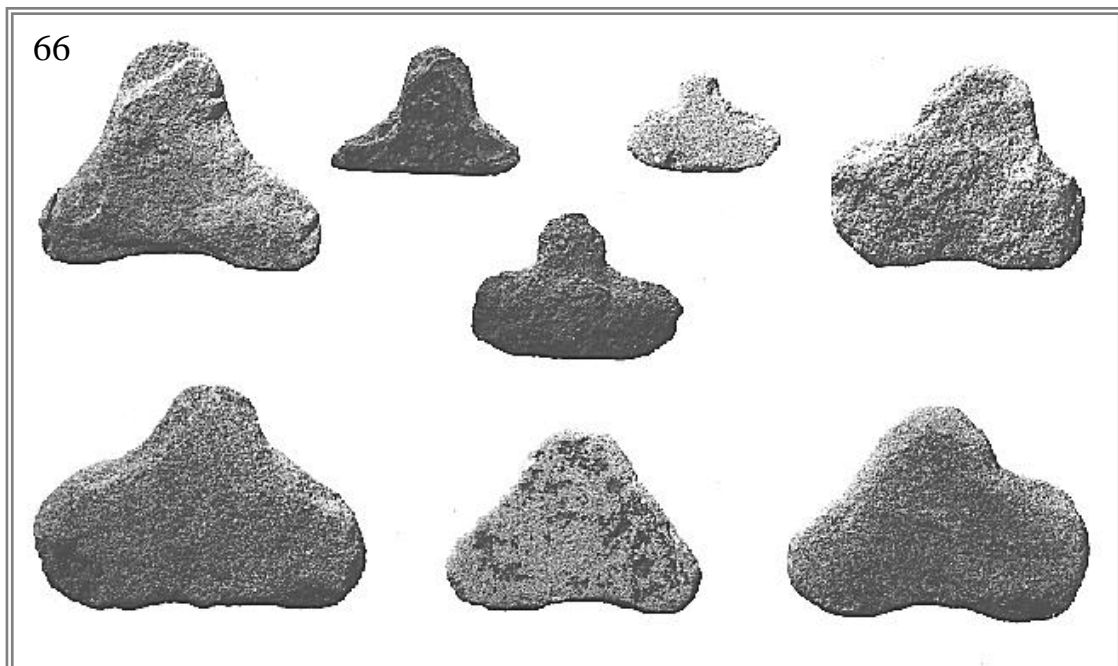
Several dolls have the part below the waist wrapped in rags to create large haunches. This is done on older dolls (fig. 4, p. 21; 85, p. 94) as well as on recent ones (fig. 58, p. 67). A rounded shape beneath the waist is in other cases created by the two, three or more dresses the doll is wearing (fig. 53, p. 63). As mentioned when discussing how Barbie is often viewed in Morocco, a few young women from the Midelt region explain the fact that some of their bride dolls have thin haunches and buttocks by the tightening of a belt around the dolls' dresses, a belt that is an important item of the bride doll as well as the real bride (fig. 88, p. 97; 90, p. 98). They also stressed that this should not be interpreted as a way of representing a thin bride.

The female dolls among the Tuareg (fig. 1-2, p. 20) and among the Moors (fig. 3, p. 20) collected between the 1930s and the 1960s have very developed buttocks because this is a sign of beauty and wealth. So the doll was a means to inculcate on the child's mind the ideal of female beauty, just as the Barbie doll nowadays does for the American and European child. This ideal of female beauty was once realized in rich young Tuareg girls by submitting them to a special diet based on rest and

on plentiful nourishment from their twelve or fifteen years onwards (Cortier, 1908: 310). Among another Saharan population, the Teda, the girls did model the buttocks of their dolls made in the 1960s with sap of the acacia and covered them with rags (fig. 46, p. 60).

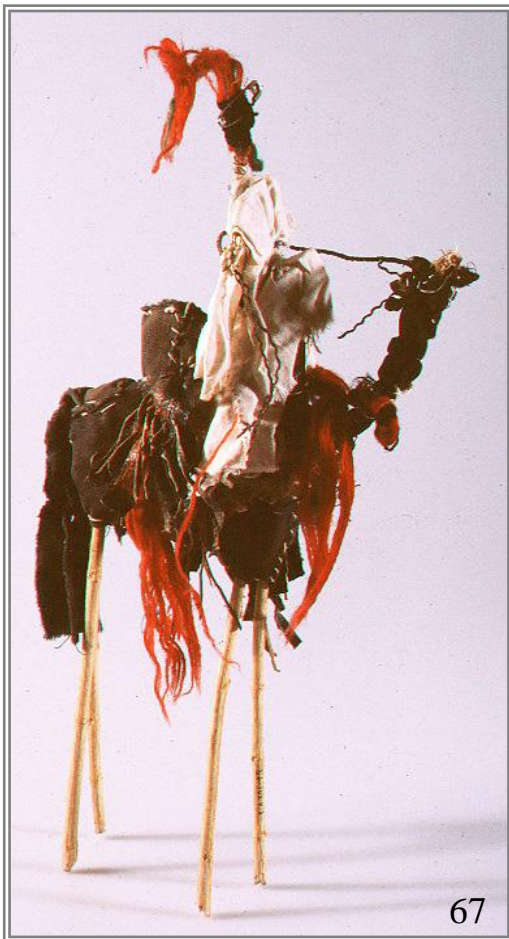
The simple, schematic or elaborated shape of toy animals

Almost all North African and Saharan self-made toys are three-dimensional objects, freestanding and worked out from all sides. It is among the toy animals that I have found the first examples of bi-dimensional toys such as the animals of stone (fig. 66), dung, tin foil or leaves (fig. 13, p. 29; 15, p. 30).



Although regularly based on a more or less arbitrary choice, I think that it is possible to make a distinction between the toy animals with a simple shape, a schematic shape and an elaborated shape. I hope the examples given below will clarify the differences between these three categories. As it is impossible to include all the concerned photographs and designs in this book the reader will have to look in *Saharan and North African Toy and Play Cultures. The Animal World in Play, Games and Toys*, p. 154-155.

Examples of the group of toy animals having a simple shape with no clear resemblance to the represented animal are shown in this book on figures 19 (p. 31), 25 (p. 32), 39 (p. 52), 70 (p. 75), 40 (p. 52) and 66 (p. 72). Compared to the small group of toy animals with a simple shape there are many more to be classified in the group of toy animals with a schematic shape. A schematic shape I would define as a simplified model lacking one or more parts of the animal's body and with no or only few indications of the features of the head. I have also classified the toy animals with two or three legs in this category. Figures 13-16 (p. 29-30), 28 (p. 34), 41 (p. 52), 54 (p. 65), 72-82 (p. 82-87) and 125 (p. 169) of this book offer some examples. The toy animals of the third group have an elaborated shape often showing a sense of detail. All parts of the animal's body are represented together with most or all features of the head. Yet, this does not mean that it always is a naturalistic copy of an animal. Two examples of such toy animals can be seen on figures 67 and 68.



An overview of the Saharan and North African toy animals with a simple, schematic or elaborated shape is given in the table below.

	Dromedaries	Horses Mules	Domestic Animals	Non-domestic Animals	Total
Simple Shape	6	3	0	2	11
Schematic Shape	21	11	9	12	53
Elaborated Shape	4	2	5	2	13
Total	31	16	14	16	77

No doubt it would be interesting to try to match these differences in number between the simple, schematic and elaborate shapes of the Saharan and North African toy animals with differences in the ethnic, environmental, economic, social, cultural and possibly other situations in which the children making these toys live. However, I am convinced that this is yet impossible or at least would create misinterpretations because of the insufficient and unequal quality of the available data. The only thing that can be stated is that, generally speaking, the three to twelve-year-old Saharan and North African children prefer to make toy animals with a schematic shape. But in this case also, age and gender differences will play a role and the data on the age and gender of the toy-making children are not always available.

Each time a child creates a toy animal it has been looking for a particular shape that for him or her represents the chosen animal. Sometimes it is even possible to find examples showing a real effort to create a specific shape, as when making dromedaries with a frame of little branches. These little branches, one for the legs and another for the neck and the head, are tied up to give them the necessary curve. The bonds are removed once the branches are dry, this way keeping their forced curve. Some other examples can be found among the toy animals made with palm leaves and those modeled with clay.

Further to the above mentioned description of the shapes of toy animals and in reference to the remark of Theo van Leeuwen and Carmen Rosa Caldas-Coulthard concerning toy vehicles (1999: 7), I could try to define the “minimum features” each toy must have to be recognized as the representation of an animal.



Scrutinizing the data and the figures, I first felt to be at a deadlock as some toy animals have such a simplified shape that I could not determine the minimum features making it a toy animal as in the case of the little boy manipulating his wooden dromedary (fig. 25, p. 32), of the mules of stone (fig. 69), and of the snakes of rope or a piece of intestine (fig. 19, p. 31). I was only able to progress when I thought of making a distinction between the point of view of the child using an object chosen or made by it, the point of view of the other players, and the point of view of other children and adults not participating in the play activity.

When an isolated player is concerned such as the three-year-old boy manipulating a rectangular piece of wood as if it is a dromedary (fig. 25, p. 32), it seems to me that any object whatever could do. What makes this piece of wood a dromedary is only very vaguely related to its shape but owes everything to the intentions, the 'vision', of the boy and the way he manipulates it. The same can be said of the reed becoming a horse and all the more so when a child only uses its own body to become an animal.

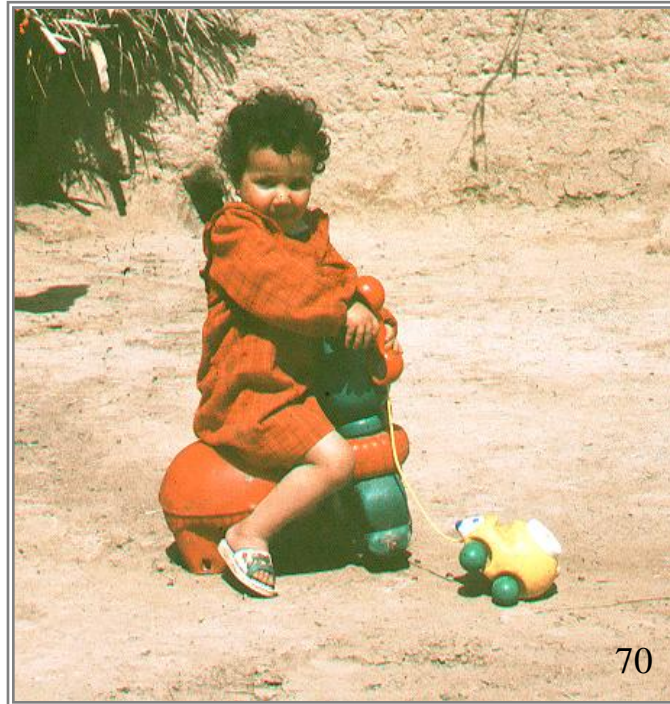
When it concerns a playgroup each player must recognize in a given object the minimum features that makes it a toy, in this case a toy animal. When the player's body is used to create a dromedary it is I think the representational meaning that lays at the basis of this transformation not the body as 'object'. But even if it concerns objects chosen by a playgroup to represent an animal, the shape of this object is not sufficient to explain the choice. I suppose this is the case for the rectangular stone serving as mule (fig. 69, p. 75) or the rope serving as snake. In the case of the mules of stone, the stones taken apart do not represent an animal at all. But these stones serve perfectly this purpose once they are assembled to a toy cart designed to look like a realistic image of a real cart. Even outside the play situation this toy cart with its mule of stone will be seen by the playgroup members, but also by other children and adults, as a cart pulled by a draught animal. A rope with its tubular shape, its suppleness and its length may easily bring children to the idea of using it as a snake, but it still needs to be manipulated in a play activity to change into a snake. A rigid rope is not a snake, it only has the potentiality to become a snake and will become one when the playgroup decides so. The same statement can be made for the little stones, the snail shells and the ears of maize used by children to represent small cattle while playing a game of herding.

Analytical or naturalistic structures

The above analysis of the self-made North African and Saharan dolls and toy animals reveals that these toys should be qualified as analytical structures rather than naturalistic ones. They have been designed to show significant attributes and characteristics of the model they represent. Their makers are not interested in representing an individual living example of that model but in making a symbolic representation of it. Theo van Leeuwen wrote to me about the Saharan and North African dolls: "I think, yes, the 'analytical' element of dolls is often paramount, it is only in play that they enter in 'narrative' syntagms" (e-mail, June 24th, 1998).

I also did not find any trace of toys representing imaginary models.

Nevertheless, such imaginary models slowly find their way into the toys and minds of the North African children through imported toy animals such as the wheeled hybrid animal and the wheeled turtle of figure 70. An imaginative approach was clearly at work when an eight-year-



old Moroccan boy from Midelt created in 1997 his own dinosaur with Plasticine bought in a local shop (fig.137, p. 178).

Children's semiotic reinterpretation of toys

Theo van Leeuwen (e-mail, June 14th, 1998) stressed the following topic in my analysis:

A further aspect that I find semiotically interesting is the way in which your research provides great examples of semiotic re-contextualization or re-interpretation, as when western plastic dolls become brides (and in the process lose the movement of their limbs by the look of it).

Two of these examples of re-contextualization or re-interpretation are related to imported plastic dolls. In a really poor quarter of Marrakech (Douar Akioud) most of the girls still played about 1980 with the traditional self-made doll having a frame of reed. But a girl living in the same quarter already played at the end of the 1970s with an imported plastic doll (fig. 33, p. 36). This girl, now a woman skilled in the embellishment of hands and feet with traditional henna-designs, was so kind to show me how she transformed, when she was about nine-years-

old, the plastic doll from Hong Kong, China or elsewhere, into a real bride of Marrakech (fig. 34, p. 36). Another example comes from Ignern, a small Moroccan village. There one finds today the self-made doll as well as the imported plastic doll, a plastic doll adapted to local ways by giving it a self-made dress (fig. 35, p. 37). The girls join in the house of one of them with the purpose to sew by hand trousers and a long shirt for such dolls.

New meanings can be attached to traditional toys. That is what happened to the toy animals of palm leaves serving during the first half of the twentieth century for boys' games of the Moroccan pre-Sahara, when being transformed in the 1990s into touristic objects made by boys from the same region to be sold to passing by tourists (fig. 13-16, p. 29-30).

Children's relationship to their toys

As far as the available data suggest it is clear that the Saharan and North African children use their toy animals for enacting play activities related to adults' use of animals, play activities such as herding, giving water, taking to graze, breeding, organizing a camp or razzias, being a warrior, engaging a race, going to hunt, setting traps, starting to plow and organizing transport. The dolls are used for acting out stories, for representing events, e.g. marriage, giving birth, bringing up children. In both cases the figurines enter a narrative action. Gilles Brougère writes that a child views the doll as an object to be used and its image is interpreted in function of the game, of its use, and not judged for its own sake. The toy is related to a desire, whether a desire for a valorized childhood or the child's desire to grow up and not be any longer a child... to project itself in an adult destiny through valorizing representations from the child's point of view (2003: 100). This second possibility of a child projecting itself in an adult destiny through valorizing representations from the child's point of view really is the adequate description of what seems to happen in Saharan and North African children's doll play.

The girls' affective relation to their dolls seems to be directed towards the representational concept, the represented model, rather than to the

doll, the material realization of the concept or model that is used as a means and only valuable as long as the play activity goes on. One might say that the function of such a doll is limited to the game; it only comes to 'life' when the player manipulates it, when it becomes part of a series of interactive relations mutually accepted and enacted by the members of the playgroup. When the play activity is interrupted or stopped, the doll becomes an object, a material item that can be left on the spot or thrown away. It certainly does not become the substitute companion doll Brian Sutton-Smith describes in relation to recent North American childhood (1986, 46, 126). The same can probably be said about the children's relationship to their toy animals. Once more however a general statement should be relativized as an author writes about the Tuareg Kel Ahaggar children's dromedaries of carved stones: that even if most toy animals are left behind when moving camp, those best executed are kept (*Saharan and North African Toy and Play Cultures. The Animal World in Play, Games and Toys*, p. 56). Nevertheless, the toy animals do not play the role that teddies do for European and North American children.

The self-made doll as bearer of individual and social meanings is mostly treated with a lot of indifference once the play activity is over. Could this be the reason why my Moroccan female informants of Ksar Assaka stressed that an individual name is not given to the bride dolls, that such an individual name was almost never mentioned to me by other informants from Morocco or the Tunisian Sahara and that only one bibliographical document mentions an individual name for a traditional doll? A twenty-year-old woman from Imi-n-Tanoute spontaneously gave a specific reason why a first name is not given to the bride doll of her childhood. She said in 1992 that giving a first name to such a doll would belittle this doll to the level of a small girl, she who is a bride.

An example of giving a first name to a self-made doll came to the foreground when talking about their doll play with three sisters from the village Ksar Assaka near Midelt. The older sister, born in 1968, says she played with a doll called *tislit* the general Amazigh word for bride. This bride doll did not receive an individual name. The two younger sisters, born in 1971 and 1973, claim to have played not only with the bride doll having no individual name but also with a little girl doll more rudimentary dressed and called *terbètinu* 'my little girl'. This little girl doll receives a first name, especially some old name such as Beha, Etto

or Yemna. Moreover, they spoke directly to this doll, saying for example “my little girl you have fever, I shall bring you to the hospital” or “I shall go with you to the public bath”, something that was not done with a bride doll. When all these sisters and their playmates were talking or singing during their play with a bride doll these actions related directly to playing a wedding ceremony.

Only one author from the consulted bibliography refers to giving an individual name to a doll. This information concerns the girls as well as the boys from the Chaouia population in Algeria. In 1938, G. Tillion writes that each doll has her own name, sometimes an arbitrary name the child did like, but most of the time the name of a girl known and admired by the child. When a girl’s name is given to the doll, the children take care of the filiations. Thus, a six-year-old boy was furious because a four-year-old boy belonging to another lineage had given to his doll the name of a girl of the lineage of the first boy who argued that the four-year-old boy could as easily choose a name from his own lineage as there were enough girls in it (p. 54).

In contrast to what is done with the self-made bride doll it seems that Moroccan girls sometimes give an individual name to their plastic doll as the daughters of a primary school headmistress in Marrakech used to do with their European doll in the beginning of the 1960s (fig. 71).



4 Toys, play, socio-cultural reproduction and continuity

In general the anthropological evidence also suggests that familial or other cultural contexts affect the basic identity of the players as players. There is abundant evidence available from social science research to indicate the relativity of the forms of play to culture... Early socialization clearly has a direct impact on the kind of identity that players will have and helps to account for the considerable differences in play forms across cultures.
(Sutton-Smith, 1997: 104-105)

Before discussing the sensitive topic of, on the one hand, socio-cultural reproduction and continuity through toys and play,¹ and on the other hand, creativity and change through toys and play, analyzed in the next chapter, I need to stress that I by no means want to oppose the development of individual and collective creativity to the reproduction - or more accurately the recreation - of tradition in successive generations, even when speaking of communities in which the social and cultural evolution could seem to be imperceptible at least until quite recent times. Such communities have been designated for a long time as ossified and immutable, this way denying their own dynamism and evolution, an evolution that although slower than in industrialized communities nevertheless has been just as real.

Speaking of non-industrialized communities, it certainly is easier to give instances of the relationship between toys and the continuity of attitudes, behaviors and values in successive generations than to document on the relationship between toys and the development of children's creativity.

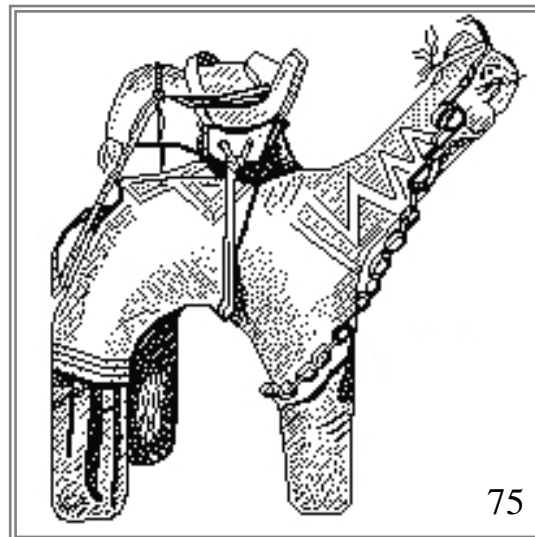
¹ Seeing children's games and toys as a continuation of the play and toy culture of earlier generations and as a means of socializing children into the existing adult world has been the starting point in my approach. This is clearly attested by my first article on games and toys published in French in 1983 that describes the imitation of female life in Ghrib girls' games (Rossie, J. P. & Claus, G. J. M.).

A remarkable African example of continuity in toy design is revealed by the spatial and temporal distribution of clay toy animals with the two front legs assembled in one leg. In the collection of Saharan and North African toys of the Musée de l'Homme I found some three-legged toy animals made in the 1930s by the female servants of the Moors of Oualata, a small town in the Mauritanian Sahara. These miniature toy dromedaries, toy horses and other toy animals of unfired clay measure between 5 and 9 cm of height, 4 and 9.5 cm of length (fig. 72-74).¹

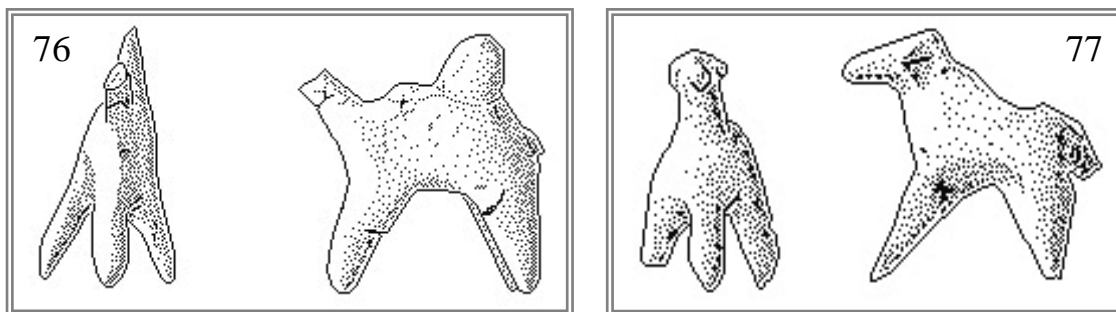


¹ I give a detailed description of these toy animals in *Saharan and North African Toy and Play Cultures. The Animal World in Play, Games and Toys*, see 1.7 Dromedaries in clay (p. 75) and 2.2 Horses, mules and donkeys in clay (p. 90).

Jean Gabus (1958: 168) shows a design of such a three-legged toy dromedary, a design reproduced at figure 75. The same author mentions that the Tuareg children from Timbuktu and Goundam, two cities situated along the Niger River in Mali, play with three-legged toy dromedaries or other toy animals (1958: 164).



In a publication describing another Musée de l'Homme's collection of archeological objects found in 1904 at the borders of the Niger River in Mali, I found the same type of toy animals (Lebeuf et Pâques, 1970: 53-54). These clay toy animals, with two posterior legs and one front leg, represent a toy dromedary (fig. 76) and five sheep (fig. 77).

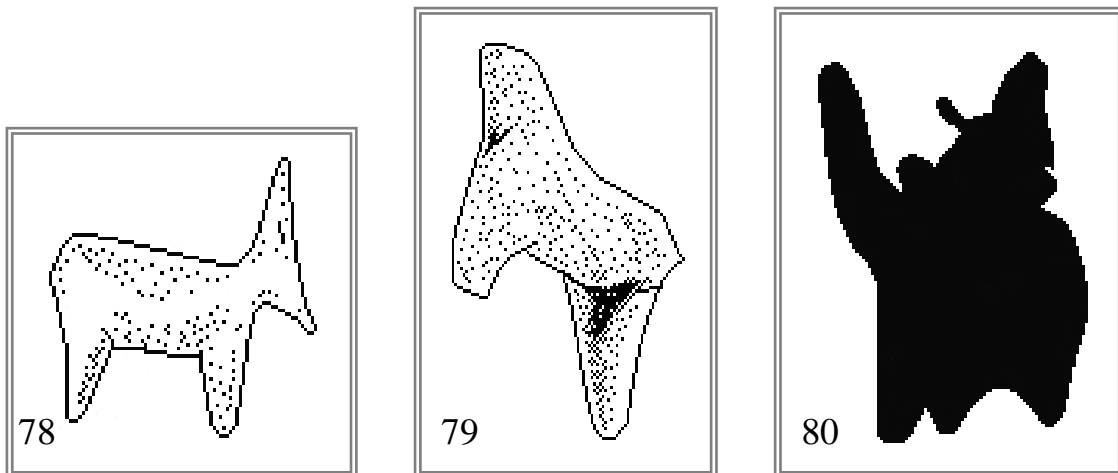


Yet, in two articles on the archeological excavations of the oldest West African city, the ancient town of Jenné-Jeno in the Inland Niger Delta in Mali, are shown some toy animals, once more in clay, that date back to more or less two thousand years.

Susan and Roderick McIntosh, the archeologists leading these excavations, wrote:

Toys made from river mud, miniature clay animals and cattle are a common sight in modern Jenné. Broken pieces of clay - still recognizable as cows, sheep and a Niger-dwelling manatee - found at the ancient Jenné were immediately identified by the workmen as toys.

They added that one of the two thousand-year-old children's clay toys that were made in great numbers is a bull (1982: 407, 410, 413) (fig. 78).

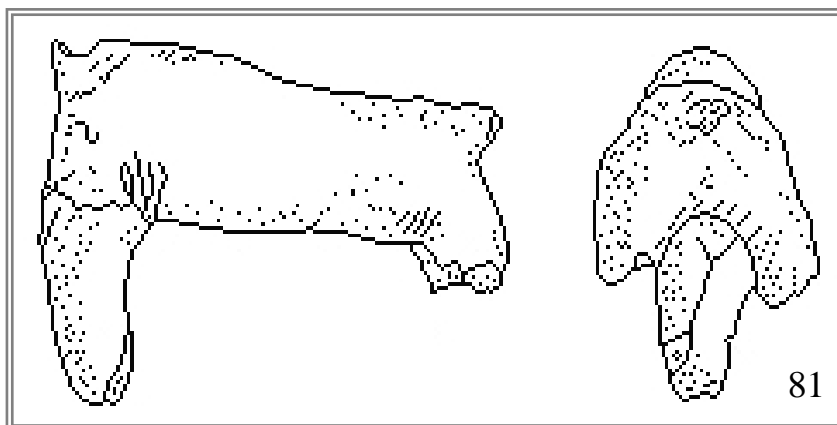


One of these toy animals (fig. 79), once used by the children of ancient Jenné and figuring among other toy animals from the same excavation on the cover of *The UNESCO Courier* of May 1984, seems to indicate that it only has one front leg. Meanwhile, e-mail correspondence with Susan Keech McIntosh, professor of anthropology at Rice University, Houston, Texas, has confirmed the fact that it indeed is a toy animal with a single front leg. Another toy animal on the cover of the same *UNESCO Courier*, shown to the left of the toy animal of figure 79, also has a single front leg.¹ The three-legged toy animals from along the Niger River in Mali - those from Jenné-Jeno, found in 1904 or made by Tuareg children in the 1950s - together with those of the children of the Moors of Oualata in the Mauritanian Sahara belong to the same toy design tradition. In her e-mail, Susan Keech McIntosh also writes, “I agree that the continuity in subject and style across the centuries in (these) clay toys is very striking”. Moreover, I suppose that one of the toy animals in clay, made at the end of the 1970s or the beginning of the 1980s and that two young boys from modern Jenné show on a photograph in the article of Susan and Roderich McIntosh, also has the two front legs united in one leg (1982: 410). It is a toy dromedary looking as if it is being mounted by a dromedarist (fig. 80).

¹ E-mail of March 21st, 1998 from Susan Keech McIntosh to the author: “Of the toys on the *UNESCO Courier*, the two on the top right have a single front leg”.

As information on ancient toys of African children and on the continuity of their design through the ages must surely be exceptional it certainly is profitable to study the Jenné-Jeno clay toy animals more in detail. In 1995, Susan Keech McIntosh edited the book *Excavations at Jenné-Jeno, Hambarketolo, and Kaniana (Inland Niger Delta, Mali), the 1981 Season*. When analyzing the list of statuettes and animal figurines in clay (p. 219-221), one remarks that the vast majority of the animal figurines, showing indications of their legs, have a single front leg. Out of the twenty-six toy animals, twenty-four are three-legged and two are four-legged.¹

Among the twenty-four three-legged animal figurines, thirteen have been identified as cows, six as probably cows and one as probably a sheep (fig. 81). However, there is no mention of a three-legged toy dromedary in contrast to those among the other toy animals of this type found in 1904 or made between the 1930s and the 1950s.



For twenty-three three-legged animal figurines an accurate dating was possible. The oldest one has been dated back to about 100 BC, four others between that time and AD 400, nine between AD 400 and AD

¹ These twenty-four three-legged toy animals from Jenné-Jeno have the following SF (small find) numbers, in order of appearance on the list of statuettes and animal figurines (Table 4.1) in McIntosh, 1995: 219-221: 1474, 1552, 385, 507, 817, 23, 916, 917, 1039, 1092, 1024, 1194, 1331, 1401, 1435, 803, 801, 729A, 737, 1028A, 1165, 1204, 497, 236. The other two animal figurines have both been identified as a fragment of a four-legged cow: SF numbers 1477 and 1554.

900, three about AD 900 and six between AD 900 and AD 1400.¹ So, these archeological finds alone already attest continuity in material, technique, shape, subject, toy and play tradition for at least 1500 years.

As mentioned, I have found four groups of three-legged toy animals in clay, three located along the Niger river in Mali and one from the Mauritanian Sahara: the archeological finds at Jenné-Jeno (100 BC - AD 1400, McIntosh, 1995: 219-221, ill. 237-241, plate 36, and McIntosh, 1982: 407-413), the archeological finds in 1904 from the Rhergo area (no date, Lebeuf et Pâques, 1970: 53-54), the toy animals of the Tuareg children from Timbuktu and Goundam (1950s, Gabus, 1958: 164) and the toy animals from Oualata (1930s-1950s; collection of the Musée de l'Homme, Département d'Afrique Blanche et du Proche Orient, 38.48.79-83; Gabus, 1958: 164, ill. 168).

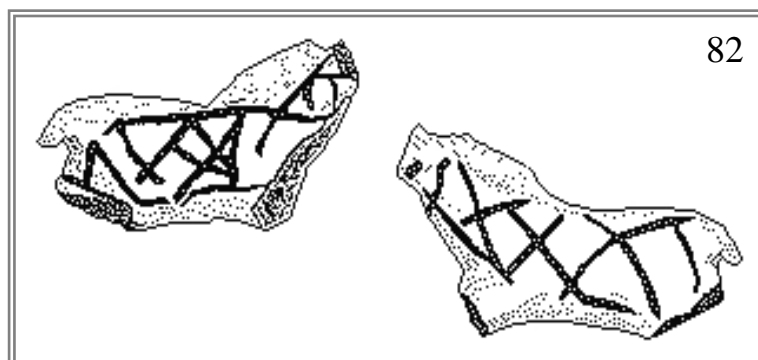
A comparative analysis of these four groups of three-legged toy animals in clay has yielded interesting information:

1. As far as measures are given, these toy animals are miniaturized representations, mostly varying in height between about 4 cm and 9 cm, and in length between about 4.5 cm and 10 cm.²
2. Whereas the three-legged toy animals from Oualata and of the Tuareg children along the Niger River are of unfired clay, the ones found in 1904 along the same river are of fired clay, the clay toy animals from Jenné-Jeno being unfired as well as fired.

¹ The oldest toy animal, a torso of a three-legged cow (SF 1194), was found in Level 48 of Excavation Unit LX-N at Jenné-Jeno (McIntosh, 1995: 220). For a description of this level and radiocarbon dates see page 437. The dates for the different phases in the development of Jenné-Jeno are mentioned on pages 60-61 and 360-372.

² The measures found for the different groups of three-legged animals in clay are: The archeological finds in the Rhergo area: dromedary H = 5.2 cm, L = 4.8 cm. The archeological finds at Jenné-Jeno: for the toy animals found complete enough to give a good idea of real height and length, the height varies between 4.3 cm and 11 cm and the length between 4.6 cm and 11.5 cm, there are two whole figurines measuring 4.3 cm of height and 5 cm of length or 5.1 cm of height and 4.6 cm of length. The Oualata toy animals: those of the collection of the Musée de l'Homme measure between 5 cm and 9 cm of height, 4 cm and 9.5 cm of length; the height and length of the Oualata toy dromedary shown by Gabus (1958: 168) is about 13 cm. For the toy animals made by Tuareg children of Timbuktu and Goundam no measures have been given.

3. The toy animals of the Tuareg children of the 1950s, those found in 1904 and a lot of the ones found at Jenné-Jeno seem to be monochrome, this in clear contrast with the colorful ones from Oualata. However, two or three of the Jenné-Jeno toy animals show some traces of paint and the rider on the back of the clay dromedary found in 1904 was undoubtedly painted.
4. When looking at all these three-legged toy animals I was struck by two aspects: the generally quite rough elaboration of the whole on the one hand, and the attention paid to details on the other hand. All the examples of the collection of the Musée de l'Homme, those found in 1904, the ones of the Tuareg children and many of Jenné-Jeno have been described as roughly modeled. Several Oualata toy animals have an elongated neck and head, a description that has been used also for several Jenné-Jeno toy animals. The Oualata toy animals from the Musée de l'Homme's collection and those in Gabus' book have a worked out tail as have all those found in 1904 and some of those found at Jenné-Jeno. Other details are found in the four groups or at least in three of them, details such as the indication of eyes, ears and saddle. But only in the case of the Jenné-Jeno toy animals have the modeling of horns or of an udder been mentioned.
5. A last remarkable detail is found on two of the Jenné-Jeno three-legged toy animals, namely on a "fragment fired black clay cow figurine; incised "ladder" pattern on right side" (SF 758, 10th century) and on the one, reproduced at figure 82, described as a "fragment animal figurine, possibly horse; incised cross-hatching over body" (SF 1537, 8th century) (McIntosh, 1995: 219-220). When one looks at the incisions on the Jenné-Jeno toy animal of figure 82, takes into account the mention of a ladder pattern on another one, and compares this with the zigzag-like lines on the three-legged toy dromedary from Oualata (1950s) shown at figure 75 (p. 83), the resemblance is indeed intriguing.



Although it is not possible for the regions studied in this book to give other examples of such a centuries old toy and play tradition many of these have their origin hidden in ancient times. Probably few people will have expected to find such a two thousand-year-old, and probably much older, toy tradition in the southern part of the Sahara, this continuity in toy design and in the material used to create such toy animals is not so surprising if one bears in mind the striking similarity between some ancient Chinese, Egyptian, Greek, Indian or Mayan toys and some modern toys such as dolls, toy animals, knucklebones, marbles, spinning tops, spinning wheels, kites, swings, rattles... (Beaumont, 1994; Durand, 1992; Eady, 1989-1990; Schofield, 1978).

As elsewhere the North African and Saharan dolls and doll play as well as the other toys and play activities reflect the social and cultural realities of the community in which the children grow up. They are directly related to the child-rearing methods and to the values upheld in the child's family and community. Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen stress the overall importance of the specific social setting in which visual and linguistic meaning is produced and communicated. In relation to the play activities and toys of North African and Saharan children these settings are the household, the extended family, the playgroup, the peer group, the neighborhood and the local community. These are "social institutions which to different degrees and in different ways, regulate what might be 'said' with images, and how it should be said, and how images should be interpreted" (1996: 119, 264).

In North Africa and the Sahara, the doll play is a collective event assembling children of the same family or neighborhood, mostly girls. Furthermore, those children often use in their doll play several other toys or play materials. They also integrate in their doll play some songs, dances, counting and nursery rhymes, storytelling and word-games.

My analysis of the doll play and the self-made dolls of the Saharan and North African girls, and rarely also boys, shows that they only refer to adult life, a few examples left aside. These dolls are not isolated objects. They serve for games in which an interpretation of female or male life is enacted. The female doll becomes a bride, a spouse, a mother, even a divorced or an old woman. The male doll becomes a bridegroom, a herdsman, a notable man, a warrior, a horseman, a dromedarist, a mule-

driver. These representations of adult roles are directly linked to the everyday life of the children and their parents, and so in clear contrast to what Allison James writes about Western children: “The world of Barbie and Action Man, although life-like, are adult worlds, but worlds apart from the everyday lives which children and their parents inhabit” (1993: 164).

In its doll play the North African and Saharan child very often anticipates the life it will have as an adult, at least in those communities where the lifestyle only changed slowly from one generation to the next, a stability that you can find nowhere in these regions since three or four decades. So, the question must be asked if nowadays the doll play still projects the familial reality according to the values and roles dictated by the collectivity and if it is not more often a way of liberating oneself from the social constraints as in the Occident where the doll play is not an interpretation of adult behavior but a means to escape from its ascendancy, as Michel Manson defines it (1985: 54). Still, it can be easily stated that in North Africa and the Sahara and for the nineteenth and twentieth century, the dolls and doll play present a mirror of adult life. With few exceptions the dolls themselves and the play activities in which they figure represent socially valued characters and activities. Thus, when analyzing these dolls and doll play, it becomes clear that the male as well as the female dolls of those regions and periods almost exclusively symbolize an idealized status of an adult man or woman, a man or a woman in a locally enviable situation such as being a bride or a mother. Reference is constantly made to the positive, worthy adult model with which the child should identify.

This sharply contrasts with the Western European doll since the beginning of the twentieth century. A doll Gilles Brougère described in French (1985: 134-135) but given in translation hereafter:

The strict païdomorphisme cannot explain everything that today is made and sold as a doll. Beyond the purely childlike forms, a world for and by the child is proposed, a world only existing in function of the representations and desires attributed to the child. It is the traces of the interpretation adults make of the imaginary and aspirations of the children... This way the doll becomes the mirror of an ideal, idealized, childhood, but intended for the child and this by several ways, be it a

matter of the direct representation of the child, of the aspirations attributed to it, of a withdrawal into a reassuring imaginary, reassuring because strictly childlike or seen as that (Kiki, the Walt Disney figures).

However, what is at stake in the doll play of North African and Saharan children is a personal interpretation of the adult world, not a simple and clear imitation of it. Jürgen Jensen (1971: 208-209) stresses in his article on the games of imitation in the island Buvuma in East Africa, that the games of imitation do not serve in the first place the learning of skills, techniques, behaviors and roles as the children have in such environments the possibility and even the duty to practice them in their everyday life while progressively becoming integrated in the tasks of their mother, father or other family members, and the same can be said of the children in Northern Africa. In this context Brian Sutton-Smith writes: “Play schematizes life, it alludes to life, it does not imitate life in any very strict sense... it is a dialectic which both mirrors and mocks reality but never escapes it.” (1986: 141).

A lot of play activities and toys help children to integrate themselves in the primary social groups in which they grow up, to adapt to the roles offered to them and to internalize the norms and values prevailing in these groups. Nevertheless, one should not see non-industrial communities, even rural ones, as monolithic groups. In the same neighborhood and within the same socio-economic class, you can find families that are more restrictive regarding the play activities and the toy making of their children than other families. In some families playing is seen as a waste of time, especially for girls, whereas other parents leave their children more free to play.

But individual differences also play a role. Some children seem to play a lot more or less than other children, possibly because of their health situation, temperament or personal interests (see Sutton-Smith, 1997: 46-47). Frank and Virginia Salamone (1991: 136-137) express the relationship between the individual and social aspects of play as follows:

The socialized and enculturated child must use the socio-cultural material at hand in order to construct its play. It is impossible to think about nothing. But what the child does with the material of everyday life - how it plays with it, the joy it takes in that activity - is its concern as it constructs, destructs, and reconstructs its environment... As such... pure play has social and cultural functions as well as psychological ones.

The individual differences between toy making and playing children, whose analysis necessitates a psychological approach, are largely lacking in this study and in my search for published information on play, games and toys in North Africa and the Sahara, I have not yet found trace of such psychological research. Nevertheless, the next chapter proposes some aspects of these individual differences by referring to children's creativity in making toys and enacting play events. Yet, before starting the chapter on creativity through toys and play it is opportune to mention what Irenäus Eibl-Eibesfeldt (1989: 15) writes about continuity and change in his book *Human Ethology*:

Progress depends on the balance achieved between the preserving 'conservative' forces and those promoting change. We stick to the proven, but experiment with change in small doses. This certainly is 'adaptive', because it is improbable that the entire store of cultural traditions should have lost its adaptive value from one generation to the next. Our need for security makes us cling passionately to our 'beloved' customs. It is from this secure base that we experiment with new ideas and insights.

5 Toys, play and creativity

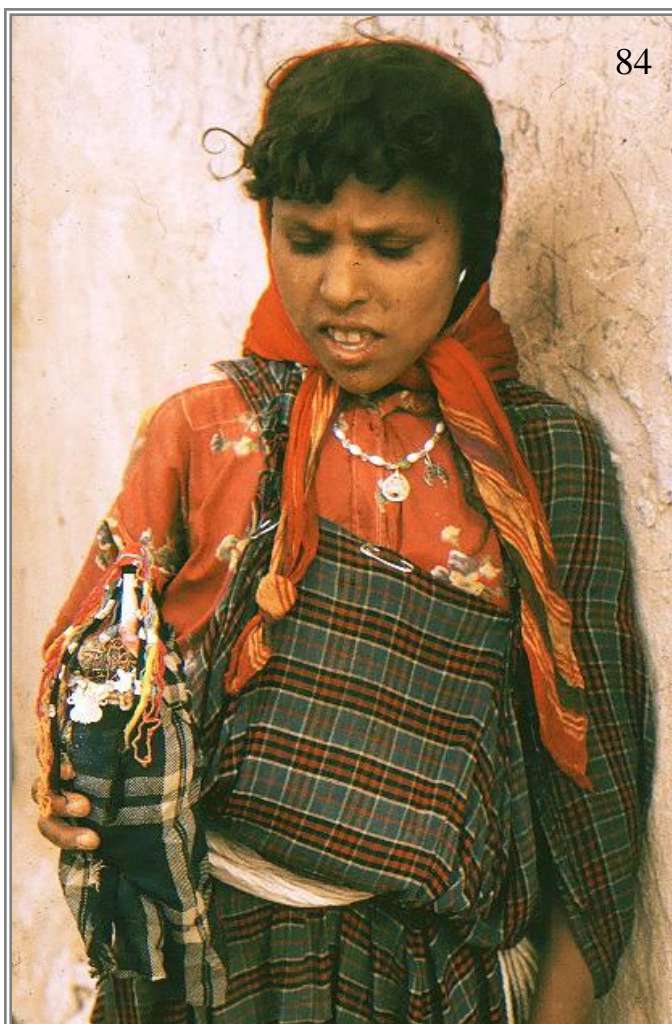
Almost exclusively stressing the social and cultural aspects of children's play, I became more interested in its creative aspects when invited in November 1988 to participate in the *1^a Biennale del Gioco e del Giocattolo. La Creativita* in Torino, Italy. Since then, I have paid more attention to this topic and found examples of creativity and individuality in making common toys and working out general play themes by North African and Saharan children. For a more developed discussion of this topic I refer the reader to the document *Children's Creativity in Toys and Play. Examples from Morocco, the Tunisian Sahara and Peace Education* I prepared for Time to Play – Fourth Nordic Conference on Children's Play held in Hameenlinna, Finland in 2002. This document is available in the section publications of www.sanatoypplay.org (articles, 2003).

Jeffrey Goldstein wrote "In play, children explore not only their physical environment but their emotional, social, and cultural environments also" (1995: 138). In this exploration and interpretation of the world Saharan and North African children not only show fidelity to the traditional canons but also develop their creativity. Mario L. Aguilar stresses the same duality as follows: "Children exercise a tremendous creativity as their playing is not repeated but recreated once and again. Nevertheless, they always go back to the rules attached to the adults' world and that particular adult system" (1994: 34).

According to J.P. Périer one can distinguish four poles of creativity in whose development children's games and toys play an important role. The development of these poles of creativity refers to the creativity of analysis, the creativity of imagination, the creativity of action and the creativity of communication with objects as well as with living beings (1978: 12).

At the end of my first research period in the Tunisian Sahara in spring of 1975 some Ghib girls I was familiar with accepted to give me their doll. The day they handed over these dolls to me an unusual creative action was surely undertaken by their schoolgoing brothers or cousins. Probably influenced by their schooling these young boys did not accept

that their sisters were giving me dolls without facial features. Before I could interfere, the boys designed facial features on their sisters' or nieces' dolls (fig. 83). Yet, traditionally the Ghib girl's dolls lack facial features (fig. 84-85), a custom still honored by the girls at that moment although some of these girls clumsily tried to imitate their brothers (fig. 7 left, p. 25). Fifteen years later, in 1991, Ghib girls of the following generation make a creative use of a waste product of the consumer society, namely a plastic flask. To give a head to their dolls these girls put the plastic flask on top of the old type of cross-shaped wooden frame.



In 1991 the Ghib girls were already used to go to school and so doing have learned to use a pencil and make designs and this new skill probably explains the well-elaborated facial features on the doll of figure 86.



When looking for creativity in the play activities of Saharan and North African children, an important distinction to make is that between a collective and somewhat standardized way of playing with dolls or other toys and a singular and individualized way. Generally speaking, one would feel inclined to stress the collective and standardized aspects of doll play in these regions. However, the more I have the possibility to observe and to be informed on doll play in Morocco, the more I become aware of the possibility that, beneath this apparent uniformity of the types of dolls and themes of doll play particular to each ethnic group or region, individual variations proper to each child or small playgroup are hidden. A striking example is given through the analysis of the dolls and doll play of the three Laabib sisters from Ksar Assaka who played within a small playgroup and with some years of difference between 1975 and 1985 near the same paternal home.

At the end of 1996 and the beginning of 1997, I had the possibility to get detailed information on the doll play and the dolls in the village Ksar Assaka situated at 4 km from Midelt in the direction of the Jbel Ayachi Mountain in Central Morocco. This information comes from three sisters: Souad, Najat and Sabah Laabib. The reader can find a more detailed description of these dolls in *Saharan and North African Toy and Play Cultures. Children's Dolls and Doll play* (fig. 80-86, p. 127-132). An analysis of the connected doll play also shows some interesting variations between the playgroups and even between the individual players. Although several aspects of these sisters' doll play are alike - using similar play spaces, playing at wedding in small playgroups with only girls of about the same age, using similar dollhouses - there also are marked differences in how the playgroups work out the doll play such as differences in the enacted parts of a wedding ceremony, in the number of used dolls and dollhouses and in what happens with the dolls and dollhouses after playing.

Souad Laabib, born at Ksar Assaka in 1968, describes with great precision the dolls she made between the age of six and twelve years. When Souad was reassembling her doll she stressed that it was of an unchanging type (fig. 87).



The frame is made with a reed at the back of which a piece of a half reed is fixed cross-wise with a ribbon. Over the arms hang two garments made with long rectangular pieces of fabric that have in their center a fissure for passing them over the head. A belt of the same fabric is tied around the waist. The part of the reed above the arms is completely wrapped in two headscarves. This way nothing is visible of the doll's face that never had facial features. The upper garment should always be a fabric with shining designs. Souad's mother brought these precious rags from a tailor's shop when she went to the Sunday market at Midelt.

Najat Laabib, Souad's sister born in Midelt in 1971 but living at Ksar Assaka, engaged in doll play till the age of twelve or thirteen years. She and the other three girls of her playgroup competed to make a beautiful doll and if a doll was not considered nice enough, it was immediately remade. When I asked Najat in September 1996 if she wanted to recreate as faithfully as possible the bride doll of her childhood she offered me on a next visit three dolls. The first doll has a frame of two whole reeds fixed together with a ribbon in the shape of a cross (fig. 88). In the center of a blue rag a fissure has been made to hang the upper garment over the arms of the doll that is tightened at the waist. This bride wears her hair in two long plaits in front of the arms, the hair being replaced by brown woolen yarn taken from an old carpet. Two big earrings hang into the headscarf. This bride doll has no facial features.



The second doll has the same frame as the first one (fig. 89 right, see also Rossie e.a., 1998, video). It wears one garment with shining designs tightened at the waist. Another rag of the same fabric serves as headscarf. From under this scarf and before the arms hang two long plaits of hair. These plaits are made with woolen yarn from an old carpet. Just as the first doll, this doll has no facial features.

For the third doll the same frame is used (fig. 90). A ribbon tightens this garment at the waist. A white rag serves as headscarf. In opposition to the two other dolls of Najat or those made by her sisters, this doll has facial features designed with a black ballpoint for the eyes and eyebrows and a red one for the mouth and the make-up on the cheeks. The hair, also made with woolen yarn of an old carpet, hangs at the back in one big plait.



The youngest of the Laabib girls, Sabah, was born in Midelt in 1973. In Ksar Assaka around 1983, she played together with her sister Najat and/or some other girls with their self-made dolls. When I asked Sabah at the end of 1996 if she wanted to make once more her doll, she also made three dolls just as Najat did. Twice she used pieces of reed and once an ear of maize or Indian corncob (fig. 91). The doll's frame is an ear of maize with at its top a piece of a half reed put right through it, this way giving arms to the doll. The long reddish-brown hair is just the beard of the ear. The unique garment of this bride is a rag flannelette fabric taken from an old baby dress. A small ribbon is tightened around the waist. The top of the ear of maize represents the head, but there are no facial features.

For her second doll Sabah uses two parts of a half reed fixed with a ribbon into the shape of a cross (fig. 92 left). The abundant hair of this doll consists of hemp and envelops completely the top of the vertical reed hiding the whole of the face without facial features. For its only garment it wears a rag cut out of an old jellaba tightened at the waist with a belt. The third and tallest doll has a cross-shaped frame of reed (fig. 92 right). This doll wears a fine transparent garment with square designs of golden threads, a ribbon of the same fabric making the belt. The most remarkable is its green hairdo plaited out of reed leaves. At both sides of the head these plaits form two big curls fixed at top of the reed with a multicolored headscarf enveloping the whole head so that nothing of the face is seen. This hairdo imitates the typical woman's hairdo of the region, still used by Sabah's grandmother but no longer by her mother.



There is no doubt that these dolls made by three sisters and the doll play for which they are used have, in the words of Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen, *individual characteristics* as well as *social characteristics*. So one should try to overcome the *sameness* approach common when

talking about non-industrial communities and take more into account individual variation. This might be even more the case in relation to children as the above-mentioned authors stress the fact that “unlike adults, they (the children) are less constricted by culture, by already existing metaphors... Children, like adults, make their own resources of representation. They are not ‘acquired’, but made by the individual sign-maker” (1996: 7-8).

A truly individual creativity comes to the foreground in the case of a girl of a poor quarter of Marrakech in Morocco who made out of an undressed plastic doll, made in China, a beautiful bride doll of Marrakech. This girl, Fatima Kader born in 1971, was so kind to make for me in 1992 a copy, as truthful as possible, of the doll she played with at the age of about nine years. Before describing this doll, I have to stress the fact that this young woman already had from her young age a great skill for decoration and make-up. This is confirmed by the fact that she developed from a girl creating remarkable dolls to a woman who excels in applying complex figures with henna on hands and feet.

The plastic doll of figure 33 (p. 36) mass-produced in China or elsewhere, was transformed under my eyes into the bride doll of figure 34 (p. 36). To do so Fatima first of all gave breasts to her doll by putting two pieces of rag, rolled into small balls, under the dress the doll wears already. Then she sewed underpants from the same somewhat transparent white rag also serving for the dress and the long veil. The long hair consisting of dark natural wool is fixed with glue and plaited into two braids at the end of which Fatima fixed an elastic with plastic ornaments often used for little girls’ hair. With the same wool and glue the doll gets eyebrows and forelocks. In order to stress the lips and cheeks a red nail varnish is used to design geometric patterns on the chin and above the nose but also the *tache de beauté* on the left cheek. The nails of the hands and feet have been lacquered in red. Just above the forelocks the *kherîr*, a decoration of red mercerized cotton threads, is fixed that is also used for brides. On the hairdo a mauve *kherîr* fixes the veil. Two girdles encircle the waist. The necklace and the two bracelets of the doll are made with a child’s necklace. Finally, Fatima introduced into the doll’s head two earrings for little girls. The two *kherîr*, the earrings, the necklace, the two elastics with plastic ornaments, the nail varnish and the eye-liner used to decorate the doll have been bought by Fatima at the medina of Marrakech

in order to create the doll. However, when she was a child she used her own jewels or those she could obtain from her grandmother, mother or other female relatives together with their make-up products (for more details see *Saharan and North African Toy and Play Cultures. Children's Dolls and Doll Play*, p. 157-158).

In 1996, I found another fine example of the creative use of natural and waste material skillfully combined to create a remarkable toy representing an inaccessible item of agricultural progress, namely a tractor (fig. 93). This happened in the really small village Ignern, located at 1600m of height at the foot of the Jbel Siroua Mountain in the Moroccan Haut Atlas. This ingenious toy design has been realized in not more than fifteen minutes by a thirteen-year-old boy with nothing else than some fresh pieces of cactus, parts of a little branch and of reed, on the one hand, and pieces of rubber, part of a rubber pipe and plastic bottle stoppers, on the other hand.



A larger piece of cactus is used as under frame for the tractor. At the front and the back of it a stick is pierced through the cactus to form the axles. Red button stoppers serve as wheels and as wheel stoppers. The driver's chair is made with two small cactus pieces, one for the bottom and one for the back. The bottom of the chair and its back are separately fixed with some little pieces of reed piercing the cactus parts and stuck in

the under frame. In front of this chair another piece of cactus, treated in the same way as the chair's back, is also stuck in the under frame, after which a little stick is pierced through a red bottle stopper and fixed on top of the piece of cactus, this way becoming the steering wheel. The final touch is given to this tractor by putting a piece of green water-pipe through the under frame, so becoming the tractor's exhaust-pipe, and by piercing sticks through some other red bottle stoppers and sticking them in the under frame to create head-lights and rear-lights. The making of this quite exceptional toy, exceptional as up to now I only have seen something like that in this village, necessitates a good level of technical skill and a good knowledge of the specific characteristics of the used materials.

The foregoing examples of self-made toys and play activities clearly demonstrate the following statement of Gilles Brougère, made in the debate during the *1^a Biennale del Gioco e del Giocattolo. La Creativita* in Torino, Italy, on 1.11.1988: being creative does not mean to change to the unreal or to the imaginary, as being creative can be very well related to everyday life and so a child can be creative without being original because thousands of children have found the same solutions. Moreover, this creativity is rooted in the children's "ongoing activity of experiencing, experimenting, reflecting, then experimenting again" (Bernard van Leer Foundation Newsletter, 86, 1997: 2).

Because of the primordial importance of North African and Saharan children's playgroups, I want to stress the hypothesis that their creativity in making toys and playing with them could more often be expressed, and if so should be investigated, in the children's interactions within their playgroups rather than in the case of isolated players.

Although this chapter in which I have tried to highlight these children's creativity in toy making and play activities shows that a child's personality and the individual differences between children do play a role, it also reveals the necessity of much more detailed research to overcome the striking lack of information on these topics. The social group and socialization oriented approaches of the research in non-industrial societies has for long masked the individuality of the members of a family or a local community, probably exaggerating the uniformity, conformity and similarity between them, as if they all possessed a collective *basic personality*. Therefore, I think that the following two

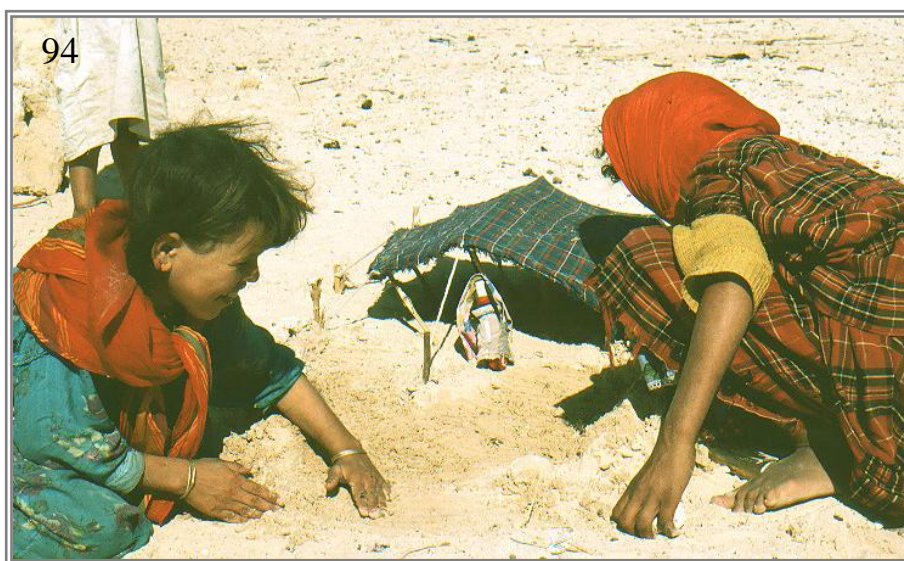
statements also hold good for North African and Saharan children, namely what Bathiche and Derevensky have said about children from the United Arab Emirates and Canada: “the play environment permits children to openly express their personality, engage in different roles, and develop their views of the world” (1995: 53), or what Gerhard Kubik (1997: 117) writes about children from sub-Saharan Africa:

The culture of sub-Saharan Africa emphasizes the children’s huge creative potential, despite the ephemeral nature of most of the objects: things are made, but just as quickly discarded. In many areas, the children’s creativity is allowed to be expressed autonomously and without limitations, because adults are usually not interested and intervene only when they feel disturbed or threatened.

I also think that one will need a lot more detailed information on the role of individuality and creativity in children’s games and toys from non-western non-industrial societies to validate the first part of another statement: “The more traditional the society, the more likely the toy is a simulacrum of an adult occupation (a miniature spear, a doll); the more modern the society, the more likely it is a negation of everyday realism” (Sutton-Smith, 1997: 155), even if I have to admit that, within the limits of my actual knowledge and insight, I endorse this hypothesis.

6 Toys, play, girls and boys

Sexual differentiation played and still plays a very important role in the growing up and socialization of North African and Saharan children and therefore also in the sphere of toys and play.¹ Toys made by girls seem largely to be inspired by the intimate sphere of family life, especially making dolls, small houses, little tents, toy utensils (fig. 94).



¹ Concerning the different situation and attitudes towards girls and boys in a Moroccan village of the Khemisset region Aicha Belarbi (1997: 6) writes: "If we summarize a four-year-old girl's activities during one day, as they were described by the mothers and focused on by the young sisters, we point out the limited and repetitive nature of the child's activities. The four-year-old boy has a different daily experience than his female counterpart. This simple description illustrates deep gender differences: while girls are expected to wake up early, sometimes without any help, mothers take into consideration the character of boys in terms of when they are expected to wake up. Some of them wake up early, others have difficulty in doing so and that is fine. When washing, boys need to be assisted by mothers or sisters; girls manage by themselves. Concerning play activity, girls are allowed to play near home, for a short time, and the mother keeps a watchful eye on them. An implicit permission is given to boys to play as long as they want and where they want. The access to Koranic school is also different. Girls usually attend it one year later than boys, except for those who have siblings attending the same school. In essence, the life of the four-year-old boy is more interesting, and he appears to interact more with adults and siblings than the girl child. Four-year-old girls are expected to be more self-reliant, but they are not yet given many responsibilities. This shifts by the age of six". At the end of her article Aicha Belarbi states: "The results of this study cannot be generalized. Nonetheless, we find the same way of life and the same perceptions within other rural communities studied in other research" (1997: 10).

Boys, on the contrary, although they also might make here or there these toys (fig. 95) seem to prefer to make toys inspired by technology or necessary for enacting economic activities.¹



It is especially in their pretend games, and in the making of the toys used in these, that the girls or the boys of these regions represent the everyday life of either their female or male relatives. In Great Britain a comparable difference exists between boys and girls (James, 1993: 198):

Playing games entails developing particular and effective play-skills to avoid being stigmatized as a loser, an outsider or as being simply odd and different... For boys this means manipulating the important signifiers of masculinity - 'toughness' and 'physical prowess' - in the process of play; for girls it means demonstrating through play the nurturing skills of wives, mothers and managers.

As girls are part of the female world they remain more bound to tradition than boys do and this reality is reflected in their games and toys. It maybe explains why most toy making and most play related to technological and socio-cultural change are found among boys. Following research on the

¹ The first version of this chapter but restricted to Ghib children's games and toys was written as part of an article published in *Special Issue on Children's Play* of the review *Ethnographica* published by Cleo Gougoulis in 1993.

development of children's identities, Allison James (1993: 200) also comes to the conclusion that girls are more oriented towards tradition:

The discourse of romantic love and stereotypical gender roles which permeate the games girls teach one another, therefore, act as a conservative force on girls' public aspirations. As each childhood generation passes its knowledge on to the next, the stereotypes of what it means to be female remain potentially unchallenged.

My research on North African and Saharan children's dolls and doll play has shown that boys only seldom play with dolls and if they do so their dolls represent, with very few exceptions, male figures.¹ Thus, it is not surprising that playing with dolls most often reflects adult womanhood and that the dolls themselves are a copy of an adult woman, more specifically a bride - the most enviable status for a young girl. At this level there seems to be no difference with the dolls and other toys of French children of which Pierre Tap and Gilles Brougère (Brougère, 1993: 176) say that they support the sexual differentiation and the conformity to the social model. Their statement is given in translation:

There do exist cultural elements that underpin the male-female dichotomy and in this context the toys play a really important role. Among these toys, the doll and its accessories receive the highest level of consideration as female toys, being chosen by girls and rejected by boys. However, when choosing the toys of its own sex and rejecting those of the opposite sex, the child is not the object of passive conditioning but it constructs its own identity and its own roles in order to escape its actual subjection, to grow and to be perceived as growing.

The making of toys related to the animal world, an animal world that still plays an important role in rural North Africa and in the Sahara, is predominantly the work of boys as the third volume of the collection

¹ Dolls made by Saharan and North African boys are exceptions and if so they represent warriors, notable men, dromedary or horse riders, herdsman or mule-drivers. See *Saharan and North African Toy and Play Cultures. Children's Dolls and Doll play*, 1 Male dolls, p. 49.

Saharan and North African Toy and Play Cultures. The Animal World in Play, Games and Toys demonstrates.¹ With these toy animals - representing dromedaries, horses, mules, goats, sheep, cattle, dogs and also some wild animals - the boys play at watering and feeding their herd, at mounting a caravan, engaging in a race, organizing a hunting, cattle-stealing or cattle-trading expedition, all activities related to economic activities and the male dominated outside world.

In my book *Saharan and North African Toy and Play Cultures. Domestic Life in Play, Games and Toys* the information on playing with miniature tents only refers to girls' play and this is also the case with dinner play. For their dinner play or household play the girls make a lot of toy utensils but it happens that boys also make them (fig. 95, p. 106). Other games are typical for girls although boys occasionally engage in these. On the contrary, games and toys related to subsistence activities such as breeding, gardening, agriculture and trade seem to be boys' games and my data only speak of a girl's game in the case of playing at being a shepherdess. Some games belong to the play activities of girls as well as those of boys but both sexes play them separately as for example in the case of games for which a small house is constructed. The same happens with musical games, dances and certain play activities linked to feasts and rituals. It also happens that about ten-year-old girls play games normally reserved for boys or that girls use toys made by boys although they do not make these toys themselves as in the case of the toy windmills for the Mulud feast in Central Morocco. Finding eight-year-old boys playing girls' games or using toys made by girls seems to be much more difficult.

Following the line of gender division between the inner female world and the outside male world common in the region, the self-made toys and related play activities that refer to household life (small houses, toy utensils, toy hand-mills, toy looms) are more peculiar to girls, whereas, the self-made toys and related play activities that refer to technology (toy vehicles, toy weapons, toy communication items) are more peculiar to

¹ Yet, Tuareg girls do make toy dromedaries mounted by a male doll or sometimes a female doll, just as the girls of the Moors do. See *Saharan and North African Toy and Play Cultures. The Animal World in Play, Games and Toys*, 1.5 Dromedaries with frame of vegetal material, p. 62.

boys. When one looks at the photos of toys made by North African and Saharan girls or boys illustrating this book and the volumes of the collection *Saharan and North African Toy and Play Cultures* this sex based distinction strikingly appears.

From the age of about six years sexual differentiation in play activities becomes very clear, an age also put forward by the authors of a short article on the segregation of Moroccan boys and girls in rural areas (Belgiti e.a., 1971: 102). Here and there an observation I made about 1999 indicates that girls and boys of six years or more form mixed playgroups as in the village Imider in the Haut Atlas where the playgroup consisted of two boys and three girls and in Amellago in the same region where four girls and one boy played together (see *Saharan and North African Toy and Play Cultures. Domestic Life in Play, Games and Toys*, 1.3 The house and furniture). In these two cases the children are about seven-year-old and they belong to the same family or are close neighbors.

That sexual differentiation appears already at an early age is clearly demonstrated by the reaction of a three-year-old boy being engaged with his six-year-old niece in doll play in front of a house in Sidi Ifni in January 2002. When the niece orders the small boy to make dolls or to perform female tasks he flatly refuses to do so stating loudly that he is a man (Rossie and Daoumani, 2003, Video 1).

As sexual differentiation is unimportant for small children when making playgroups, it is common that an older girl supervises a small group of girls and boys whom she engages in a game or who play separately. At the age of about six years boys leave the playgroups more or less controlled by older girls to form their own playgroup from which the girls are excluded. From that age onwards children's playgroups become separated between girls' groups and boys' groups, whereby girls' playgroups much more than boys' playgroups possibly have to care for little children. The same age limit has been put forward by Allison James for children in Great Britain (1993: 185-186):

Four-year-old boys and girls still often played together and shared their toys and games as, in the nursery setting, the boys shared the bathing of dolls and the girls made (forbidden) guns out of construction toys. But in the rule bound games played by older children, gender took on much more significance... It was clear from

my conversations with six, seven, and eight-year-olds, and from my own observations, that at this age boys and girls rarely played together, a separation shored up through playing radically different sorts of games.

As playgroups of girls and playgroups of boys are strongly separated, the role of the peer group with its same-sex playmates is overwhelmingly important in making and playing with sex-appropriate toys. Jeffrey Goldstein (1995: 139) defines this as follows:

Children appear to use sex-typed toy play as a way to identify with a positive reference group (same-sex peers), to distinguish themselves from a negative reference group (such as parents or children of the opposite sex), and to elicit predictable reactions from others (such as approval or disapproval from teachers or parents).

Yet, boys and girls not only use their playgroups for reasons of identification, in them they also exchange experiences with same-sex peers, this way learning a lot about their future place in the male or female worlds as defined by each culture and society.

Within their playgroups boys certainly enjoy more freedom than girls in their playgroups, at least as long as the boys do not disturb adults or do not overtly transgress the norms. Boys can also go much further away than girls, the distance broadening when the boys become older as in the case of some Moroccan boys playing in the sea at two hours walking from their village (fig. 96). This way, older boys can escape the direct control of their parents and other adults.



Girls on the contrary often must stay in the vicinity of their home among others to be available to help in the household or to be in charge of the little ones, but also to remain under a stricter supervision (fig. 30-32). When girls look after little children they certainly do find occasions to play but in this case it is difficult to separate the task of caring for children from the possibility to amuse one self.

Another clear difference between boys and girls, already at the age of six years but becoming more important at a more advanced age, is the time available to play and this because of the greater integration of girls in the household tasks. A striking example of this restricted time to play and more frequent duties of girls is found in my notes on a one hour observation of boys' play activities in Midelt (Central Morocco) on August 20th, 1999 in the morning. The scene is a shallow depression, some 250 meters large, between the quarters Aït Mansour and Taddawt. Within that hour, I observed the making and dissolution of about three boys' playgroups. One group playing at throwing stones at each other or at a given target, another group doing some wrestling, and a third group starting a football game. Moreover, an eight-year-old boy was helping a younger boy to ride on a children's bicycle while another boy pulled a hoop before him. Yet, during this whole hour I did not see one girl playing in this typical play area. What I observed was a six-year-old girl cleaning the ground in front of her house-door putting little stones in a basket to throw them aside. A somewhat older girl is passing by with a plate of biscuits on her head to take them to the oven. Two other girls, also about six year old, have done some errands and return home. Meanwhile, an older girl is looking after a group of toddlers sitting near the entrance of a house. The only play activity in which a girl together with two boys shortly was engaged, happened in front of a little shop where they just bought a *laab u kul*, literally play and eat, sweet and a little string needed to make it rotate like a spinning wheel.

Lahcen Oubahammou describes in 1987 this difference between girls and boys in the following way: first of all the Aït Ouirra girl (Moyen Atlas) is less favored than the small Ouirra boy because while still very young she has to dedicate herself to the household tasks and so she cannot enjoy childhood pleasures as much as boys. The situation of female adolescents is even worse as they are married from the age of

twelve or thirteen years onwards entering fully adult life with all its responsibilities and obligations (p. 126-127).

All this clearly shows that the viewpoint of Saharan and North African adults on children's play activities is quite different according to the child's sex. In "Building on people's strengths: early childhood in Africa" (1994: 29) the following is written in this context:

The subordination of women begins in early girlhood with the division of household labour by gender. African girls assume domestic responsibilities from the age of five or six years. This means that girls aged 10 to 14 work at least seven hours more a day than boys in the same age group. Almost, inevitably, it is the girls who share their mothers' tasks of cooking, cleaning, fetching water and firewood, caring for younger children, farming and income generation, herding and animal husbandry - tasks that consume most of every day.

This gender based difference in relation to children's play is also mentioned by David F. Lancy (1996: 148) when writing that, according to several researchers, work starts earlier for girls than for boys and that girls are more often than boys ordered to stop their play and help their mother or other female relatives. This statement relates to the Kpelle population of Liberia but it can also be used for rural and even for urban Moroccan communities.

In Allison James' *Childhood Identities* reference is made to the research on children's games done by Lever showing the difference between the play activities of boys and girls about 1976. One of these differences is based on "the observation that although girls sometimes join in boys' games, boys rarely join in girls' games", and Allison James adds to this: "My own research supports these findings which are, I suggest, contextualised by the growing significance of gender as a mark of difference more generally in children's social relationships" (1993: 191). The scarce information I gathered on this topic seems to confirm this. Yet, much more evidence is needed before being able to endorse or refute the statement that older girls play boys' games more often than older boys play girls' games. Moreover, it remains to be proved if the same holds for toy making by boys and by girls, the example of some Central Moroccan girls from Ksar Assaka playing with the toy motors

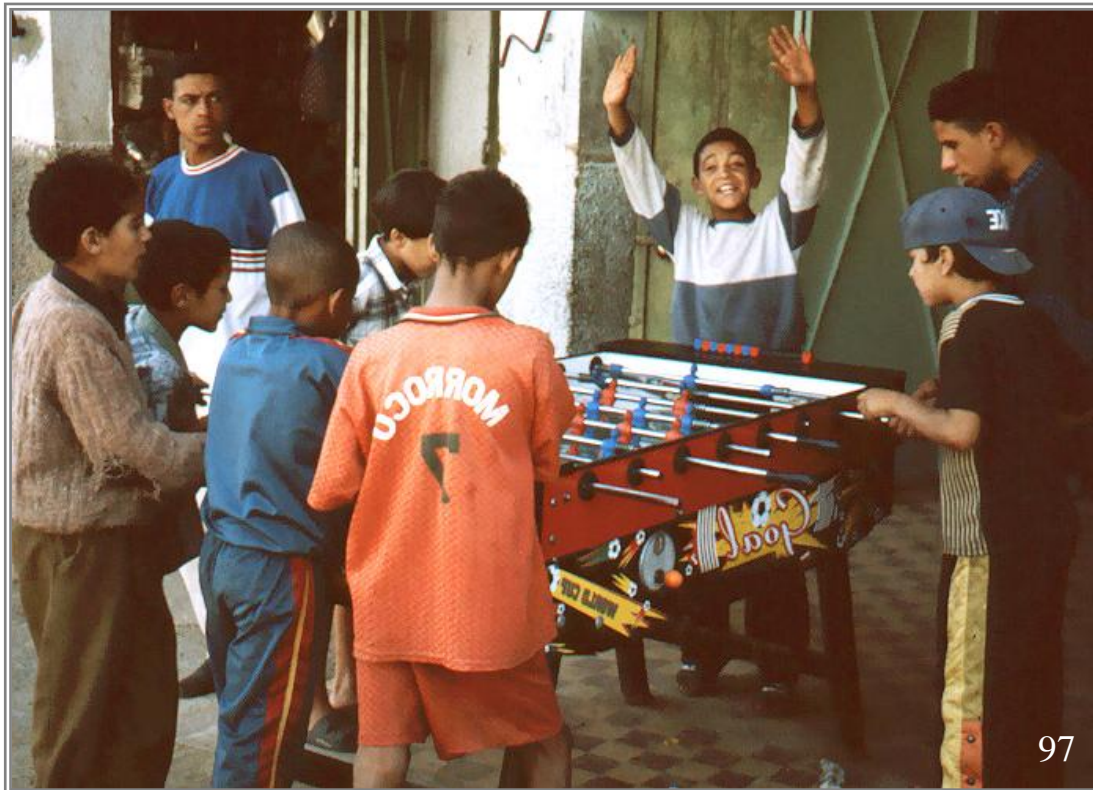
made by boys (fig. 127, p. 170) without making one themselves already pointing in this direction.

As the data on gender differences in North African and Saharan children's games and toys are scarce, the above made statements should only be seen as hypothetical and not as established facts. Moreover, the distinction between girls and boys in the sphere of making toys and playing with them should not be viewed as a rigid one as I have found in Morocco already some cases in which a girl or a boy made or played with a typical toy of the other sex. Information from Algeria, one on Mozabite children and another one on Belbala children, shows that a real collaboration between girls and boys can exist for example when constructing small houses or a complete miniature village. In the first example the brothers made dollhouses for their sisters during the 1920s and in the second example Belbala girls and boys played together to make a miniature village about 1960 although executing different tasks (see *Saharan and North African Toy and Play Cultures. Domestic Life in Play, Games and Toys*, 1.3 The house and furniture).

Play activities also show another kind of relationship between boys and girls as discussed by July Delalande who analyzes the opposition between French boys and girls. She writes that it is the boys in particular who disturb girls' games in order to make the girls take notice of them (2001: 162-164). Fernando Pinto Cebrián observed the same behavior among Sahrawi children where it happens that boys destroy the girls' miniature tents so that they will not continue to ignore their presence (1999: 105). In 1975 I observed a similar situation among Ghrib children. When some girls were making a dollhouse a few boys from the same family or neighbors threw sand at them. Immediately an eight-year-old girl stood up against a twelve-year-old boy in a threatening attitude speaking harshly to him. This observation shows again that the girl-boy relationship is not that stereotyped and that the personality of the girl plays its role.

Commercial entertainment through playrooms established in a café, a house or a garage and where one finds money games such as billiard, table football (fig. 97, p.114) and pinball is quickly expanding even in small Moroccan towns. This evolution not only brings about important changes in the play activities of especially teenage boys from urban

centers but also a new clear cut difference between boys and girls as girls are excluded from such places of commercial entertainment.



Even if little is known on the more fundamental aspects of sex-typed toys and play in these regions, one can without hesitation stress that they play an important role in the children's upbringing and in the transmission of gender specific attitudes, roles and values. Nevertheless, one should always be cautious with generalizing statements such as the strict separation of older girls and boys because there are indications that this separation can be surmounted. For example, some of my Moroccan female informants declared that being children they liked to play together with their brothers, cousins and other boys of the neighborhood among others to play football or to climb in trees. This shows that a population's cultural norms are not the sole determining criteria in children's play activities but that the players' intentions must be taken into account. Yet, only a more detailed study based on observing children's actual play activities could foster a better understanding of all this.

The recent research results of scholars studying children's play in Western communities made me realize that notwithstanding important differences between Western and Saharan or North African communities,

the influence of sexual differentiation on play, games and toys remains truly similar. Thus, the following statement of Brian Sutton-Smith (1986: 27-28) is also applicable to Saharan and North Africa communities:

For, in general, anything that is important to a culture is over determined. That is, it is taught in many different ways and with much redundancy to make sure that the targets of the teaching get the message. In sex-role training, for example, if we want boys and girls to be different, as we have traditionally, we don't just tell them once. We tell them in multiple ways.

7 Toys, play and generations

“Play throughout history has been an overwhelming matter of *playing with others*, rather than playing with things” (Sutton-Smith, 1986: 170). So, playing with others from ones own generation and from older and younger generations appears to be of the uttermost importance in the growing up and socialization of children, and this certainly remains true for North African and Saharan children.¹ The information gained from the bibliography of these regions does not give much concrete data on generation differences in play activities or on playful relations between adults and children. Moreover, those who have focused on entertainment for adults and those who have studied children’s play very seldom wondered about the relationship between both categories of play activities.

The first adults creating a ludic relation with a newborn child naturally are its mother, father, an older sister or brother, a grandparent, and this is what my observation of Ghrib families in the Tunisian Sahara has confirmed. Leaving this statement aside, my own observations and the information found in the consulted bibliography do refer only exceptionally to Saharan and North African children younger than two or three years. So, this period of early childhood during which mothers and other adult members of the family or neighborhood willingly play with a baby or a small child cannot be discussed. What my data can confirm however is that the playful relation between children and adults does not stop at the age of three years. A few examples mentioned in *Saharan and North African Toy and Play Cultures. Domestic Life in Play; Games and Toys* (Rossie, 2008) show that a playful relation between adults and children of two years or more is not so rare. There is for example the Ghrib father entering the play of his two-year-old daughter trying to spin wool (see chapter 3.7), a Moroccan mother or father making a musical toy for a small or an older girl (see chapter 5), another Moroccan father

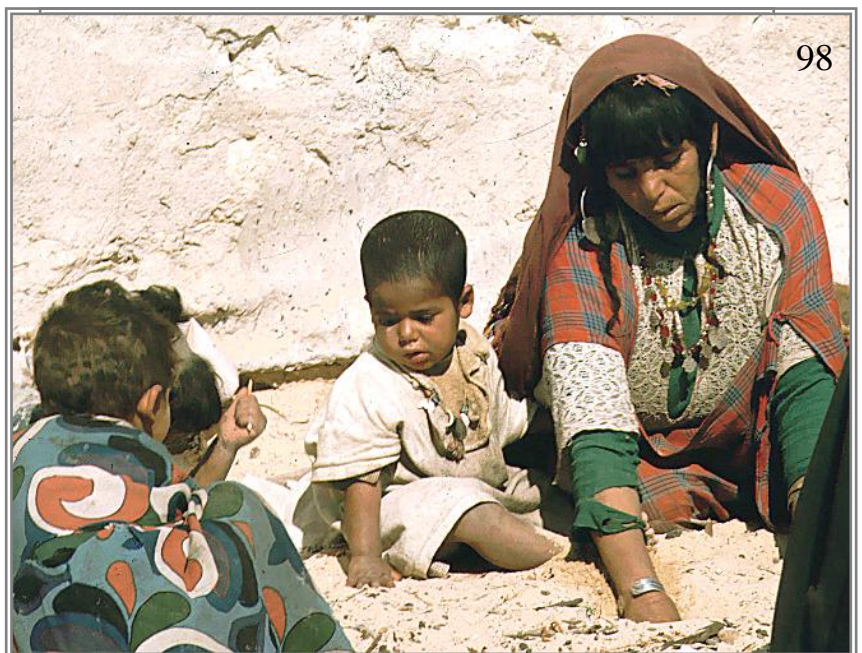
¹ The first version of this chapter but restricted to Ghrib children’s games and toys was written as part of an article published in *Special Issue on Children’s Play* of the review *Ethnographica* published by Cleo Gougoulis in 1993.

making windmills for his older daughters (see chapter 6) or a young Ghrib man amusing his little brother by letting him play the flute (fig. 26, p. 33).

In a lot of spontaneous situations and games, a member of an older generation who often is somebody of the child's relatives, playfully interacts with a youngster, especially when toddlers or infants are concerned. Among the Ghrib, as elsewhere in North Africa and the Sahara and probably all over the world, it is the mother, grandmother or older sister who most of the time soothes and amuses the little girls and boys of the family. Nevertheless, I have more than once observed that a father or an uncle, an adult brother or cousin played just for fun with a toddler, a girl as well as a boy. However, if the child gives trouble or starts crying, it is easily handed over to its mother or older sister. When a female family member plays with a little child it can also be just for fun but more often it serves the purpose of pacifying, distracting, occupying or entertaining the baby or toddler.

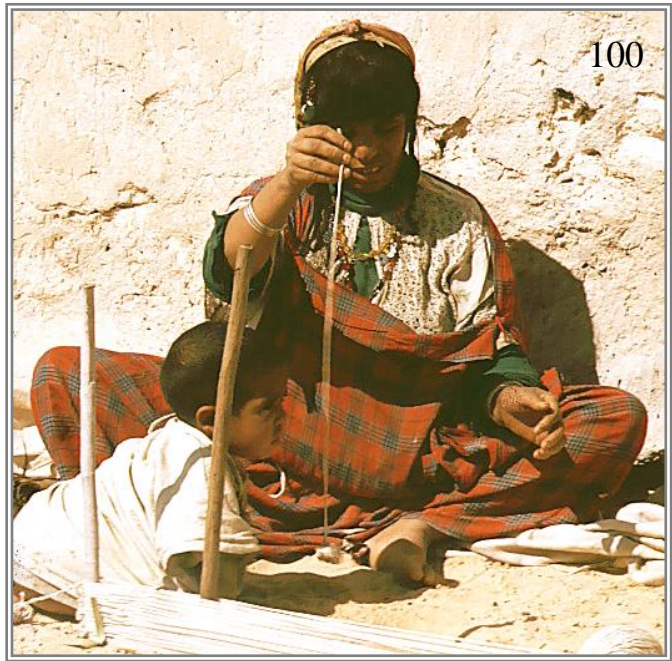
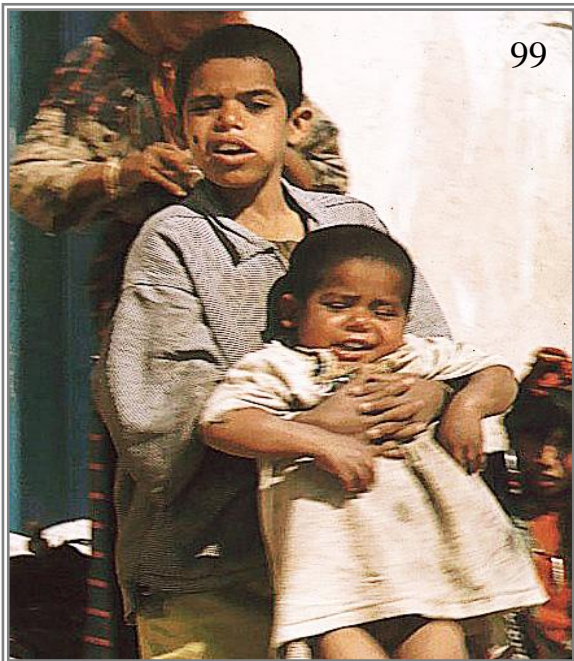
My notes on the adult-child relationships among the Ghrib are based on detailed observation, made on a minute to minute basis for longer periods of time in the oasis of El Faouar in 1975 and in the small campsites set up during Spring of the same year in the desert area between El Faouar and the Algerian border. They refer, among other things, to different circumstances in which a mother, older sister or grandmother spontaneously and affectionately plays with a little child. The following abstract exemplifies some of these observations whereby photographs have been used to visualize the observed play sequences.

Figure 98 shows a mother who playfully tries to divert her pouting son Bechir who is two and a half years old. This happens regularly during more than one hour so that she can carry on with setting up the horizontal weaving loom.



Therefore she more than once makes little holes in the sand which Bechir immediately refills.

However, all this does not calm him down. His eight-year-old brother carries Bechir twice away (fig. 99) to four boys of four to five years, playing nearby at finding small objects hidden by one of them in a heap of sand, but he soon hurries back to his mother. A few minutes later, the mother makes another little hole in the sand and puts a number of little sticks on top of it. First Bechir throws the little sticks away but then plays with them for a while. Finally, the mother gives up her job and entertains her son with a little toy she made by attaching a string to a stone and twisting it very quickly (fig. 100). Then she gives this toy to Bechir.



The above mentioned close relationship between female family members and little children too easily leads to the conclusion that in more or less traditional communities, fathers, grandfathers, older brothers and uncles do not interact with young children. However, one must be careful with such hasty conclusions, often based on superficial or hurried observations. My information on play activities and toys shows that fathers and other male family members are more regularly in interaction, especially with small children, than is often said. An interesting discussion of the role of fathers can be found in number 97 of *Early Childhood Matters* edited in February 2001.

The following photograph shows a father stimulating his youngest son to play with him by grabbing a small metal box the father continuously sticks to his own sweating forehead (fig. 101). This little game that went on for some five minutes was very much enjoyed by the father and the almost two-year-old boy as well as by his mother, who is sitting near the entrance of the tent and veils her



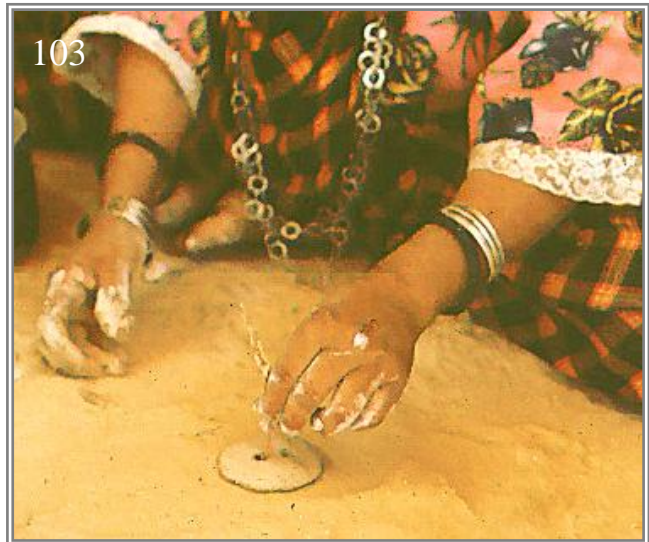
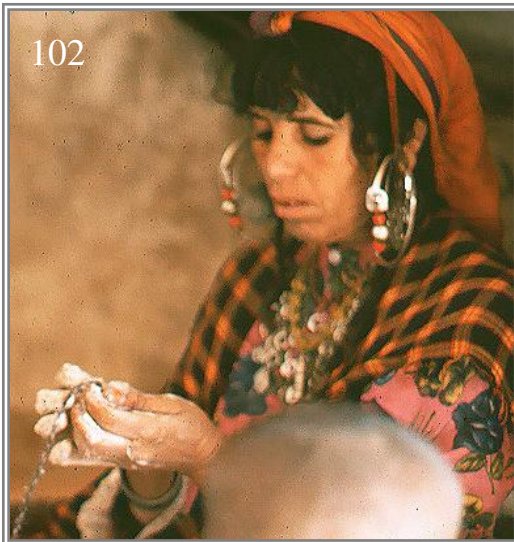
face because a photograph is taken. Through this game the father spontaneously creates with his little son an intimate relationship.

Such an intimate relationship might also be created between a father and his little daughter, or between young men and their little sisters. The following example, including some play activities, is based on a three-hours-long observation (13h-16h) done on Thursday 20.3.1975 in an encampment near Shûsha en-Nâga, situated about 38 km from El Faouar. The observation protocol starts with Wahîda, a girl of 22 months, sitting on her father's legs. Her father (62 years) moves his legs up and down so that it looks like his little daughter is riding a horse. Then he gives to Wahîda and her two youngest brothers, Mhammed (3 years and 6 months) and Ali (7 years), an orange that he has brought with him when coming with me from El Faouar. Five minutes later (13.07h), Wahîda starts walking around. Meanwhile, the youngest son Mhammed has made use of the situation to climb in his father's lap. However, Wahîda walks back to her father and tries to push Mhammed away. As she does not succeed, she starts to cry. Mhammed is then ordered by his father and his mother to leave the place to his little sister. Some ten minutes later and after she walked around in the tent for a while, Wahîda is again going to sit in her father's lap. 13.20h: Wahîda's mother (41 years) comes to play with her little daughter who sits near her father. She tries to make Wahîda laugh and gives her a little garment to play with. Holding this garment in

her hand, Wahîda crawls to her father who uses the little garment to play with his daughter and gives her a kiss on the cheek. 13.40h: the eldest brother Marzouq (19 years) starts playing with Wahîda. He puts her hand in his mouth and bites gently in it. Shortly after this, the father takes Wahîda in his lap. Later on and while he is lying down on the sand, Salim, the 16-year-old brother of Wahîda, plays with his little sister by repeatedly lifting her up and placing her on his belly (14.03h). 14.15h: Marzouq takes Wahîda in his arms and amuses her, but soon she crawls back to her father who is sitting next to me. I offer Wahîda the sunshade of my camera. She takes it and gives it to her father who, using it as a toy, plays with her little games such as putting it over her fingers, hiding it and rolling it over the ground, each time stimulating Wahîda to do the same. After a while, Wahîda walks to her mother and lays her head in her mother's lap. 14.45h: once more Wahîda is going back to her father who plays with her, among others by shouting gently "da, da, da" at her to make her laugh. 15.17h: Wahîda enters the tent after she has been playing outside with her youngest brothers who were pulling over the sand a thrown away electric bobbin. When she is passing by Marzouq he wants to pick her up but Wahîda refuses and walks to her father, sitting nearby, who takes her in his lap. From this place of safety, Wahîda starts playing with Marzouq's feet. Marzouq talks pleasantly to her, makes as if he will take her away and tickles her. An example of the playful relation between a three-year-old Ghrib boy, his adult family members and older brothers and sisters can be found in *Saharan and North African Toy and Play Cultures. The Animal World in Play, Games and Toys* (p. 86-87).

Other occasions of playful interactions between children on the one hand and adults on the other hand are found in the process of toy making. In North Africa and the Sahara children most often make their toys themselves. However, making toys for toddlers and infants can be a pleasant task for adult members of the child's family, as in the case of a grandmother who in Had Soualm at 30 km from Casablanca in September 2003 made for her six-year-old grandson a *carrosa*, a round tin serving as wheel and attached to a long stick. This was also the case among the Ghrib where not one toy was purchased until recently. Next to the little toy seen on figure 100 (p. 119), the same Ghrib mother made another toy to pacify her son Bechir who was to be weaned.

This time it is a spinning wheel for which the mother first makes a little disk of self-made plaster (fig. 102), leaving it to dry after putting two sticks through it in order to make the holes (fig. 103). Once the disk is dry and a string is tied through the holes, the mother spins the wheel, here demonstrated by Bechir's older brother (fig. 104), or gives the toy to Bechir to distract him from breast-feeding. In July 1993, I observed a father helping his little son of two and a half years to keep balance on one of the improvised swings for which older children are using the plastic chains surrounding an old fountain in the medina of Kénitra, a larger coastal town in the north of Morocco (fig. 105).



The more a child becomes older the more such a relation seems to become seldom. A simple reason why adults' interference with children's play diminishes is linked to the progressive moving away of the child from its mother and the house. If the two or three-year-old child often plays near the tent or in front of the house and that of the neighbors, this way remaining under adult control, older children go to play further away using open spaces and larger streets. In any case the older children prefer to play there where they more easily escape adult control, especially the control of those who know them well. A quite clear distinction must be made here between boys and girls as boys surely enjoy more freedom and time to play than girls. The play environment of little boys and girls normally is limited to the space adults can oversee. Although adults and adolescents have the power to disturb or stop children's play my observations show that children find the time they need to play and to make toys but the same distinction between girls and boys must be made here.

Two examples from Morocco show that an adult, in both cases a father, also makes a toy or helps to make one for older children. A young Amazigh woman of the Moroccan village Ksar Assaka near Midelt gave the first example. When she was about eight years in 1976, her father made for her and her younger sister a *ferrwadi*, a toy windmill with two vanes fixed on a single wing that is attached with an iron wire to a reed, and that especially is made for the yearly celebration of the prophet Muhammad's birthday. I noted the second example when in February 2003 an about thirteen-year-old boy in a Sidi Ifni street playing on his guitar made with a round tin can, a wooden lath, some nails and real strings, told me that his father helped him to make it.

The interaction between children and adults through playful activities creates possibilities for the development of reciprocal positive feelings. In every human context play activities, games and toys seem to have served socializing purposes, namely the reproduction of roles, attitudes, customs and values from one generation to the next. They certainly reflect the culture and social organization of a given period and place, yet, they also offer avenues for change and innovation. The authors of the book *Guided Participation in Cultural Activity by Toddlers and Caregivers* stress the importance of children's participation in adult activities for their development and their cultural and social integration

into the family and community (Rogoff e.a., 1993). In this context I want to notice that most North African and Saharan children live in families where they are not or only slightly isolated from adult activities. Consequently in many play activities described in this book they refer to what they learn by observing adult life and by their more or less important participation in adult activities. A recent example was offered to me at the end of October 2002 in the Bûalam quarter of Sidi Ifni. On that occasion I observed how a three-year-old girl amused herself by cleaning with a small brush the sidewalk before her house while her seven-year-old sister and their mother were cleaning the same sidewalk.

Among the Ghib semi-nomads of the 1970s but also among the rural and popular Moroccan population of today I noticed certain indifference for children's play from the part of adults.¹ A lack of interest based on the point of view that play and toy making activities are something that is proper to the children, that this is children's business in which adults should only interfere in case of real danger, of risk of causing damage and discomfort or when rules and values are clearly transgressed. Suzanne Gaskins describes such an attitude for the children of the Mayan villages of Yucatan in Mexico. She writes that when Mayan children play, they play following their own will and with almost no interference from adults except the taking away of household items used to play or to insist on physical security. Mayan children's play certainly is personally motivated. It is not based on a structure or motivation induced by adults and is not used to attract adults' attention (1999: 49).

This author also stresses that Mayan children only play during a small part of the day and that they only use little of the available time to play for symbolic or make-believe play (1999: 47). My observations of Ghib and Moroccan children's play however seem more to support the hypothesis that symbolic and make-believe games do play an important role in these children's development, a pretend play often in relation to the adult world as clearly shown in this volume as in the preceding volumes on doll play and on play linked to the animal world.

¹A similar situation is attested in relation to sub-Saharan African children by Gerhard Kubik who writes: "The children are autonomous in their own play-world; adults interfere only when conflicts arise that appear to be irreconcilable" (1997: 114).

Pierre Flamand writes on the intergenerational ludic activities among the South Moroccan Jews from the 1950s that not one child indicates its father as the initiator of its games. Some girls attribute this role to their mother but many attribute it to their grandmother. Sometimes the influence of the family living on the countryside is mentioned. Most adults have no interest in the play activities of their offspring. They think it suffices when they give them some money at the feasts (p. 213).

The few toys made by a father or a mother mentioned in this volume show that they are made for special occasions such as the Ashûra and the Mulud feasts. Some Sidi Ifni teachers, members of the Isni Culture and Art Association, whom I asked in December 2002 if their father, mother or another adult had made a toy for them when they were children stated that this was not the case. Nevertheless, only a more detailed analysis could clarify this topic. Still, I think I can endorse what Elisa Lwakatare says in this context when writing about Tanzanian adults that they make few toys for their children (1999: 4). Buying a toy for one's own child or for a child of one's family probably is a more common although limited behavior.

In contrast to the just described situation, one would think that adults in technically highly developed countries who buy so many toys for children would be particularly interested in children's play. However, June Factor noticed recently on the basis of her research in Australia that a useful consequence of the myth of the insignificance of play lore has been the relative absence of adult interference in children's games that permits the children to organize themselves as they like and to be free from the common ideas of adults on how to play and what to play (2001: 33). On the other hand Julie Delalande stresses in her analysis of playing with sand at the preschool that already at a very young age of the children their parents put into their hands buckets, spades, sifters and moulds, often teaching them to make sand pies and sand castles (2001: 187). Such an attitude to teach children how to create forms and buildings with sand, and to invest oneself as an adult in children's play did not occur during my observations either in the Tunisian desert or on the beaches near Kénitra or at Sidi Ifni in Morocco. The information gained from the bibliography does not attest such attitudes either. However, this statement must be relativized as Boubaker Daoumani directed my attention to the fact that at the Sidi Ifni beach some popular class mothers with little

children sometimes help their little ones to make forms and constructions with sand but without using material specially made for this purpose.

Wolfgang Hering speaks about the conscious or unconscious, wanted or unwanted influence of adults on children's play activities, grading from weak forms, as when children spontaneously imitate their adult playmates, to very direct and goal-oriented interference through, for example, didactic games (1979: 130-132). One can see, up to a certain level, this spontaneous imitation of adult playmates and the indirect influence of adults on children's play activities in the Tunisian Sahara of the 1970s as well as in present day Morocco. However, the official and private preschools and primary schools in Morocco do not pay attention to children's play and toy making, except to expel them from the classroom. So, didactic games have not yet found their way into pedagogical practice there (Pillods, 1994).

The indifference for children's play mentioned in relation to adults in general is also found among primary school teachers and those working in preschools. For example the schedule in preschool classes offers no or almost no time to play. This is the case for the expensive private preschools as well as for one-class schools held in a garage or in a home, asking small fees from parents and often run by a young woman who partially or completely followed secondary education. Next to a pedagogical approach with no or little attention to play there also is the fact that parents do not really appreciate attempts to introduce play activities and toys in the class. The few preschool teachers I could discuss this topic with told me each time that the parents strongly emphasize the early learning of reading, writing and learning by heart.

But, the taking into account of children's toy making and play, on the one hand, and the use of didactic games, on the other hand, could slowly enter the Moroccan preschool system through the combined efforts of two projects supported by the Bernard van Leer Foundation, an international foundation that centers its efforts on the development of low cost initiatives based on the participation of the local communities and directed towards the welfare and education of socially and culturally disadvantaged children between 0 and 8 years. The two organizations are the *Alliance de Travail dans la Formation et de l'Action pour l'Enfance*, *ATFALE* meaning child in Arabic, based at the Mohamed V University in Rabat, and the Ministry of Education whose project is directed towards

the 36,117 *kuttab* or Koranic preschools who care for some 800.000 children between two and six years in 1994-95 (Bouzoubaâ, 1998:5). Those two projects collaborate to give training to the personnel of these *kuttab*, untrained as they are to work with this age group and for whom no on the job training existed. During the training attention is paid to different topics such as language, health, arithmetic, methods and organization of the school, but also to the topic of games and toys. For this a brochure was made on play in the preschool. In the brochure one reads that to become a place adapted to the little child, the new preschool must get to the point of recognizing the fundamental importance of play and thus accept to see the child in its particularity and specificity (ATFALE, 1992: 4). The same ideas have been expressed in a different way in the introduction of the reworked brochure (El Andaloussi B., 1997: 1). No doubt the toy and play culture could play an important role in this context. A role the more important as the participation of parents in the preschool should be promoted possibly by making and repairing toys as has been done in other developing countries (Bernard van Leer Foundation, 1991: 14).

Julie Delalande (2001) just as the authors of the book edited by Julia Bishop and Mavis Curtis (2001) discuss in detail the influence of the preschool and primary school and particularly of the playground on the relations between children, their play activities and children's culture.

Without wanting to diminish the role of the school environment on North African children between three and twelve years, I think I can affirm that the role of this environment on children's play activities and toys is less important in for example Morocco than in France or in Great Britain. This probably is not due to a less important schooling but because of a different attitude towards children's play at school. As indicated a few paragraphs earlier, the role of the nuclear and extended family and of the neighborhood on children's relationships and on their play activities appears to exceed by far the role of the school. Yet, I have tried to learn a bit more about what happens in some primary schools of the Sidi Ifni region during recreation time and this by questioning three teachers, members of the Isni Culture and Art Association. These teachers have taught for about six years in three schools in different villages, one situated in a quite urbanized village at 2 km from Sidi Ifni, another one located in the mountains at 11 km from this town and the

third one to be found in an isolated place at 35 km from Sidi Ifni. The primary school courses that last for four and a half hours per day are interrupted by a recreation period of fifteen minutes. If one deducts the time to go to the toilet and for assembling the pupils, some ten minutes are left for recreation. According to these three teachers the pupils often form small groups of three to four children. The groups consist of pupils of more or less the same age and are based on family or neighborhood relations. In these small groups the children play together or divide among them an orange, some biscuits or whatever one of them has brought along to eat. Mixed groups of girls and boys become rare from the second class onwards and are as good as non-existent from the fourth class onwards. The boys often play physical games. Girls also play such games, like in December 2002 when the game of elastics was much in favor, but it is also common to find the girls talking in small groups.

Giving children the possibility to play and to make toys in the preschool is not at all the same as telling teachers to use and direct children's play activities nor to introduce pedagogical play and toys in the preschool. Frank and Virginia Salamone (1991: 136) warn of:

The dangers inherent in adult involvement. As in our example of preschoolers in Ibadan, once an adult decides on play and on seizing the teaching moment, fun leaves a playful child and routine sets in. If adults are involved, they frequently impose an educational element in the play... When children set their own goals, they are developing and working through their own developmental tasks.

Looking at it from this angle, the non-involvement in children's play typical for most North African and Saharan adults could well be an advantage rather than a disadvantage.

In Morocco other structures directed by adults and intended for children do not seem to integrate children's play culture in their activities. First of all it must be said that youth movements are not much developed outside larger towns. The scout movement does exist in Morocco but as in Rabat this is more the case among the wealthier class. On the contrary, the "dâr shebâb" or youth house, is found even in little towns like Midelt and Sidi Ifni but not in the villages. In these youth houses volunteers sometimes organize children's workshops. Being

present at a few meetings of such children's workshop in Kénitra in 1993, I noticed that the activities were limited to singing and playing indoor games like those common among youth movements, for example turning around some stools whose number is one less than the number of players. When questioning the volunteers, aged between about seventeen and twenty-five years and quite often being teachers, it became evident that the local play culture is not or only seldom used.

The generally accepted viewpoint in North Africa and the Sahara, accepted by local people as well as by foreign observers, that adults of these regions are quite indifferent to, or, probably more correctly, non-preoccupied by children's play remains as far as I know without an adequate explanation. However, some elements for such an explanation can be brought forward. As toy making and play activities are viewed as an integral part of childhood, as this childhood is not defined as a separate socio-cultural entity and as there is a clear distinction between the status of being a child and the status of being an adult, these child(ish) play activities should not only be dropped when entering adulthood but adults should not participate in children's play either.

Moreover, as children in these communities most of the time are very well socialized and mostly respect the local norms and values even in their play, there seems to be little necessity for adult interference. Still, adult interference and control of children's play is certainly more important when it concerns girls who have to remain in the vicinity of the house, whereas boys enjoy a lot more freedom.

During one of my observations of children's play in the popular quarters of Midelt, a small town in Central Morocco in August 1999, my attention was drawn to yet another aspect of the adult-child relationship in play activities, namely the use for play of adults' tools, instruments and utensils by girls as well as boys. The example that made me think about this was given when a little girl of four years drove around another little girl of three years with a wheelbarrow. The adult men sitting nearby did not intervene for some time. They only reacted when the girl hit the wall of a house. Only then an older man told the girl to stop playing with the wheelbarrow.

Looking back at my research data, I can find several occasions in which children are allowed to use tools, instruments and utensils of adults. For their play and toy making activities children can sometimes

use hammers, pincers, picks, shovels, ropes, baskets, several kitchen utensils and for the little ones also bundles of keys. However, the use of adult instruments by children remains an exception and seems more to be occasional than systematic.

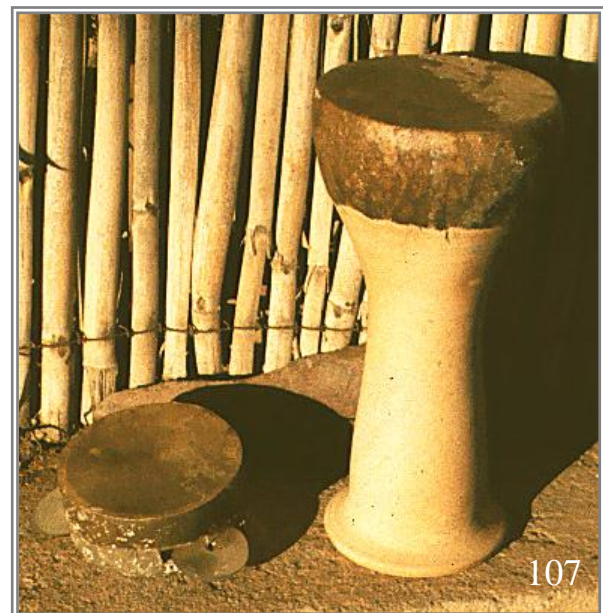
In relation to the adult-child relationship through a gift of a toy, so common in other societies more directed towards consumerism, it seems that such a gift was, and often still is, exceptional in the Saharan and North African societies as the children in most cases make their toys themselves. If it is not the child itself, then it is a sister or brother, a female or male cousin who does it. And even if a mother or an aunt, a father or an uncle or whatever person makes the toy, it does not form part of a system of rewarding or tokens of affection. Only exceptionally the toy becomes an object to be given as a present. This situation contrasts with Western societies where toys have become gifts to children or as Brian Sutton-Smith (1986: 21, 41) writes:

The most important single interpretation of toys in the family must be that they are part of a Festival (e.g. Christmas) in which gifts signify the bonds and controls within the family... parents use toys for the purpose of bonding, but also contradictorily for the purpose of solitarizing their children... parents say implicitly to their children "that we give you these toys in order to bind you to us, now go and play with them by yourselves.

As this author further clearly demonstrates, some of these gifts are soft toys, dolls and pets that the child will treat as imaginary companions in order to fill this impression of solitude (1986: 43-53).

Although North African and Saharan parents would be very astonished by such an attitude, this does not mean that traditionally gifts for children are nonexistent in these regions, but the occasions for giving gifts are very limited as are the number of toys given. Moreover, gifts for children are not specifically gifts of toys but also gifts of sweets and food. Nevertheless, that adults buy toys for their children is already mentioned. Moreover, giving toys certainly is not something new especially in urban milieus as F. Castells notes already in 1915 and for Rabat that merchants sell locally made traditional toys and toys imported from Europe (p. 342).

One of the Festivals during which toys are given to children is the important Ashûra feast that takes place in the first month of the Muslim year. In North Africa, this Festivity gives rise to rites and customs that are related to the birth of a new year and the death of the last year. It is also a time in which children receive special attention. Some of the toys given to boys (fig. 106) and girls are small copies of musical instruments. Small hand drums as the one on the left of figure 107 are normally given to girls, the small pottery drums being given to boys. However, the smallest pottery drum of figure 106 is sometimes also given to a two or three-year-old girl, as at that age gender differences are not yet so important.



But also other toys are given such as water pistols, toy animals or toy utensils, all plastic toys often made in China. One of the best memories Souad Laabib, a thirty-year-old Moroccan woman, has kept from her father is linked to the toy she and her sister received from him for the Ashûra feast when she was six years, namely a plastic cat on four wheels.

Anyhow, this toy-giving bears no relation to the number of toys that for exemple Swedish children receive (Nelson and Nilsson, 2002). Thus, the situation described by Gilles Brougère about French parents when he writes that in order to understand a toy it must be situated within the social and affective relations between parents and children (1999: 4), certainly is not found with the same intensity in the regions this book is

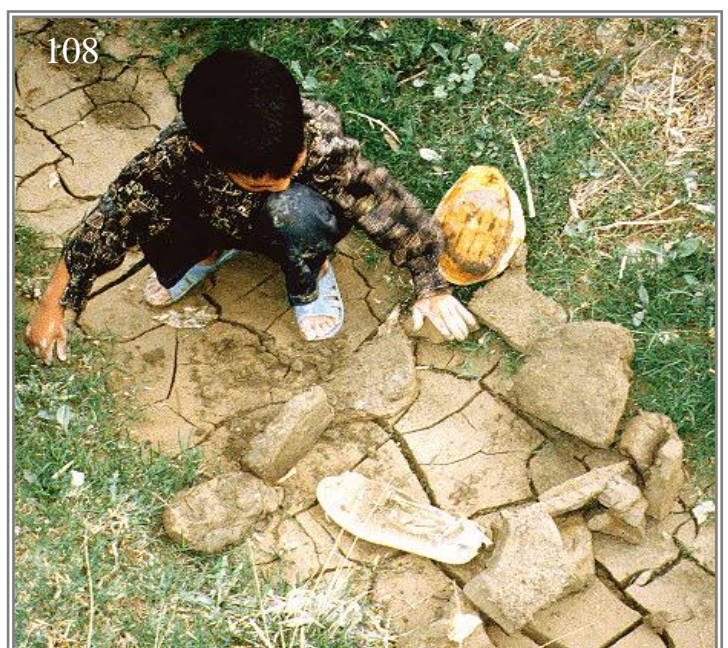
speaking of, except probably among the wealthy and Westernized families.

In the West, toys are cultural messages created by adults and mostly bought by adults but intended for children. In the popular milieus of Northern Africa, this is still something exceptional and when toys are bought by adults these toys have most of the time been designed by Western or Asian adults. In opposition to the imported toys stand the toys the North African and Saharan children make themselves. The developmental advantages of making toys oneself are multiple or as one can read in a Bernard van Leer Foundation Newsletter (1997: 2):

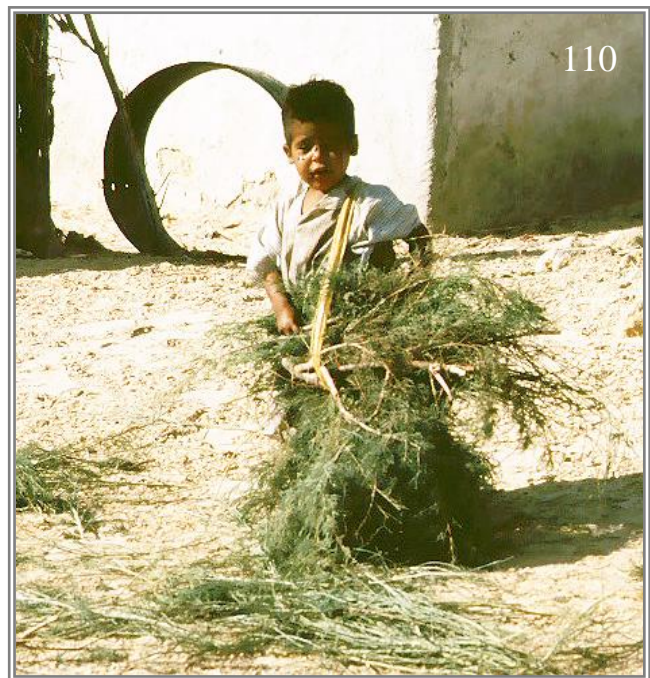
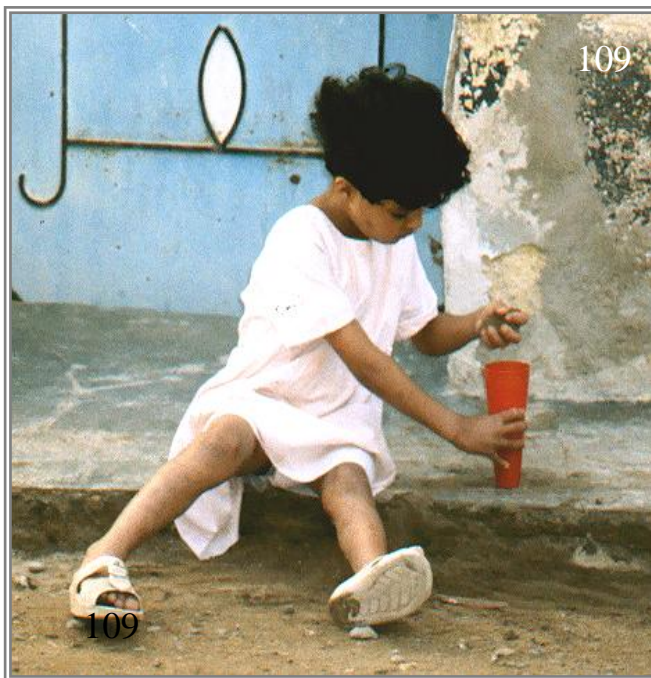
Children making themselves their toys set themselves their own goals, they are not dictated or suggested by adults, be it parents or teachers, this way they are free to work according to their own developmental level and to develop those abilities they need most from their personal point of view.

These toys are created by children to communicate with children and, notwithstanding some exceptions, they are not created in isolation but most often within a playgroup. Although it surely is true for North African and Saharan children to say that “Talking about the game (and the toy making) independently of the life of the group playing it is an abstraction...” (Sutton-Smith, 1997: 106), this does not mean that children from these regions do not play alone.

Solitary play can be observed now and then especially among young children. There is the five-year-old boy preparing his meal by crushing pieces of pottery on a big stone in front of my neighbor's house in Sidi Ifni at the end of November 2003, the three-year-old boy of Amellago in the Moyen Atlas (fig. 108) building his garage with pieces of earth taken from the dry irrigation canal and



using an old sandal as truck in November 1999, the five-year-old girl making cakes before her house door in Midelt in September 1999 (fig. 109) or the little girl riding on her plastic toy animal on the roof of her home in Goulmima in 1994 (fig. 71, p. 77). In 1975 I photographed a just three-year-old Ghrib boy playing on his own at transporting firewood (fig. 110).



If in the sphere of play activities, games and toys the role of adults is less visible in the North African and Saharan context, the role of the children's playgroup, of the older siblings and playmates and of the peers is overwhelmingly important. This importance of older siblings and playmates has been stressed for gender-role acquisition among children in Great Britain by Allison James (1993: 185):

There is still a tendency to assume that it is just adults whom children are observing and copying in the socialization process, forgetting that older children in the playground or siblings at home also loom large in children's social relations. They might also, therefore, play a significant part in the shaping of gender identity.

My observations of children's interactions in some streets of Kénitra, Khemisset, Midelt and Sidi Ifni show that older children play an imported role in the transmission of games and of the techniques to create

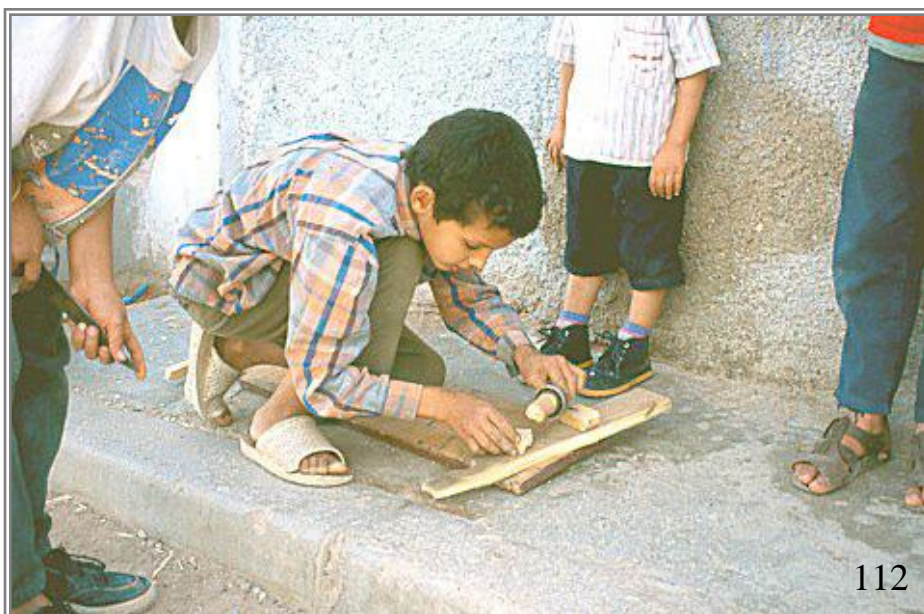
toys on younger children in particular. Situations of informal learning regularly occurred when I made observations but as this did not specifically retain my attention I did not take notes. However, since I read the publications of Barbara Rogoff and Artin Göncü on the active participation of the children in their environment and in the adult world I became aware of this aspect.

One of the four videos filmed in Sidi Ifni in the beginning of 2002 shows a six-year-old boy looking at his ten-year-old brother creating with cardboard a few toys such as a truck, a small house and a device to move a little car (fig. 111). Not only does the younger brother attentively observe and occasionally help the toy maker, but also the latter



regularly directs his brother's attention to the making of a specific part of the toys he is creating (Rossie and Daoumani, 2003, Video 2).

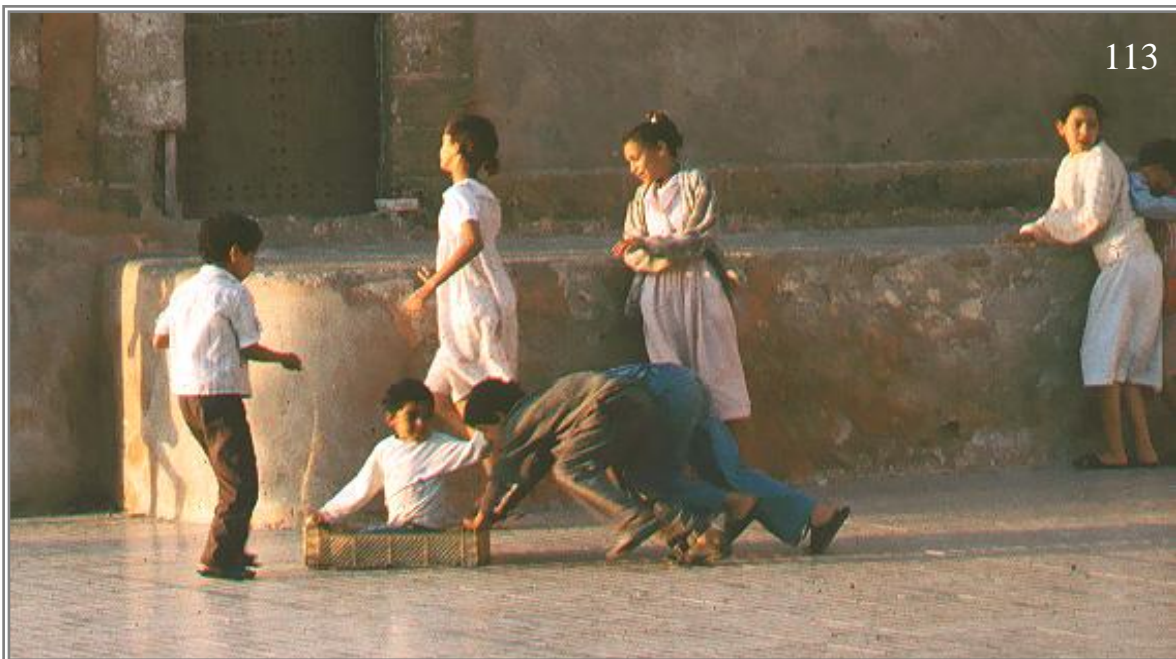
A second example happened in October 2002 also in Sidi Ifni. On the sidewalk of a descending street I saw in the evening two about thirteen-



year-old boys repairing their skateboard with three wheels made of ball bearings (fig. 112). Then they sat down on it to run down the slope at great speed. The next day and the day

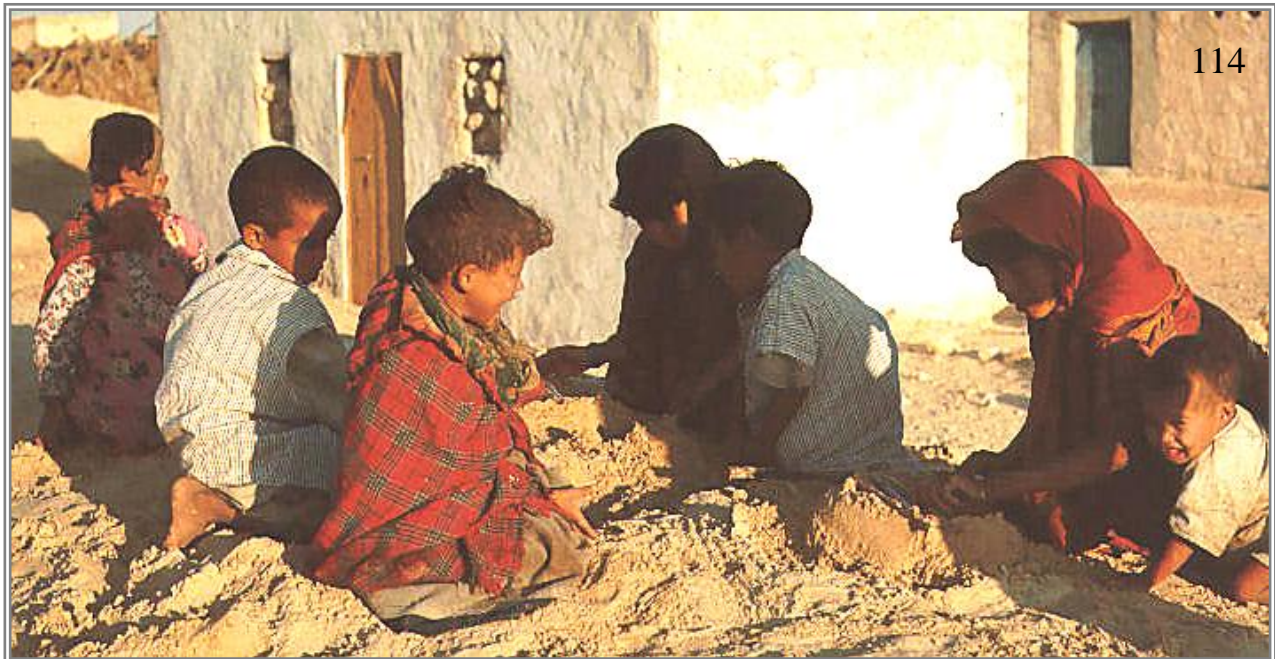
after up to four other boys of about the same age joined them. In this playgroup the first two boys helped their friends not only to make such a skateboard but sometimes also to steer it.

Concerning the playful relation between two to five-year-old children I can stress the role played by older girls and sometimes also older boys. One of the common tasks of girls from the age of about seven years onwards is to look after the little ones, often to give the mother the possibility to fulfill some other task. To do so the girls among other things amuse the little child, offer it an enjoyable experience, play with it, initiates it to a game. When the girl looks after several little ones she may organize a playgroup, the children engaging in parallel or collaborative play. Once they are about six-years-old the children progressively free themselves from this supervision and learn to constitute their own playgroups mostly with peers and often although not exclusively with children of the same sex.



Children's play activities in these regions are mostly collective and outdoor activities (fig. 113). Playgroups are therefore the basic social organizations. They consist of only girls or only boys, seldom of boys and girls together. When girls and boys form a playgroup together they are toddlers or somewhat older children, possibly under the direction of an older girl (fig. 114, p. 136), maybe now and then an older boy. As far as I could observe, playgroups of peers seem to be strong and durable

groups that clearly act as quite autonomous entities and within which a certain hierarchy is elaborated.



The factors for choosing playmates to form a playgroup are primordially based on ties of kinship or neighborhood. This certainly strengthens the cohesion of the playgroups and the bonds between the children, even more than in the case of playgroups composed of schoolmates.

Alice Meckley has analyzed young children's social play construction by studying children's play in a North American nursery classroom. About the nature of the social organization and the verbal and nonverbal communication forms in children's play worlds she writes (1994: 294-295):

All of the young children in this group demonstrate shared knowledge of specific play event enactment, objects used in specific themes, and players' styles. The evidence of this knowledge emerges in their play... children have a repertoire of procedures and techniques for negotiating roles, plans, actions and objects in play... But more important than the knowledge of the parts of play is the shared knowledge of all the play. All groups of children who regularly play together have play events they know and regularly enact; these play events are often unique to this specific class or child culture.

My detailed observation of Ghrib children's playgroups and the more casual observation of Moroccan children's playgroups give me the feeling that the conclusions of Alice Meckley also apply to these playgroups. Yet, it again makes the lack of detailed data on children's play in North Africa and the Sahara strikingly evident.

8 Toys, play, rituals and festivities

As with most aspects of adults' lives, the social, religious and magic rituals and feasts can be appropriated by Saharan and North African children to create play activities. But sometimes the distinction between play and ritual becomes indistinct and the children are directly integrated into ritual life. Then the children really perform a ritual, yet in such cases ritual and play easily mix.

Speaking of the links between play activities and toys, on one side, and of rituals and feasts, on the other side, I should first of all stipulate that this chapter deals much more with play activities in which children interpret certain rituals and some aspects of festivities than with real ritual games. An example is offered by a two and a half-year-old girl from Midelt who spontaneously imitates prayer.

Charles Béart offers in his book *Jeux et Jouets de l'Ouest Africain* a chapter on magic and conjuring in play activities (p. 565-569), on ritual play (p. 571-578) and on the link between games and festivities (p. 578-590). In opposition to other chapters in this book, there is no information on the children of the Tuareg and the Moors. Myself I have only been able to find a few data on these aspects in the play activities of Saharan and North African children.¹

Nevertheless, I found during my research among the Ghib of the Tunisian Sahara some games related to magical and religious life. So, when the Ghib children of the 1970s needed to trace a circle for one of their collective games, e.g. the game of hide and seek, they often imitated a magic ritual for the protection of goods. The girls or the boys stay in one line. While walking they trace a circle in the sand with one foot while singing: "step by step (we make a circle), the one who does not trace the circle, his mother will become ill". When the circle is traced, the one in front of the line starts to run fast along the interior side of the circle. Everybody should try to catch the one before her or him while

¹ More details and photographs are available in the chapter 'Toys, play, rituals and festivities' of my book *Saharan and North African Toy and Play Cultures. Domestic Life in Play, Games and Toys*.

screaming: “the one who catches a playmate, must pinch this playmate”. If a child pinches the playmate too strongly this can provoke a fight. A direct link exists between this way of tracing a circle and the beliefs. Tracing a circle around one’s goods to protect them is something children as well as adults do. An observation I made in El Faouar in November 1975 shows how a little Ghrib girl traces a protecting circle. In the morning, Jamila, a four-year-old girl, and Fatna, a neighbor of about seven years, are looking at some men of their family building a house. Without apparent reason, Jamila starts to trace a circle with her foot as is done for the hide and seek game. At the same time she sings the magic formula to protect goods. Immediately, Fatna follows her in the same tracing. However, the girls do not continue a game but sit down playing in the sand.

Dominique Champault mentions the use of this protecting circle by Belbala children in relation to their household play. She writes that the small houses and their furniture are abandoned by their young owners who will find them undisturbed when they come back some months later. Conscientious owners take the precaution to surround their small house with a circle drawn with their foot, just as adults do to attest their property rights on an object left temporarily in the desert so that it will not be seen as something lost (1969: 349).

In a game the Ghrib children imitate a ritual accomplished when a child takes a long time to start walking. Two older children carry a little child put in a basket from house or tent to the other houses or tents saying before each entrance “carry from door to door, oh my beloved, if this is God’s will, he will walk”, when it is a boy or by saying “carry from door to door, if this is God's will she will collect firewood”, when it is a girl.

There is also the Ghrib children's divination. A boy or a girl playing the role of the male or female soothsayer rolls up a piece of woolen yarn between both hand palms as when making a little ball of clay. If one of the players asked information about an adult of his family then once the yarn is well rolled up, the soothsayer says: “Oh little yarn, oh frizzy! When will the master of the house come home?” The soothsayer, depending on what his or her client wants to know, asks other questions. Then, the soothsayer puts the rolled up yarn on the ground to unroll. If the yarn's end points to the east this is interpreted as an indication that the concerned adult will come home the same day. But if the yarn's end

points to another direction this means that this adult will stay away for some time. The players can agree to give to the other directions a specific meaning, for example in relation to the time of return.

While making some constructions with wet sand in April 1975, the Ghrib boys from the oasis of El Faouar refer to the religious life and magic beliefs of their community when building a mosque or a saint's tomb (fig. 115). The children from Mopti on the Niger River in Mali also build mosques with clay. Jean-Jacques Mandel and Armelle Brenier-Estrine write that these toys are vital symbols written in clay that record the collective memory of the children. The old mosques from that region, reflecting centuries of scholarship, are not made anymore except in clay by the children (1977: 10).



A game played by the Ghrib adolescents and adults about the 1970s, but not by the children, refers to burial rites. This game is called “the one who is dead is really dead”. An adolescent lies stiff on the ground. Four other adolescents must lift him under the shoulders and at the feet but only with their index fingers. Before lifting the dead one, they softly say: “the one who is dead is really dead, how are we going to wash him? We will wash him with the urine of the donkeys”. After these words they try to lift him as high as possible. Yet, a similar burial rite can also arise all of a sudden in the imagination of Moroccan children, as I witnessed in a

street of a popular quarter of Kénitra in August 1993. There I saw how a little child taken by four girls suddenly changes into a dead child that is transported by hands and feet, put on the ground and mourned by the girls shouting “Allah, Allah”.

The data I collected in Morocco and those found in the consulted bibliography offer little information on the relationship between rituals and children's play activities. Nevertheless, the reader will find some information in my book *Saharan and North African Toy and Play Cultures. Children's Dolls and Doll Play*. In this book I discuss children's make belief play in which they enact certain marriage rites, but also rites in relation to delivery, birth, funerals and asking for rain (see 2.14 Female dolls of Morocco, p. 111) as well as in relation to circumcision (see 3.5 Child dolls of Morocco, p. 200). Some games of skill, such as ball games and swing games, were related to rites of attracting rain.

Concerning the link between festivities, games and toys, the Ashûra feast¹ comes to the foreground but the Aïd el Kebir, the feast of the sacrifice, and the Mulud, the commemoration of the birth of the Prophet, also play a role. In this context and especially in Morocco, the Ashûra feast is the most important one because it is then customary to give sweets and presents to children. Ashûra falls on the tenth day of the first month of the Muslim lunar calendar, and the festivities last for ten days starting at the beginning of the month. In *Enfances Maghrébines* Mohamed Dernouny writes that the Ashûra feast gives adults the possibility to offer something to children, an occasion for a truce between them for as long as the festivities last (1987: 27).

¹ Ashûra is the first feast of the Islamic calendar. It comes one month after the Aïd el Kebir, the feast of the sacrifice and two months before the Aïd el Mulud, the commemoration of the birth of the Prophet. From a Sunni religious point of view it only is of minor importance. According to the *Dictionnaire Encyclopédique de l'Islam* (1991: 44) Ashûra is related to the Jewish feasts and the Prophet made it a day for facultative fasting. In North Africa it has greater importance and as Jemma-Gouzon (1991: 257) writes: Ashûra absorbed several rites related to the winter and summer solstice, e.g. the custom of lightning bonfires. It also absorbed rituals related to women, children, fertility and death. Following my observations of children's play activities during the Ashûra period in Central and Southern Morocco the most important activities are the making of music and singing, and the throwing or spraying of water.

That this custom is not limited to Morocco is proven by Dominique Champault who writes about the Belbala from the Algerian Sahara in the 1960s that the children receive little presents for Ashûra (1969: 147).

Today in Morocco, the parents and sometimes other members of the family buy one or more toys for the children or give them some money. When I was in Morocco during the Ashûra feast of 1994, the markets in the popular quarters of Rabat, Kénitra, Marrakech or Midelt, and certainly also those in the other towns, were overflowed with toys, often plastic toys. The water pistols and guns for the boys and the beauty sets for the girls seemed to be in fashion. Most of these quite cheap toys come from China, Hong Kong and Taiwan. But there still are next to the plastic music instruments also those made locally. The boys and the girls use these music instruments especially for their door-to-door begging organized during Ashûra. In Sidi Ifni during the Ashûra feast of March 2003 I have nevertheless observed that the children rhythm their singing by hitting small pottery drums and often do this without any begging for sweets or pennies. Especially the girls sing in small groups while clapping hands and shouting joyously. In this town it certainly was the most common play activity during the whole Ashûra period.

Information from the village Ksar Assaka near Midelt in Central Morocco and referring to the 1970s tells that girls and boys go in separate groups to beg from door to door for small presents in kind or in money. Each group forms a small orchestra to accompany the songs sung for Ashûra. The children try to enter quietly in a home to surprise the occupants with an unexpected and noisy appearance. A man from this village born in 1968 added that in his youth the group of boys between eight and twelve years formed a small orchestra with a violin or guitar player and tambourine players and that one of them became a masked figure. One of the boys wears a beard cut from a sheep or goatskin and puts a cushion or a blanket under his clothes to have a protruded belly. The boys' group goes from home to home to sing and perform a masquerade, this way obtaining wheat, sugar, etc.

Information provided by my Moroccan female and male informants or based on my own observations, shows that there is another play activity directly linked to the Ashûra feast, namely the spraying of water. Pierre Flamand confirms this for southern Morocco in the 1950s when writing that the adults and even more the children spray each other in the streets

and also in the houses hiding their water-sprayer behind their back. Almost half of the children possess such a water-sprayer. They use it for Pentecost among the Jews and for Ashûra among the Muslims (research from 1948 till 1958, p. 151). This play activity is also mentioned for the Aït Ouirra of the Moyen Atlas by Lahcen Oubahammou who notes that during Ashûra people throw water at each other without taking care of wasting water (1987: 87-88).

The data I collected on the spraying of water during Ashûra in the village Ksar Assaka near Midelt refer to three successive generations: grandparents, their children and their grandchildren. The concerned children are those of the 1950s and the 1970s together with the children of today. The children from the 1950s as well as those of the 1970s could permit themselves a lot of liberties when throwing water on children and adults. Two anecdotes are revealing in this respect. About 1950, during Ashûra, some more or less ten-year-old girls took an older woman and together simply plunged her into the water of a small irrigation canal. This woman did not protest against this treatment and other adults did not show any reprobation.

About twenty-nine years later, during the Ashûra of 1979 or 1980, a group of girls and boys of about eleven years entered the mosque, took the pots filled with water serving to perform the ablutions before praying and went on the flat roof. There they waited until someone passed by. A few minutes later, a man arrived with his mule loaded with a huge pack of herbs. The moment he passed before the mosque, the girls and the boys throw all the water on him and his mule. As the man lost control over his mule, the pack of herbs fell on the ground. In this case also, the man did not show bad feelings and the children came down from the roof to help him to put all the herbs back on the mule.

Those who told me these two anecdotes said they thought adults would not tolerate today such a behavior or that they would react angrily. In Midelt and during the Ashûra of April 2001, the children's spraying of water has changed into spraying water with a water-pistol or a water-gun bought in the market or in a local shop. Although such water-pistols and water-guns were sold during the Ashûra of March 2003 in Sidi Ifni boys and girls more often used plastic bottles and especially plastic bags filled with water used as water bombs during their water fights in the evening.

The last evening of Ashûra on 14 March 2003 was without any doubt the climax when at nightfall bands of children engaged in a real water battle.

In Morocco, the toy industry has found in the Ashûra festivities in general and in the water spraying in particular, a promising situation to sell their toys. These last years, water-pistols and water-guns have been added to the musical toys, the toy beauty sets, the toy utensils and the toy weapons. Moreover, the selling of water-pistols is not limited to the Ashûra period as I have seen a twenty-eight-year-old mother from Ksar Assaka buying for her three-year-old daughter such a plastic water-pistol in the Midelt market for the occasion of the Aïd el Kebir feast of March 2000.

Ashûra also incorporates rites of fire as indicated by F. Castells in his "Note sur la fête de Achoura à Rabat" published in 1916. This author writes that at nightfall and before eating couscous a straw fire is lighted in the middle of the yard of each house. Around this fire lighted candles are placed and the women and children sing around the fire while playing on an oblong small drum. Everyone, but the children especially, joyfully jump through the smoke. The ashes of the sacred fire contain much benediction. They are rubbed on the eyes of the children to protect them against illnesses (p. 334). In the beginning of the 1920s and in the valley of the Oued Sebou, one of the important Moroccan rivers passing north of Fès and Sidi Kacem and flowing into the Atlantic near Kénitra, the children took firebrands smeared with tallow that once lighted are thrown from one child to the other child in some places outside the village. According to Biarnay, this game caused many accidents (1924: 84).

Although I did not find in the consulted bibliography nor in my own data any other reference on Moroccan games linked to fire, my observations in Sidi Ifni in March 2003 show that this relation between Ashûra and games linked to fire still exists in this country. During the first evening of Ashûra I saw a group of about ten children between five and ten years and with almost as many girls as boys staying around a small fire encircled with stones while being observed by a mother standing on her doorstep in a small street. In this fire kept burning by the children with newspaper pages they set on fire their own long piece of Jex, being steel wool used to clean pots. Once the end of the piece becomes red hot the child turns it around quickly using his arm like a mill's sail. When everything goes well numerous sparks flow around like

in fireworks and all those being too close jump away. Sometimes a child takes a newspaper page that just starts to burn and runs around with it.

Looking forward to be able to do some more observations of the Sidi Ifni children during Ashûra in March 2004 I was astonished there were no children throwing water bags or lightning fires in the streets but only children playing drums and singing. Asking a few adults what happened I was told that the local authorities have forbidden the throwing of water bags and the lightning of fires because some adults complained about their nuisance.

Dominique Champault describes a similar rite of fire for the Belbala children of the Algerian Sahara in the 1960s. She says that during the Ashûra feast the children wildly run around some time before sunset dragging a bundle of firewood kept together with palm-leaflets. This bundle is lighted by a child who drags it for a moment, then hands it over to another child and so on until the bundle is completely burned. Normally, only boys do this but little girls beneath the age of ten may take over the bundle. Adults view this play activity as a rite of purification of the whole oasis, yet the children must be careful not to drop ashes on the paths where people walk because ashes attract the *jnun* or spirits (1969: 147).

Especially for the Mulud, the feast of the commemoration of the Prophet's birth, the boys of the small towns of Goulmima and Tinejdad in Central Morocco make little windmills. Normally this is only done at this occasion. Sometimes boys make these windmills to sell them for about 1 dirham (0.1 EUR). The simple windmill has one sail, but I saw in the same towns also some windmills with two parallel sails turning in opposite directions.

As I noticed in Midelt and surrounding villages, the boys still make these windmills nowadays. At the time of the Mulud of June 2000, I observed in a village just outside Midelt a boy of about ten years making such a windmill. However, I did not see then any windmill in a neighboring village and a few adults told me that the children of their village did not play with them anymore.

Still, another ten-year-old boy from the Aït Mansour quarter in Midelt showed me the windmills he made (fig. 116). In order to make the sail turn the boys, and rarely the girls, run with it very fast. However, it seems that girls playing with such windmills were not that exceptional even if they did not make these toys themselves.

A woman from Ksar Assaka near Midelt clearly remembers that her father made for her and her sisters this type of toy windmill when they were small girls in the 1970s. The impression prevails that today fewer children run with a windmill than ten years ago.

As happens with other traditional toys, the self-made windmill or the one made by adults seems to be replaced by small plastic windmills whose handle is filled with sweets.

I should mention Pierre Flamand's detailed description of some games and toys linked to Jewish life in the 1950s. These games and toys mostly refer to children's play activities in the Jewish Mellahs of Southern Morocco for the Purim feast (research from 1948 to 1958, p. 201-204).



At the end of this chapter, I want to stress that in a Western European context children may enjoy the playful enactment of rituals and festive events as was the case with my own children who about 1970 liked to play St. Nicholas (fig. 117, p. 148) and Epiphany (fig. 118, p. 148).



9 Toys, play and change

In this chapter I shall first discuss the topic of changing childhood in an North African and Saharan context, illustrated with a microscopic analysis of the changes occurring in several aspects of children's lives between the childhood of a grandmother, her daughters and her grandchildren in a Central Moroccan area between 1940 and 2000. Then, examples from my fieldwork among children from Morocco and the Tunisian Sahara will illustrate several factors influencing their toys and play activities through internal influences such as sedentarization, moving from village to town, devalorization of the mother tongue, schooling, gender differentiation, adult interference, and/or external influences such as emigration, tourism, television, toy and entertainment industries, high tech, and the consumer society.¹

The historical perspective in my fieldwork is limited to three generations. Nevertheless, I suggest that it offers, by studying children's play, games and toys, a useful approach to recent evolution and change, looking backward through the memories of adults and looking forward through the children's elaboration of their future. Information from the bibliography and museum collection enlarges this period that spans the whole twentieth century.

¹ This chapter is an updated version of the text I wrote when invited to the congress *Changing Childhood in the World and in Turkey*, organized by the Center for Research on Child Culture, Faculty of Educational Sciences, Ankara University, 16-18.10.2000 and published in the proceedings of this congress (Rossie, 2001).

9.1 Changing North African and Saharan childhoods

Although it is neither easy nor simple to evoke the evolution of North African and Saharan childhood from a traditional way of life to the actual way of life, I shall try to point out some major factors that influenced and still influence childhood and at the same time the play activities and toys of children from these regions. There are at least two reasons why this is a difficult task. The first reason is that one speaks about an ongoing process, whereby it probably is impossible to say how tradition should be defined and where and when it comes to an end. For example is it the introduction of the money-economy, European domination, modern transport, schooling, radio, television, electricity, new religious or political systems that alone or in combination have changed childhood decisively? The second reason is to be found in the fact that the North African and Saharan populations show such diversity, within as well as between countries, that speaking of these topics in general quickly leads to vague and biased assertions. Moreover, one should not forget that childhood is just a hollow word if not specified according to children's concrete life.

Nevertheless, I want to put forward some statements concerning childhood that as far as I know are valid for most North African and Saharan populations:

- A traditional childhood undisturbed by local and foreign influences must be as good as non-existent in Africa, influenced as it is by Islamization, Christianization, Westernization, sedentarization, urbanization, modern education, mass media, disasters of natural and human origin, etc.
- The importance of customary socializers and socializing institutions that support the children's development, such as the extended family, is fading away more or less quickly because of changes leading to disruption and to greater individualization, but also to greater vulnerability.
- The above mentioned influences on African childhood interfere with or hinder the transmission of the way of life, including the toy and play culture, between adults and children but also between older children and younger ones.

- As the beliefs, norms, values, attitudes and practices of the adults constantly adapt to new challenges but also can be seriously disrupted by them, the “cultural routines for children's development” become destabilized.¹
- The quite autonomous extended family system in which African children traditionally grew up has often been broken down as new agents of socialization came to the foreground, the state controlled youth centers and the European school system in particular (for a discussion of the influence of the European school system see Lancy, 1996: 185-196).
- However, changing childhood seems only slightly to have affected the difference in attitude towards girls and boys, giving less liberty and more hardship to girls than to boys.
- Notwithstanding the factors of change it can be said that the values, norms and attitudes towards children among rural and popular class families do more adequately resist change and so up to now have been less fundamentally affected than is the case in other spheres of life like technology, economy or law.²
- The authority of parents and family elders, although sometimes criticized in private, is seldom openly questioned.
- The role of peers and peer groups remains very important even if the influence they exert has been subjected to change.
- Although the form and content of children's play activities have changed, several basic characteristics still hold, characteristics such as being mostly outdoor activities, collective activities, autonomous activities without adult interference, activities only slightly dependent on external resources such as the toy industry, and realistic play activities that are linked to real life not to worlds of fantasy.

¹ I here refer to the important book of David F. Lancy, 1996, *Playing on the Mother-Ground. Cultural Routines for Children's Development*.

² An interesting example of the continuing influence of traditional child care among the Samburu and Turkana of Kenya as well as of its adaptation to changing childhood situations, is found in the Lmwate system in which grandmothers and also traditional play activities, songs, poems and stories play a crucial role. See Bouma Joanna, 2000. This example of informal education is briefly described in chapter 11.1 *Pedagogical and cultural action in developing countries* (p. 201-202).

- With enlarging exceptions, the toys and the other play material remain of local origin and are made or found by the children themselves.
- The toy industry with its sophisticated female and male dolls, Tamagochis and electronic toys, has not yet been able to really infiltrate the play world of most African children, except those of the upper class.¹

The Moroccan author A. Radi wrote in the 1980s that the family, this central, dynamic, omnipotent and omnipresent institution before colonization, ossified and on the defensive under the protectorate, is overflowed, snowed under and finally on the point of being overtaken on the morrow of independence when this last stronghold is giving in to the different pressures, especially the ones exercised from the interior by the new generations seeing no longer any justification for the reserves and resistances of their elders towards the ongoing transformations (1987: 62).

I could offer some generalizing examples of changes in children's lives based on my own experience of changing childhood in Central Morocco in the 1990s and in the Tunisian Sahara in the 1970s (see Rossie, 1993: 194-195). However, I am convinced that a microscopic analysis of the changes occurring in several aspects of children's lives between the childhood of an Amazigh grandmother, her daughters and her grandchildren although very limited in scope offers a better insight. This evolution in childhood bridges a period of sixty years and it took place in an around the small town of Midelt in Central Morocco between 1940 and 2000.

¹ A special number of the Moroccan review *Enjeux* on the toy trade, published in 1993, shows that this upper class, stimulated by the audio-visual media, undoubtedly is started of on whatever is the fashion in Europe. One reads in this review that a contagion similar to a cultural transfer exists of which the best example is that of the famous Barbie doll. Nowadays, a little Moroccan girl of good family needs to have the whole outfit, the Barbie house with its furniture, the complete set of Barbie dresses, Barbie's Ferrari and her fiancé. Something with what to create a world conform to the Occidental cultural stereotypes. The same phenomenon exists among the boys but the fashions are different. Nowadays robots of the Terminator kind are the best sold ("Le marché du jouet", 1993: 35-36).

CHANGES IN CHILDHOOD OVER THREE GENERATIONS WITHIN A CENTRAL MOROCCAN RURAL FAMILY, MIDELT REGION, 1940-2000				
Changes in Childhood	Grandmother	Mother (A)	Mother (B)	Mother (C)
Born	In 1940 at home	In 1962 at home	In 1968 at home	In 1973 at home
Magical practices (1)	Fully applied during childhood			
Medical care (2)	No			
Children actual Child planned	9 0	3 0	2 0	1 0
Children death before age 12	2	0	0	0
Age at marriage (3)	14 year	18 year	15 year	17 year
Ethnic tattoo (4)	All	No	No	No
Used language	Local Amazigh language (5)			
Living place	House with garden in small village			
Mobility	No change in living place till marriage	Moving from French lead mining center to small town, then to small village	Moving from French lead mining center to small town, then to small village	Moving from small town to small village
House members	Parents, children, paternal and maternal aunt	Parents, children, maternal grandmother when widow		
Water supply	Well outside or in irrigation canal	Well in house		
Electricity	No			
Television (6)	No	From 14 years	From 7 years	From 3 years
Toys	Only traditional mostly selfmade toys	Traditional mostly selfmade toys with very few exceptions (7)		
Schooling	No	Till 5th year of primary school	Till 5th year of primary school	Till 5th year of primary school
Distance from home to school	-	Primary school: Year 1-2:10' Year 3-5:1h	Primary school: Year 1-2: ½ h Year 3-5:1 h	Primary school: Year 1-3:10' Year 4-5:1h

CHANGES IN CHILDHOOD OVER THREE GENERATIONS WITHIN A CENTRAL MOROCCAN RURAL FAMILY, MIDELET REGION, 1940-2000

Changes in Childhood	Son of mother (A)	Daughter of mother (A)	Daughter of mother (A)
Born	In 1981 at hospital	In 1985 at hospital	In 1988 at hospital
Magical practices (1)	Applied first 40 days		
Medical care (2)	Yes		
Wished age at marriage	- (3)	20 years at earliest	20 years at earliest
Ethnic tattoo (4)	No		
Used language	Local Moroccan Arabic (5)		
Living place	House without garden in small town		
Mobility	No change in living place		
House members	Grandparents, parents, children, till few years ago also two unmarried sisters of the father		
Water supply	Well in house		
Electricity	Yes		
Television (6)	From birth		
Toys	Almost no traditional and no selfmade toys but market or shop bought plastic toys, mostly imported toys (8)		
Schooling	Till 4th year of secondary school	Starting 4 th year of secondary school	Starting 5th year of primary school
Distance from home to school	Primary: 10' Secondary: 1h	Primary: 10' Secondary: 1h	Primary: 10'

CHANGES IN CHILDHOOD OVER THREE GENERATIONS WITHIN A CENTRAL MOROCCAN RURAL FAMILY, MIDELT REGION, 1940-2000			
Changes in Childhood	Son of mother (B)	Son of mother (B)	Daughter of mother (C)
Born	In 1987 at hospital	In 1989 at hospital	In 1997 at hospital
Magical practices (1)	Applied first 40 days		
Medical care (2)	Yes		
Wished age at marriage	- (3)	- (3)	-
Ethnic tattoo (4)	No		
Used language	Local Moroccan Arabic (5)		
Living place	House without garden in small town till divorce (1990), house with garden in small village till 9 and 7 years, then house without garden in town		House in town (18 m), house in village (6 m), to other town, back to same village
Mobility	Small town - village - other small village - same town	Village - other small village - small town	Big town - small village - small town - same village
House members	Parents, children until divorce (1990), then grandmother, mother, boys, two unmarried maternal aunts, and two unmarried maternal uncles till 1998		Grandparents, parents, child, now no grand-parents (2000)
Water supply	Public fountain in street of small town, well in village house, running water in small town house		Running water in town houses, well inside village house
Electricity	Yes in town, no in village		Yes
Television (6)	From 5 years	From 3 years	From birth
Toys	Mostly traditional and selfmade toys until moving to town (9)		Rare traditional and few imported plastic toys (10)
Schooling	Starting 1th year of secondary school	Starting 4th year of primary school	-
Distance from home to school	Primary: 10' Secondary: 1h	Primary: 10' Secondary: 1h	Primary: 10'

Notes

1. Magical practices related to pregnancy, birth and childhood; during the first forty days of its life the child is seen as particularly vulnerable to negative influences and is covered when leaving home. During the ceremony of the 40th day the baby is introduced to the outside world, e.g. by bringing it outside uncovered, opening its eyes to the sun and naming everything to it, the good deeds and things as well as the bad ones.
2. Medical care: medical help at giving birth, postnatal medical care, vaccination, medical control during first years of life.
3. Boys marry late and seldomly before their 25 years due to lack of (sufficient) income and difficulty in financing the bridewealth, the marriage ceremony and the possible housing.
4. According to the grandmother the girls of her generation asked themselves for the ethnic tattoos when they were about 13 years. She also said that she and her sisters did not want to continue this tradition for their daughters because the way of life had changed.
5. The mothers did speak local Moroccan Arabic, Derija, to their children since their birth but with people of their own and older generations they continue to speak the local Amazigh language. The grandparents also speak Moroccan Arabic with their grandchildren. Although the youngsters of the third generation understand the local Amazigh language quite well, they do not speak it and they often show a negative attitude towards it.
6. In the small village watching television was restricted as it worked on batteries until the providing of electricity in 1997.
7. At the French mining center some imported toys were available. One example is the plastic cat with wheels and a turnable head. The traditional toys made by adults are next to the top, some drums given to girls and boys for the ten days long Ashura festivities.
8. The children of this family living since birth in an outside quarter of Midelt declare that they do not make toys themselves. There are a few plastic toys, especially dolls for the girls.
9. Since they have moved to Midelt, both boys have dropped almost completely the making of traditional toys, especially different kinds of vehicles and some toy-weapons. In this small town the oldest boy bought himself a cheaper Asian electronic game in 1999.

10. This little girl has two plastic dolls and a plastic water gun. Being back in their village of origin, the father made for the Ashura festivities of 2000 a little bendir-drum for his daughter and the mother a reed-flute.

**Trends of change in children's lives in
Central Moroccan rural families:**

1. Since one or two decades giving birth at hospital has become the rule, as is medical care for infants and vaccination; all things that really were exceptional in the generations before 1980.
2. Although the belief in magical forces and evil influences still exists, the use of magic in childhood has been largely limited to babies' early life and to periods of illness.
3. The number of children in a nuclear family has clearly dropped between the generation of the grandmother and the present generation of women of reproductive age.
4. The marriage of the girls of the second generation has somewhat been delayed but the planned age for the marriage of the girls of the third generation shows the actual mothers' wish for postponing the marriage age of their daughters.
5. The girls of the grandmother's generation have been the last to bear the ethnic tattoos but they have dropped this custom in relation to their own daughters.
6. Since one or two decades mothers, especially those moving to town, have often interrupted the use of the local Amazigh language as they did choose to speak Moroccan Arabic to their children. This change in language is accompanied by the loss of an important part of the original cultural heritage, especially the oral literature, songs, music and dances, which are only replaced by a limited Moroccan Arabic heritage transmitted by Amazigh-speaking parents, the television, the school.
7. I have noticed in the last decade an important rural desertion coupled with a growing urbanization of villages situated near a town, bringing with it the availability of electricity and plastic toys, and a tendency of the children to use Moroccan Arabic among themselves and with

their parents. For example, the household of the grandmother, the mother (B) and her two sons left their village in 1996 to go to live in a popular quarter of Midelt. A few months before that the household of a maternal aunt had left too and somewhat later paternal relatives did the same.

8. Only the childhood of the grandmother and of her brother and sisters has taken place in one and the same village. The childhood of her daughters, sons and grandchildren shows a move between rural and urban areas or a straightforward urbanization. In any case mobility became part of these children's life.
9. Limitation of the household members to the nuclear family, although sought after especially by daughters in law, remains often a wish due to economic reasons (unemployment or low income of the married son, expensive rent for housing facilities in towns), and/or due to the absence of the married son (being soldier or working far away). Brides and young mothers often live with their parents in law and this regularly causes tensions leading to the breaking up of the young couple whereby the bride, sometimes already after a few months, or the young mother returns to her parents. She is then asked by her husband and/or parents in law to come back or a divorce procedure is started. After divorcing the divorced woman normally returns to her own parental home. According to Moroccan law the children belong to the father and his family but one merely notices that the divorced mother often takes her children with her, on a voluntarily basis or being obliged to do so.
10. The availability of running water, of electricity and of whole day television is linked to urbanization but because of the campaign for the electrification of villages these last years the urban world has come closer to the villages. Before electricity came to the villages the television was working on regularly charged car batteries.
11. In small towns but also in rural areas the growing role of external influences, such as medical care, schooling, television, Moroccan Arabic, internal and external tourism, marriage with emigrants living in Europe or with Europeans, comes to the foreground during these last fifteen years.

12. The last twenty-five years, literacy and basic schooling has become the rule in this area with a clear tendency to extend schooling into the secondary level and sometimes even beyond.
13. The last fifteen years, a clear shift from traditional self-made or adult made toys to bought industrial toys is linked to urbanization but in the last few years it also appears in villages near small towns like Midelt. This evolution promotes the dependency of the children on their adult relatives and stimulates an attitude of seeing toys as gifts. Moreover, the small range of available cheap industrial toys, regularly of bad quality, contrasts with the very wide range of toys made by the children themselves. Yet, the fascination for and the status of these few plastic toys can destroy the children's will to create toys with local material.

This half a century of change in children's life within a rural Moroccan family reveals that several factors show a growing individualization of the children, factors such as a smaller number of children in nuclear families, individualized health care, greater importance of schooling, loosening of collective practices, later age of a girl's marriage, urbanization, etc. Some factors point to the growing influence of the mass media, especially television and video, of publicity campaigns and schooling, but also of tourism, all promoting Westernized ideas and attitudes by underlining the importance of individual achievement and consumption.¹

¹ The industry and services closely or distantly related to childhood make a real effort to change the values and attitudes of the Moroccan middle class, stimulating directly the individuality of their children and youngsters, and at the same time their insertion in the Western way of life. So doing, their participation in post-industrial culture and in the consumer society is strongly promoted, as clearly signified in the photomontage serving as flashy eye-catcher of the publicity material for a children's fair but also by trying to convince the parents of the necessity of their products and services for the optimal physical and psychological development of their children. It is from this point of view and following the French advertisement quoted below in translation, that the first edition of the Salon de l'Enfant is organized in Agadir from July 12 till September 30, 2000. Co-organized by Eve Communication and Grama Pub, with the collaboration of the Province of Agadir, the City Council and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, this fair took place at the Espace Atlantic, an ideal spot newly created to organize specific manifestations. Facing the Agadir Corniche at a strategic spot, this exhibition hall is well situated for expositions during the summer holidays or for a children's fair for children between two and eighteen

Other factors put a wished or unwished restriction on this individualization, factors such as the living together with grandparents and sometimes other relatives, the lack of individual private space in housing facilities, the still important role of strict paternal authority, the authoritarian school system. Yet, all adults mentioned in the microscopic analysis state that the authority of the adults over children surely has diminished and that children have acquired a greater ability to challenge this authority and to resist formerly automatic corporal punishment in case of disobedience.

years. A first part consists of an exposition of products and services. The second part consists of a 7,000 m² amusement park of which 1,500 m² serves as another exposition hall. In this hall several firms from the food, toy, clothing, electronic equipment and educational play sectors present their new products. A children's fashion show is organized with the integration of several children. Activities and games are also available. Other child related activities are programmed such as meetings between professionals of the concerned sectors, professional buyers, parents and children as to create the opportunity for giving suggestions and to participate in the success of the happening. The principal goal of this fair is to offer children a space for free expression, for letting off steam and for learning in an adapted environment. The project also inscribes itself in the promotion of tourism in Agadir. The children will be the first beneficiaries as an area of encounter for the children of the Kingdom's different regions is created. At the same time the regional associations promoting children's rights will have the opportunity to make themselves known. Several journalists have been invited to closely monitor this event. Announced on the website News Central - Toute l'actualité marocaine 24h sur 24h en langue française, <http://news.central.co.ma/promo/planete/default.asp>, consulted on 9.8.2000.

The heading for this advertisement of a Salon de l'Enfant, organized for the first time in Agadir but not the first one in Morocco as there already was a *Premier Salon de l'Enfant* in Casablanca between December 16th and 26th, 1993, shows diagonally and from top to bottom a boy of about twelve years, a girl of about ten years dressed and moving her arms like a cheer-leader of an American football team and another boy of about five years, both boys having an electronic toy in their hand.

What also seems significant to me is that the promoters of this children's fair put forward as the principal utility of their project for the children themselves the availability of an area of encounter for children of the different Moroccan regions, as if the natural environment of the sunny Agadir beach has become inadequate for this purpose.

9.2 Changing toys and play in Morocco and the Tunisian Sahara

Children's play activities and toys are an important part of childhood, so the changes affecting the growing up of children also influence their play culture. In this section I shall mention some toys and play activities that exemplify their evolution, especially dolls and doll play, and toys and play related to means of transport and technology; toys and play activities that I found during my fieldwork among children from Morocco and the Tunisian Sahara.

The factors of change are schooling, gender differentiation, adult interference, television, emigration, tourism, industrialization and consumer society.

My first example of the evolution of female dolls, largely the most common dolls in North Africa and the Sahara, comes from the Ghrib, a population of some 5,000 people in 1975 and living in the Tunisian Sahara. This Ghrib community, which changed from a nomadic way of life before 1960 to a semi-nomadic lifestyle in the 1970s, has nowadays completely settled down. The evolution of the girls' female dolls took place in a period of fifteen years, between 1975 and 1990. The traditional dolls represent a bride and have a stereotype frame of two crossed sticks, but their clothes made of all kinds of rags individualize them. The jewels they wear are a replication of those a girl receives from her future husband but they are made out of iron wire, pieces of tin cans and aluminum fragments. Finally, the dolls wear two plaits of goat-hair that hang before the ears, just as married women do, and one or more pieces of clothes serve as kerchief.

In the oasis of El Faouar where most of the Ghrib have settled, some brothers going to the primary school designed in 1975 facial features on the dolls their illiterate sisters had made. Traditionally, these dolls do not have such features and the Ghrib girls respected this norm. Nevertheless, the girls did not oppose their brothers' spontaneous action and some girls even tried clumsily to do the same (fig. 7 left, p. 25).

Some fifteen years later, in 1991, the facial features now designed by the school going girls themselves are well elaborated (fig. 86, p. 95). At that moment, another innovation in the making of female dolls came into being whereby the Ghrib girls made use of one of the waste products of

the consumer society, a consumer society that has succeeded in integrating the Ghib community to an increasing extent. This waste product is an empty plastic flask that serves as the doll's head by putting it over a vertical stick. The girl who made this doll has designed an elaborated face on the flask. Gilbert J. M. Claus told me that the Ghib girls actually also make doll heads cut out in a piece of cardboard or whole dolls of textile fabrics.¹

The second example of the slow but inevitable evolution of female dolls is located in the city of Marrakech in Southern Morocco. In Marrakech girls of all social milieus commonly made until the Second World War the traditional female doll with a frame of reed. A doll that, as everywhere in North Africa and the Sahara, almost always represents a bride. In the more or less better off milieus of Marrakech, the traditional doll became rare after 1950. In the beginning of the 1970s, the daughters of a primary schoolmistress played with imported dolls they dressed with the clothes of a small child or those their mother or they themselves made (fig. 71, p. 80). According to the necessities of their fantasy play, the doll was dressed as a baby, a young girl or a young woman and she was called by the name Sofia or Yasmina. The evolution of the traditional doll, with an armature of reed and made by the girls themselves, towards the plastic doll, nowadays purchased in local markets or little shops for about 6 dirham (0.6 EUR), seems to have started several decades ago, probably after the second world war at least in the more important towns.

In the popular quarters of Marrakech, the doll with a frame of reed and without facial features survived much longer. In a really poor quarter of the city (Douar Akioud) most of the girls still played with this traditional doll around 1980. But a young woman of 21 years in 1992 and living in the same quarter already played at the end of the 1970s with an imported plastic doll. This woman, now skilled in the embellishment of hands and feet with traditional henna-designs, was so kind as to show me how she transformed, as a girl of about nine years old, the plastic doll from Hong Kong, China or elsewhere (fig. 33, p. 36) into a real bride of Marrakech (fig. 34, p. 36).

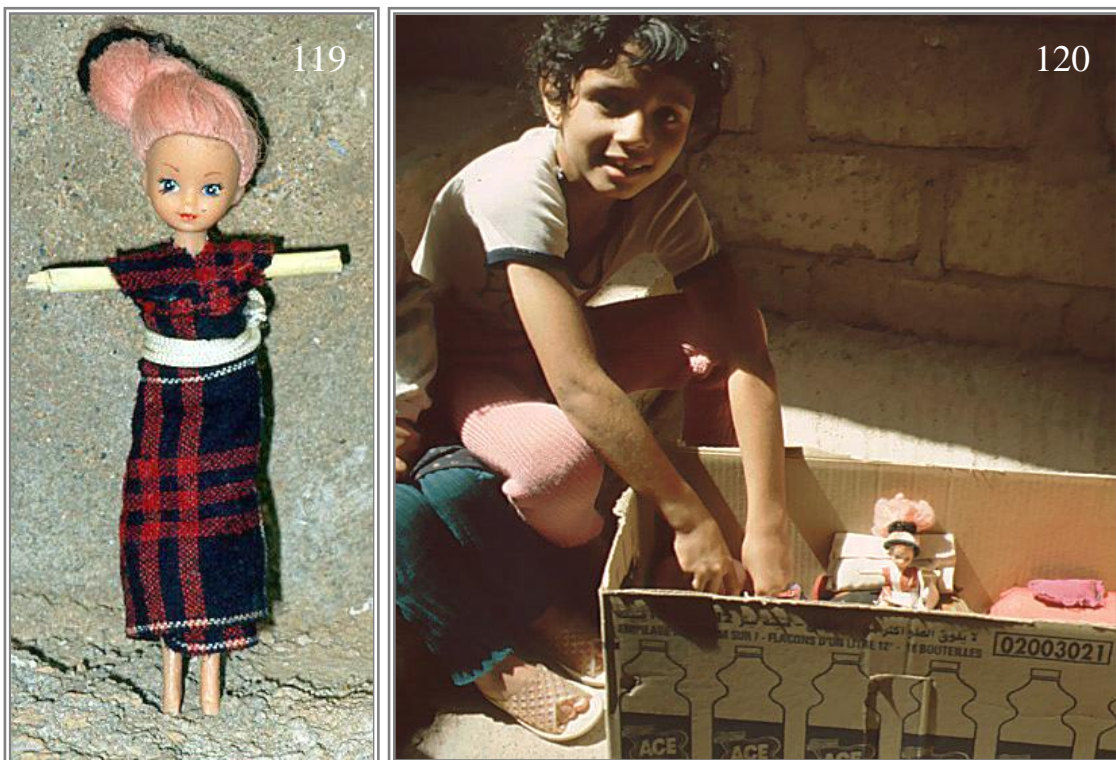
¹ Information obtained from Gilbert J. M. Claus in 1990 and 1991. All the information on the Ghib from 1978 onwards comes from Dr. Gilbert J. M. Claus, Department of African Languages and Cultures, University of Ghent, Ghent, Belgium.

Not only in Marrakech, but also in other Moroccan towns such as Kénitra, Khemisset, Midelt and Sidi Ifni, the locally made doll has been replaced by imported plastic dolls. In Sidi Ifni, a small town on the South Moroccan Atlantic coast, girls still played about 1985 with self-made dolls having a frame of reed. Nowadays, the little girls play with an imported plastic doll. In November 1998, I could observe in this town a six-year-old girl playing with her cheap plastic doll before her house's entrance. But even if the self-made doll has been replaced by a plastic doll, the other items used in the doll play seem to have remained unchanged. So, this girl placed her plastic doll in a dollhouse, the little square of paving stones on top of the stairs leading to the door, and as utensils she used a miniature wooden table with on top a few oil can stoppers filled with water and representing cups of tea. This example reveals a specific feature of the relationship between continuity and change in children's play in these regions. This characteristic can be described as *partial change* whereby part of the play activity and the play material is modernized and other parts remain directly linked to the traditional way of playing. Other examples can be found in the replacement of round stones by marbles, in making a dollhouse with a cardboard box instead of delimiting with stones a miniature house on the ground, or in replacing the water-throwing toy formerly made with reed by the children themselves by a plastic water-pistol or water-gun. This practice of water throwing on passing by persons is directly linked to the rituals of the yearly Ashûra festivity in which pre-Islamic agricultural rituals continue to exist as will be discussed in chapter 8. This partial change however is not limited to introducing new toys, it can also appear in the make believe context of the game as when boys from the Tunisian Sahara added to their traditional fight activity the context of a fight between Muslims and Christians after they had seen an Arabic film about the Crusades on television at the end of the 1980s.

Where there is a partial change in a play activity there is of course at the same time a partial continuity of tradition. Yet, a partial continuity can also occur when playing with a toy made by the toy industry. That is what happened in 1997 when a six-year-old boy from a Central Moroccan village had the axle of his toy truck broken. To fix his miniature truck he just used the skills learned by making toys himself and replaced the broken iron axle by an adequate stick. Something similar

happened when a girl from Zaïda, a village near Midelt, used a piece of reed to replace the lost arms of her Barbie-like doll (fig. 119).

This partial change is the most common way through which evolution occurs whereas a total change in play activity and toys is more seldom and therefore giving examples is not so easy. I can refer here to the telephone game of the Ghib boys in the 1970s at a moment that the only telephone in the oasis was to be found in the police station. I can also mention the introduction of cheap electronic games and the appearance of teddies in children's arms.



A real novelty for rural Morocco are, as far as I know, the dollhouse and the bride doll with which two eight-year-old girls from the village Zaïda, on the road from Meknès to Midelt and at 40 km from this last town, were playing in September 1999. The mother of one of the girls, whose husband is a primary school teacher, clearly stated that she does not want her daughter to play outside in the dirt. Probably because of this interdiction, the girl invented a dollhouse that overcomes her mother's objections. The dollhouse is a cardboard box with four little windows and a door, cut out in the four sides, decorated with curtains at the inside (fig. 120). It also contains a few self-made cushions and some rags serving as carpets or blankets. This girl, together with a girl living next door and

having the same kind of dollhouse, often plays at marriage with such a dollhouse and a bride doll. The bride doll is as peculiar as the dollhouse. It is an imported plastic doll of the Barbie type sold in local shops but normally serving as a decorative object for which a woman or an older girl crochets an Andalusian dress (fig. 6, p. 22). With some rags both girls created a dress for their doll. However, when playing with such foreign plastic dolls local doll-making skills can still be useful. Looking more closely at the doll I noticed the original way in which one of the girls has replaced the missing arms of her doll with a piece of reed in the way arms are given to traditional dolls (fig. 119, p. 164).

In Moroccan rural villages one finds today the self-made doll as well as the imported plastic doll, a plastic doll sometimes adapted to local ways by giving it a self-made dress (fig. 35, p. 37). But in some other, even really small, Moroccan villages the self-made doll has disappeared, as this is the case in the beginning of the 1990s in the village Ergoub situated at the end of a 9 km long tarred road leading to the town of Sidi Ifni in southern Morocco. However, in other adjacent villages the self-made doll in reed and rags continues to be used by the girls. Some lines earlier I wrote: not only in Marrakech, but also in other Moroccan towns such as Kénitra, Khemisset, Midelt and Sidi Ifni, the locally made doll has been replaced by imported plastic dolls. However, this generalizing statement was contradicted when making my first video on doll play in Sidi Ifni, a small town along the Atlantic coast south of Agadir, in January 2002 (Rossie and Daoumani, 2003, Video 1). A six-year-old girl agreed to show how she played with dolls together with her three-year-old cousin in front of this boys' house. Although the girl had several Barbie-like dolls at her disposal she directly started to make a few dolls of the traditional type using two sticks to create the cross-shaped frame she then covered with rags. Both her self-made dolls and the plastic dolls represent children.

The evolution of North African and Saharan dolls refers to the play activities of girls as boys only rarely make dolls. But the evolution of toys representing means of transport and technology on the contrary refers to the sphere of play activities of the boys.

In the 1970s when the Ghrib lived a more or less semi-nomadic life, their boys liked to play with and to make a sometimes mounted toy dromedary (fig. 39, p. 52). But for a toddler just a piece of wood would

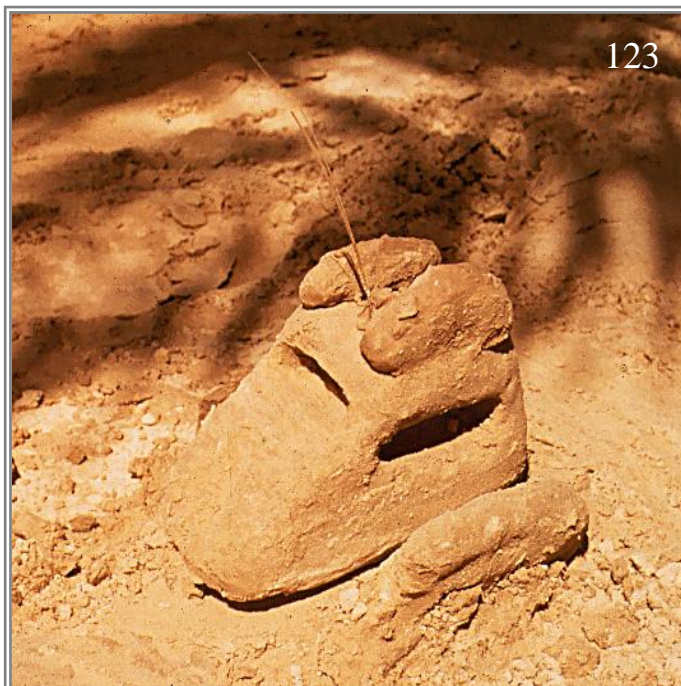
do to represent the symbiosis that existed over centuries between the Ghrib and their dromedaries of which they were renowned breeders (fig. 25, p. 32). In the second half of the 1970s it was obvious that different toys and games of the Ghrib boys were influenced by the evolution of their community from nomadism to sedentariness, such as playing at being a village merchant (fig. 121).



I found another example of this evolution in the play activities of the Ghrib boys when they made sand buildings at the natural source of the El Faouar oasis in 1975. At that moment two boys also made a miniature oasis garden they then irrigated (fig. 122).



This evolution however was very clear in the case of toys representing means of transport, for example in the making of miniature carts with a toy mule as draught-animal typical for a sedentarized way of life (fig. 70, p. 75). There were also some self-made toys, called bicycles, with which their owners ran over the sand dunes (fig. 44-45, p. 54). But more popular were the toy cars as in the case of the



Peugeot collective taxi made with wet sand (fig. 123). And young boys identified so much with this prestigious item of modernity that they became a living car (fig. 23, p. 32). Now that the oasis of El Faouar, where most of the Ghib have settled down, has grown out to be an important administrative and urbanized center, it becomes possible to buy a number of small plastic toys in its shops, especially during festivities.¹ When this toy selling expands, it certainly will cause a regression of toy making by the Ghib children themselves.

A truly important consequence of the impact of sedentarization and modernization on Ghib families is the development of a new gender differentiation in children's play activities. It is not because of a personal choice or by sheer chance that the toys representing modern means of transport were only made by Ghib boys but it reflects the reality of children's games and toys among the Ghib in the second half of the 1970s when only boys seemed to be affected by the recent introduction in their society of modern technology and new ways of life.

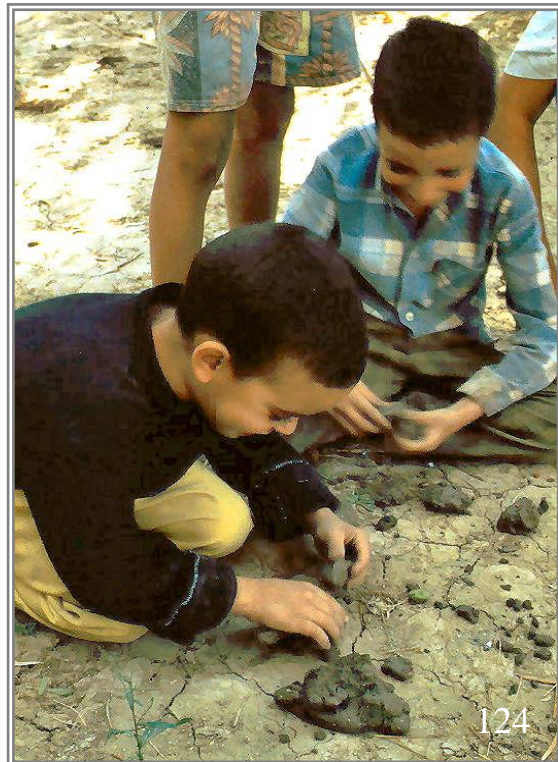
In contrast to the boys, Ghib girls stuck to traditional games and toys, thus remaining much more than their brothers under the impact of the traditional way of life. Moreover, this gender-based distinction was not

¹ Personal communication of Gilbert J. M. Claus, January 1992.

restricted to the sphere of playful activities. In the primary school of El Faouar, established in 1960, there were no Ghib girls attending the lessons. Gilbert J. M. Claus wrote in 1983: “Actually, the Ghib parents do not care much about a school education for their children, and giving a school education to girls is in their viewpoint still an incomprehensible act.” (p. 137-138). This distinction between the play activities of boys and girls among the Ghib reflected a growing disparity between the childhood of boys and girls and consequently between the male and female living conditions. Indeed, Ghib boys could find the opportunity to prepare themselves for their insertion into the modern educational, economic, social and other structures of the Tunisian State. However, Ghib girls remained in their play activities and in their growing up within the traditional way of life. Nevertheless, since the second half of the 1980s there has been a major change in the attitude towards the schooling of girls among Ghib families. As a result, nowadays, many Ghib girls are attending the primary school of El Faouar.¹ In this way, the Western type of school system will surely affect the upbringing of girls. A school system that, among other factors, will influence the play activities, games and toys of these girls.

In the Moroccan countryside and in small towns one can see boys making toy animals with local material such as palm-leaves, reed, wood, summer squash (fig. 41, p. 52) or clay.

Two little boys of five and seven years living in Goulmima, a small town in central Morocco, made in September 1994 some toys in clay (fig. 124) among which were a mule, a snake, a bird, a cat, a scorpion and a lizard (fig. 125, p. 169).



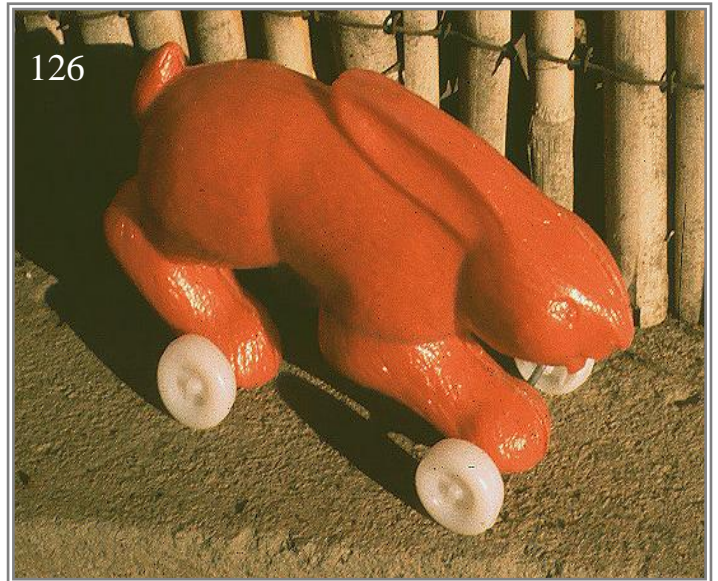
¹ Personal communication of Gilbert J. M. Claus, January 1992.



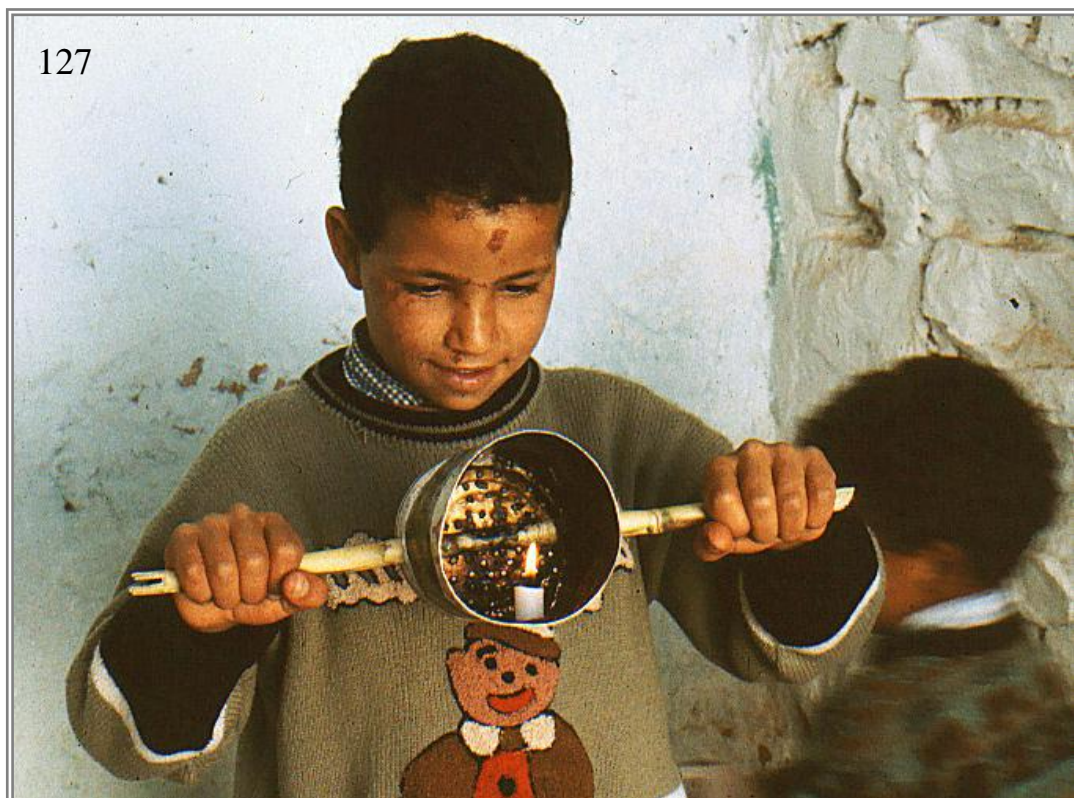
However, these traditional toy animals should not be compared to teddies. They definitely are not the type of toys suitable for an affective support for babies and small children in the same way the teddy and other soft toy animals are for the European and North American children. With respect to the teddies, I have seen one in a Moroccan house in Midelt in November 1994. This teddy was bought on the Souk Melilla of Nador, a market with smuggled goods in the northeast of Morocco. It certainly was not intended for a baby or toddler but exposed on the television set as a decorative object. Nevertheless, an about three-year-old girl standing in front of her house in the same town of Midelt in November 1998, did hold a teddy in her arms. But in February 2002, I observed in Sidi Ifni how a five-year-old boy walked around with his teddy. Exchanging a few words with this toddler he told me that it is he who bought the teddy at the local market, that his teddy has no name and that he cannot speak, as he has no indication of the mouth. Although these brief observations do not say anything about the time or place of occurrence of a changed affective attitude towards toy animals and possibly also towards dolls, one surely can speak here of an individual emotional relationship between this boy and his teddy something that as far as I know is a quite new attitude. Occasionally I have found two more examples. In the Northern Moroccan village Aïn Toujdate, between Meknès and Fès, I observed two girls of about seven years playing with a plastic doll and a teddy they had put to bed and covered with rags on the doorstep of their house in September 2003. Moreover, I saw in a small Sidi Ifni street

nearby my home an almost three-year-old girl holding tightly her teddy while discussing with a boy of her age in December 2004.

Although locally made or imported plastic toy utensils, toy weapons, balls, dolls and toy animals (fig. 126), often of bad quality, have invaded North Africa decades ago, children still make the traditional ones here and there. In the more important city shops a lot of plastic toys, e.g. animals for children to ride on can be bought, but migrants visiting their family in Morocco also import them from Europe as a present (fig. 71, p. 77).



Nevertheless, when playing with plastic toys such as a miniature truck becomes predominant, the skills learned by making toys oneself can still be important as in the case of a toy truck with a broken axle that a six-year-old Moroccan boy of the village Tabenattoute near Midelt replaced by a wooden stick in November 1997.



In the whole region, motors (fig.127, p. 170), cars and trucks fascinate Moroccan boys, city boys as well as those of remote areas.

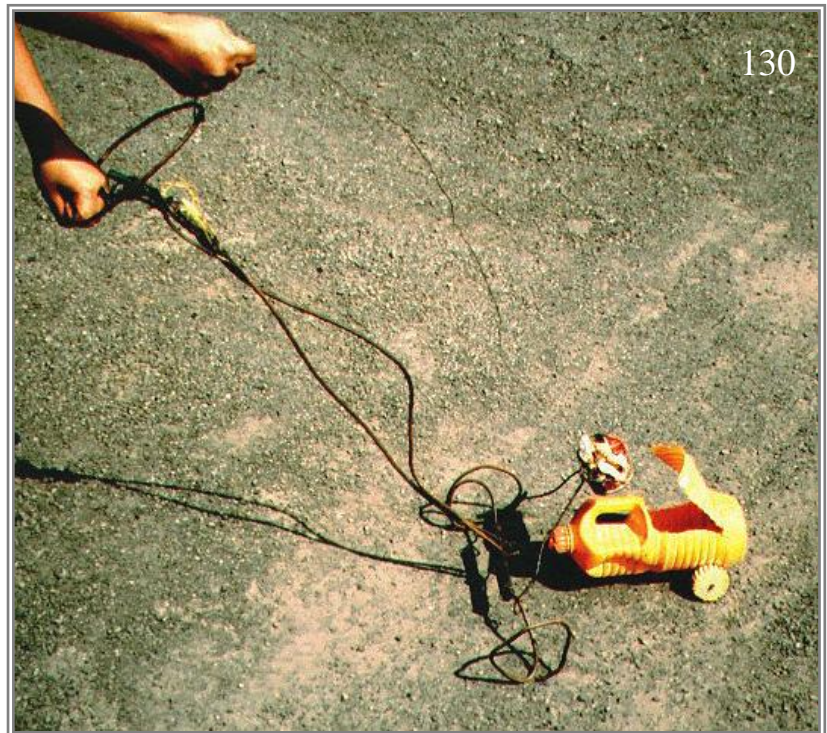
A young shepherd ran in June 1994 with his elaborated toy car over the road from Tiznit to Tafraoute in South Morocco. This car uses two floaters of a fishing-net as wheels (fig. 128).



Another boy from the village Douar Fzara near Kénitra made in 1993 an elaborated truck using thrown away oil filters as wheels (fig. 129).



In Ksar Assaka, a small village near Midelt in Central Morocco, I witnessed in 1995 how toys can change in response to new experiences. Up to then, the boys made a truck with an oil can, four wheels cut out of a tire, a steering wheel of wire and so on. However, as they observed during the reconstruction of the

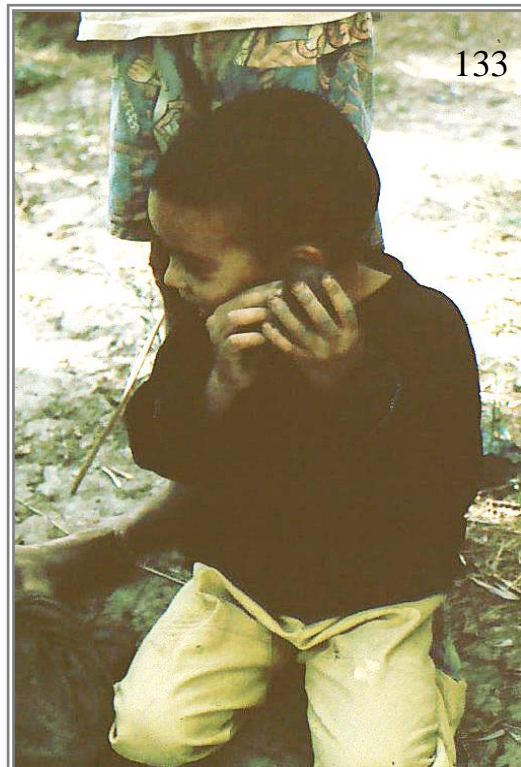


irrigation system how a concrete mixer was filled with a lifting tray attached to the mixer, they invented a way to attach a lifting tray to their toy truck using a small tin can as tray and a long wire attached to the steering wheel. When pulling the wire, the sand or stones accumulated in the tray are thrown into the truck (fig. 130).

A final example of the influence of the modernization of North African and Saharan societies on toys and games refers to the use of telephones. In 1977, when no Ghib family living in El Faouar in the north-western Tunisian Sahara had a telephone, boys created their own telephone by covering a trench with sticks and sand, this way anticipating the role telephone communications would play in their own adult life (fig. 131-132).



The same situation occurred at the end of the 1970s in Ksar Assaka in Central Morocco where boys and girls had their own telephone lines using a long wire to which at both ends a little plastic pot was fixed. But even nowadays when the use of telephones has become much more frequent, Moroccan children do not only play with plastic telephones. Sometimes they still make their telephone themselves as in the case of the five-year-old boy from Goulmima playing with clay (fig. 133).



The examples given up to now show that it is easier to detect change and continuity in children's toys than in children's play activities and that traditional toys are more easily replaced by those of the toy industry than that the play content changes. I have been able to observe this in a middle class family, running a hotel-restaurant for tourists in Sidi Ifni when I video filmed two sisters of six and nine years during their doll play. These girls have a lot of real Barbie dolls some of them received from family members living in France and a few others from tourists staying regularly at the hotel. Nevertheless, when playing with these Barbie dolls the girls enacted two local play themes treating the dolls as children: the mother child relationship and the school situation. Thus these Barbie dolls never became adolescent or young women displaying interest in actual Western female life although these girls see such a contemporary

European and North American emancipated way of life daily on parabolic TV.

As we could see, changes in the toys and games of Northern African children do not mainly come from foreign imports, as in the case of Asian or European toys. On the contrary, it is interesting to notice that change occurs most of the time by two ways: by using local material and techniques to create toys referring to new items, for example the just mentioned toy telephone in clay (fig. 133, p. 173) or a tractor of cactus pieces (fig. 93, p. 101), and by using new material and techniques to produce toys referring to local themes, for example plastified electric wire to make a dromedary and its rider (fig. 28, p. 34).

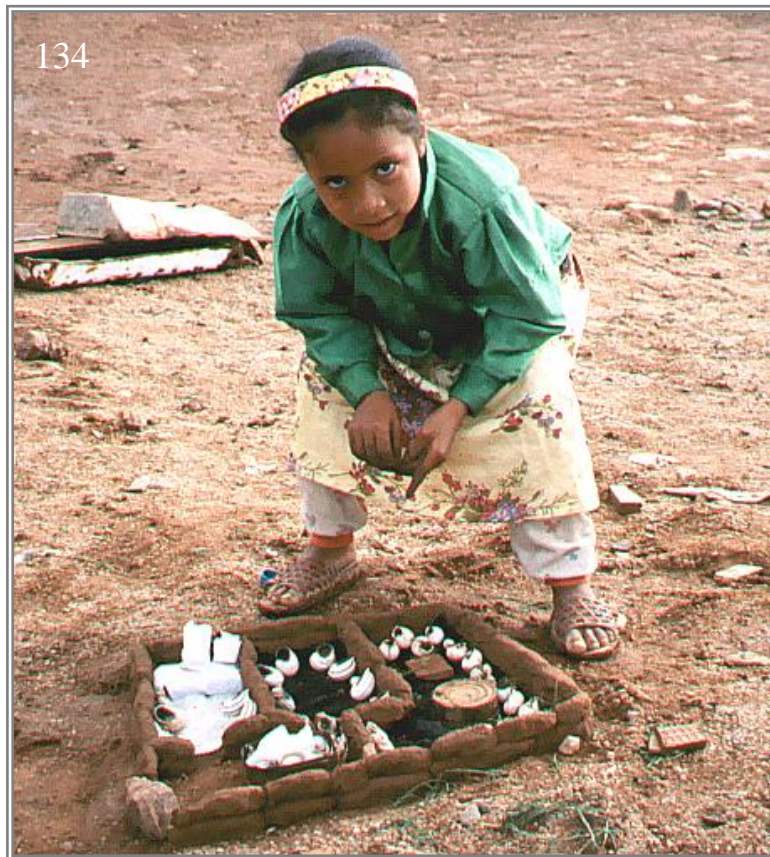
Toys made by the children themselves are often very short living play objects. However, at the same time they are remade again and again, this way offering possibilities for change through internal and external influences:

- Change, or maybe more correct progress, due to ameliorated skills because of exercise and the child's own development, whereby the toy becomes better adapted to the play functions it should have according to the child.
- Change because of environmental influences, such as other available material, learning from others how to do, shifts in interest promoted by social and economic change, influence from Western visual communication systems and global toy marketing...

Through their pretend or fantasy games, children not only react to changing situations in their natural, material and socio-cultural environment but they can also foresee them. A phenomenon Alain Polcz called "anticipating play" (1987: 1). The playing of the Ghib and Moroccan boys with imitation cars, motors or telephones, in a period when these technological items were still rare, certainly made these boys better acquainted with them.

The same can be said of the mobile phone. In the very beginning of the twenty-first century the mobile phone quickly enters the life of Moroccan adults not only of those living in cities but also those living in small towns. However, village children may already integrate this new product of high tech communication in their play activities. An example came

forward when video filming in March 2002 the doll and construction play of a six-year-old girl and her eight-year-old brother from a poor family living in an isolated house in the Lagzira region near Sidi Ifni. Near one of the small houses delimited by walls made with mud and stones (fig. 134) lays a piece of an old telephone that according to these two children represents their mobile phone (Rossie and Daoumani, 2003, Video 4).



To make a discussion of the actors, agents and events influencing North African and Saharan children's play, games and toys during the twentieth century easier, I have separated what one could label internal causes of evolution from the external causes. Yet, these causes are so strongly interwoven that separating them already harms the description of reality.

An important factor in the evolution of Ghrib boys' and girls' games and toys during the last fifty years has been the progressive sedentarization of this population in a few oases in Southern Tunisia. In Morocco it is the galloping urbanization and the consequent desertion of the villages that changed not only the play environment of the children but also the content of their pretend play, for example by replacing open air unstructured play areas by streets, toy animals by toy cars and make-

believe play related to agricultural tasks or animal husbandry by play related to driving cars or other specific urban activities.

The school strongly influences children's play in these regions. This influence is exerted on the time to play as the school regulates children's time, on the level of the content of play activities for example when girls play school with their dolls, and on the level of creating playgroups because a child has the possibility in his class to engage in friendships with children who are not available in his neighborhood and family.

The Arabization of the Moroccan population but also of other North African and Saharan populations going on for centuries, has been strongly fostered by the primary school since the independence of the countries of this region as Arabic is the language of teaching. It strongly influences children's culture in Amazigh-speaking areas by stimulating a drastic change in the communication between parents or other adults and children. It is not at all uncommon to find during the last decades families in which the parents speak an Amazigh language with their own parents and their brothers and sisters, but in which all these adults use Moroccan Arabic when talking to the children. The transmission of child lore and of linguistic and other games is in these circumstances really hampered.

The commercialization of toys (fig. 135), making the more expensive industrially manufactured toys affordable only for the middle class and high class families, creates a new distinction between Saharan and North African children, a distinction that did not exist when the toys were self-made. As the evolution towards a consumer society is slowly but surely moving on in these regions, those children whose parents cannot afford to buy good quality toys not only will feel frustrated but at the same time



they become less motivated to make themselves the devaluated toys they usually play with. This situation results more than once in buying cheap toys of rather bad quality or even toys that are dangerous for children as safety controls for toys are lacking in the region.

This commercialization of toys also stimulates the attitude of looking at toys as a gift from adults to children, an attitude that until recently was as good as non-existent there. In order to understand the influence of industrially produced and imported toys and of the mass media, especially television, on the toy making and play activities of children in Northern Africa much more research will be needed, a conclusion endorsed by Stephen Kline and Peter K. Smith.

But how to foresee the influence of simple and relatively cheap electronic toys that nevertheless always need new batteries to function? Such an electronic toy was sold in the small Moroccan town Midelt for 50 dirham (5 EUR) in

September 1999. In a popular quarter of that town, I witnessed the craze of three twelve-year-old boys for a simple electronic toy with twelve game possibilities (fig. 136). Although no origin is mentioned on this toy called Apollo, it probably was made in an Asian country and smuggled into Morocco



from Spain. This electronic toy had already been handed over between two or three friends before it came into the hands of the actual owner and it was certainly to be given to other boys of the peer group when the boy using it had tried it out.

In general, one can claim that the self-made toys are quite quickly declining in the cities, a few exceptions left aside, such as toy cars or toy weapons made by boys. Moreover, the traditional self-made doll seems as good as forgotten in these cities, at least I have found only one

example made recently by a Moroccan city girl as mentioned some pages earlier. Nevertheless, a lot of children, largely but not exclusively in rural areas, still have much fun in creating their own toys. The recent examples I have found all over Morocco are sufficient proof for this. Yet, the availability of new material, for example Plasticine that now can be bought in the little grocery shops of Moroccan towns, combined with the influence of schooling and television programs might stimulate a child to create something completely new such as the toy dinosaur made by an eight-year-old boy (fig. 137).



In June 2000, I found another example of children's creativity in using new material, in this case the packaging of a liquid that after freezing becomes a lolly. The plastic packaging of this in Morocco-made Yamuzar lolly is about 19 cm long and 3.5 cm wide. Once the lolly has been eaten, the packaging is used for a little game. The child blows up the packaging, rolls it up starting with the open end, keeps it rolled up in his hand with the rolled part between thumb and index, and then suddenly releases the rolled part near the cheek of another child. If done by surprise and in the correct way, the targeted child jumps up and everybody starts to laugh. The fun of the game is to be able to do it by surprise to someone as the children keep this packaging with them. One more example of using new material in a creative way comes from young girls of the Sidi Ifni region (fig. 138, p. 179) who in 2002 transformed candy wrappings into dresses for their dolls.



In his book on Kpelle childhood David F. Lancy notes that the children could be quite innovative (1996: 178). The same creativity is also shown by other African children such as those from the Waso Boraana of Kenya (Aguilar, 1994: 34).

A not insignificant role in changing Moroccan children's play habits and toys is played by family members living in Europe. When these emigrants return to visit their family they do not bring with them useful presents only but also prestige presents among which dolls, toy animals (fig. 71, p. 77) and teddies, toy weapons, skateboards, bicycles, etc.

A direct external influence on children's play activities and toys came or comes from such agents as the French and Spanish colonization, of the media, such as TV and video, of tourism and of the toy industry. The French and Spanish presence during the colonial period certainly had some influence on children's play heritage. In the regions under French and under Spanish rule and more specifically in the towns, the linguistic aspects of childlore have undergone changes in the play vocabulary as well as in the stereotyped phrases and songs used for certain games. The colonial school system has played here the prominent role.¹

¹ For a discussion of the influence of the European school system on childhood in Liberia see Lancy, 1996, *Playing on the Mother-Ground. Cultural Routines for Children's Development*, p. 185-196.

The importance of the role played by the media such as television, film and video on children's play, games and toys is unresearched in North Africa as far as I know. Yet, Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen stress the influence of Western visual communication such as television and advertising, on traditional visual forms (1996: 4). The influence of these agents dominated by Western viewpoints and attitudes is clearly found in the play activities of Moroccan boys, for example when they are enacting aggressive play sequences copied from Kung Fu and other action films. When the Moroccan television will start to show commercials for toys, e.g. to promote Barbie dolls, Ninja Turtles or similar worldwide marketed toys, Western visual forms and types of pretend play surely will have a greater impact. Up to now I can only mention among children from popular milieus the craze for all that is linked to Pokemon existing in the central Moroccan small town of Midelt as well as in the similar southern Moroccan town Sidi Ifni during the year 2000. This craze begun when one of the two Moroccan television stations started to broadcast an Arabic spoken version of the Pokemon animation films. However, when I was in Sidi Ifni in the beginning of 2002 I was told that although the popularity of Pokemon had been great there also this came to a end as soon as its broadcasting stopped. In this context Stephen Kline and Peter K. Smith (1993: 184) write:

Global marketing of children's goods threatens not only in the economic realm, to displace indigenous cultural industries (television production, toy making, children's books, food, clothes and accessories), but foreshadows a subtle 'transformation' of children's cultural expression - sentiments, social attitudes, values and play forms.

Although imported toys have invaded North Africa decades ago, the influence of the toy industry becomes more and more important. This is easy to observe during the annual fairs held in Moroccan towns and villages. Among popular urban families and in rural areas it is the cheap scale of industrially produced toys and the second hand toys that are bought. The sophisticated female and male dolls with all their attributes, the Tamagochis and other electronic toys have up to now only infiltrated

the world of upper class children for the evident reason of the greater financial means of their parents.

Another evolution is directly related to the development of tourism. Today in the east of Morocco, where tourists come to admire the sand dunes of Merzouga, some young girls make their traditional dolls with a frame of reed not so much any longer to play with them, although they still use them for their doll play, but for selling them to tourists. This way these dolls change from children's toys to tourist objects. The same evolution happened somewhat earlier with the toy animals made from palm leaves by the boys from the oasis of Meski or the gorges of Tinerhir, two popular tourist places in central Morocco (fig. 13-16, p. 29-30). Such an evolution related to toy cars can be observed in other African tourist places in for example Kenya, Tanzania, Mali or Senegal, possibly changing a child's play into child labor.

An example of the influence of tourism on children's toys is already a lot older and related to the beautiful dollhouses of the girls of the small town Oualata in the Mauritanian Sahara (fig. 65, p. 70). Jean Gabus writes in 1967, that the disruption of the Mauritanian society, although mitigated (but for how long?) at Oualata, has an impact on the objects intended for children's play. In a future, less distant than one might think, the dollhouses of Oualata will become souvenirs intended for tourists... They are ugly, the children do not play with them and their function has completely changed (p. 118). So, the evolution of the toy design has been in this case certainly not for the better. Moreover, the influence of modernity on children's play is not from today in North Africa and the Sahara as Herber mentions in 1918 the selling of European dolls in Moroccan towns (p. 80) and Dupuy writes in 1933 that German toys are sold in Tunisia during the Ashûra festivities.

According to Juliette Grange, children's toys and games have an inertia for changes and conserve old customs (1979: 234). Although this seems to be true for North African and Saharan toys and games, one should never forget that the technological, economic and socio-cultural evolution of the societies in this region has influenced this play culture. However, it is clear that the play activities of the girls remain longer within the sphere of tradition than those of the boys who willingly find inspiration in technological innovations and socio-cultural changes. But how to foresee the short-term and long-term influence on the girls of

schooling and television that nowadays have found their way into isolated areas?

When observing children's interest for all that is new and foreign, the following statement, although made in another context, also seems to apply to children's games and toys: "the power of modernity... is such that the argument that its ways are 'best' can, and has, led some in the Majority World (or Third World) to accept the argument and the *new ways*" (Evans, 2000: 8).

During the whole twentieth century but more clearly during the second half of that century, the changing conditions of Saharan and North African families regularly provoked a loss of interest in the transmission of the adults' and older children's knowledge and experience to the young children, especially when there is a migration from village to town and/or a devalorization of the mother tongue. So, non-industrial communities and families should not be seen as static groups but as dynamic entities. Surely, the last word has not been said about the opposing trends of conservatism and innovation in children's culture, play activities and toys as arguments for the prevalence of the one or the other can equally be supported.

I feel inclined to say that in the sphere of play activities and toys, where ancient and new types of toys and games daily mix, one should speak of subtle changes that reflect and sometimes foreshadow technological, economic, social and cultural evolution. So, together with Marie E. Bathiche and Jeffrey L. Derevensky, I feel that "children's game/toy preferences might serve as convenient markers of societal changes" (1995: 59). Yet, Stephen Kline and Peter K. Smith (1993: 190) rightly write:

We believe that the potential impact of global marketing on children's play styles and preferences points to the urgent need for more comparative cultural studies of children's play – studies which not only can document the unique character of patterns of play with traditional toys, but identify the potential forces which threaten these vital cultural patterns.

10 Conclusion

The available data show that North African and Saharan children concentrate their play on the present and on their personal immediate future in relation to, probably idealized, real life situations. Together with some other scholars, I see play, games and toys as a major characteristic of childhood and therefore I think that studying the evolution of these children's play, games and toys can adequately illuminate a changing childhood. The same data prove that playing and manipulating or making toys is an important activity for the children of these regions, not only for the small ones but also for the older ones probably until about the age of thirteen years for the girls and fifteen years for the boys. However, teenage boys more easily find time to play than do teenage girls.

Depending on the point of view, one could define the inventiveness of North African and Saharan children in making their own toys as *creativity by lack of means*, a lack of means to become part of the global toy market controlled by adults, or as *creativity by availability of means*, an availability of local means with little adult interference. I think it became obvious that personally I like to stress the last point of view. A point of view also stressed by Marianne N. Bloch when writing in an article on toy making by Senegalese children:

In all their representational play, as well as in many other play activities, children displayed their desire and ability to play and to be creative despite the "scarcity" or "limited" type of materials available to them. Yet, while they had few toys or materials specifically designed to promote creative play or cognitive, language, or social activities, their materials were neither scarce nor limited. Children were inventive and able to adapt and use the resources available in their environment. Materials were often recycled from those commonly available in children's homes or taken from the surrounding countryside. They were easily found, often reusable, generally open-ended, and adaptable for multiple purposes - the type of materials that have been found to support creative play. Thus, the observations of Senegalese children at play support those of Feitelson (1977) and

Schwartzmann (1978), which suggest children's representational play is fairly universal given time, space, materials and some encouragement. The Senegalese children had time, within the boundaries of the errands they were required to run for adults. They had space throughout their village and beyond. They observed adults modeling relevant activities and received some active help with development of materials. Finally, they adapted for their play the rich, rather than limited, materials available throughout and just outside of their village. In short, the observations suggest several points. First, despite the seeming scarcity of toys or materials made for play, children can still be inventive and engage in fairly complex representational play activities if other materials are available and multiple-purpose or adaptable. Second, when necessary children can adapt to their environment and be creative in their location of materials for play.

This remarkable analysis of the specific situation of the toy making activities of Senegalese children can without any hesitation be transferred to toy making North African and Saharan children, especially those living in rural areas. Yet, one should not conclude from this that when comparing the situation of children receiving almost exclusively industrially made toys to the situation of those that make their toys themselves, the second group of children lives in an ideal situation. On the contrary, I think it is really necessary to avoid an idealization of self-made toys and of the situation in which the children who make them live.

One also needs to relate the children's play activities, games and toys to their socialization and general upbringing when taking into account Allison James' important remark (1993: 74):

Childhood cannot be regarded, simply and unproblematically, as the universal biological condition of immaturity which all children pass through. Instead, it must be critically depicted as embracing particular cultural perceptions and statements about that temporal biological condition. It is these which shape the life experiences of members of the social category 'children' through providing a culturally specific rendering of the early years of life.

Yet, in this field of children's socialization and upbringing almost all information is lacking for the North African and Saharan regions with the exception, as far as I know, of Nefissa Zerdoumi's *Enfant d'hier. L'éducation familiale de l'enfant en milieu traditionnel algérien* (1982), speaking about childhood in the region of Tlemcen near the Moroccan border, A. Dernouny et A. Chaouite's *Enfances Maghrébines* (1987) and Mohamed Sijelmassi's *Enfants du Maghreb entre hier et aujourd'hui*, speaking of Moroccan children. There also are some studies on the problematic situation of Moroccan children, especially Haddiya El Mostafa's *Socialisation & Identité. Etude psycho-sociologique de l'enfant scolarisé au Maroc* (1988), Brigitte El Andaloussi's *Punitions et violences à l'école* (2001), Jalil Bennani's *Parcours d'Enfants* (1999) or *Enfance Violée* of the Centre d'Ecoute et d'Orientation pour Femmes Agressées (1999).

The information on Saharan and North African children's play activities, games and toys can also be useful for cross-cultural analyses and to overcome an approach too strongly biased by Western facts and Western values. The following remark of Jim Smale, the editor of *Early Childhood Matters*, stresses the same point (2002: 4):

A similar argument can be made about research that sets out to test or validate hypotheses or theory. Most of those related to early childhood development come from rich 'Western' countries and, in some settings, aspects of them may sit uneasily with such factors as local cultural understandings, practicalities and environmental realities.

The self-made toys and the play culture of Saharan and North African children, those from foregoing generations as well as those of today, surely should become part of the world's patrimony of play activities, games and toys. However, I strongly believe that this play and toy culture should not only be a heritage but that it also can be actively used in developing countries as well as in a Western context. This use of the play and toy culture of the children from the surveyed regions is discussed in the next section.

Although the theme of games and toys, on a scientific as well as on a practical level, receives little attention in North Africa, the development of preschool education will necessitate the taking into account of children's playful activities and it is here that a study of local play activities and self-made toys can find its major utility.¹ Until then, my research on North African and Saharan games and toys and their evolution seems to be a quite solitary occupation.

Taking into account the limits described in the introduction, my purpose in collecting all the data at my disposal in a systematic and critical way, has been to elaborate a basic analysis that should stimulate fieldwork to detect the specificity of local games or toys, on the one hand, and research to integrate the Saharan and North African toy and play cultures in the play activities, games and toys in other socio-cultural areas and in a world-wide perspective, on the other hand. For if some aspects of the play activities and the toys seem to be specific to a given socio-cultural area, indeed even to a given community, family or child, other play activities and toys seem to be universal.

¹ For a discussion of preschool education in Morocco see El Andaloussi Khalid, 1999.

11 Using North African and Saharan toy and play culture

I am convinced that it should be out of the question to consider this research on children's play activities of past and present times as a purely academic or folkloristic occupation, how praiseworthy it might be.¹ Much to the contrary, this research should bear concrete results. I am thinking here of the fields of child welfare, formal and informal education, the adaptation of the school to local conditions, the relationships between parents and children, between parents and teachers, of community development and the promotion of intercultural understanding. In a book, *Games and Toys: Anthropological Research on their Practical Contribution to Child Development. Aids to Programming Unicef Assistance to Education*, published by the Unit for Co-operation with UNICEF and the World Food Program of the UNESCO in 1984, I already had the opportunity to propose the use of local play and toy cultures as a source of insight into the child and society (p. 19-24), for relating school education to the real life and environment of the children, for stimulating the interest and participation of parents in the school, for the elaboration of pedagogical material anchored in local culture, for the training of para-professional and professional personnel of day-care centers, pre-schools and primary schools and for activities in youth movements (p. 24-32).

¹ Shortly before finalizing this book I found on the Internet a document called *The South African Indigenous Games research Project of 2001/2002* written by Cora Burnett and Wim J. Hollander of the Department of Sport and Movement Studies, Rand Afrikaans University, Johannesburg. This for Africa exceptional research project on children's games "was undertaken in an attempt to address the need for indigenous knowledge-research". Information was gathered through questionnaires from a representative sample of 6489 South African participants. Case studies, observations and visual recordings supplemented these data. These authors also stress the cultural, social and pedagogical value of the research results when writing: "The dissemination of results should therefore focus on addressing manifested and latent needs of South Africans and relevant stakeholders who have an interest in the application, promotion and nurturing of indigenous games as a cultural resource." (2004: 9, 21).

My ideas about an eventual use of North African and Saharan children's play and toy cultures for local pedagogical and cultural action are restricted to a theoretical and wishful level as the development of such actions belongs to professionals and other cultural agents from these regions. Yet, I can point to a recent development linked to the creation of Amazigh cultural associations in Moroccan cities with an important Amazigh-speaking population. So, when invited by the *Association de l'Université d'Eté Agadir* to give a talk during the seventh session on *Amazigh culture and the question of development* held from 25th to 27th July, 2003, a change of attitude towards children's play and toy culture could be detected. For my talk I chose the title *Moroccan Amazigh children's play and toy culture and the questions of development* whereby I stressed the possibilities for using Amazigh children's toy making and play activities in preschool and primary school education, in the training of professionals for these schools or of volunteers for youth houses and vacation colonies, in socio-cultural action, in programs for promoting Amazigh language, in the development of child literature based on local realities, etc. As afterwards different persons wanting to hear more or eventually to test these possibilities in practice approached me, I have the impression that there is a growing interest in using local play and toy culture. The coming years will show if this interest has been more than a passing enthusiasm.

The proposals for using my data in the sphere of intercultural or peace education in a Western context on the contrary are based on personal experience. In this context, the following words of Claude Lévi-Strauss: *the discovery of others is the discovery of a relationship, not of a barrier* are particularly apposite.

11.1 Pedagogical and cultural action in Developing countries

As it is accepted that there is a close relationship between the quality of stimulation at home during the first years of life and the results in the primary school (Groupe Consultatif... Unicef, 1991: 10-11), it is relevant to give special attention to children's games and toys and to the attitudes of adults towards them. In the just mentioned publication on preparing children for the school system and adapting the school to children, it is written that it is necessary to take the responsibility for adapting schools to the needs of the children and not any longer to ask the children to adapt to the system. Halpern and Meyers conclude by stressing that an integrated primary school program would permit the elaboration of a link between the interests of the family and those of the community and the reinforcement of the formal school system. It would for example be possible to integrate the values and contents of local cultures in the school program, first of all in the preschool, then in the primary school (1985). (Groupe Consultatif... Unicef, 1991: 22).

One of the contents of the local culture that perfectly fits into formal school programs is the play activities and toys of children.¹ Seen from this angle, it would really be harmful if those in charge of education in North African and Saharan countries were to neglect the play and toy culture of their societies and give way to the overwhelming influence of the playful culture proposed by the consumer society and Western media, of the standardized European or American pedagogical toys and games and of the mass produced plastic toys that more often than not are of poor quality and sometimes even dangerous.

When seeing all these toys made by children with natural and waste material one is astonished by such a creativity that contains a real learning process. In a note on "Zambia: the environment, mess and the joys of recycled and natural play materials", written for the Newsletter of the Bernard van Leer Foundation by Bernadette Luwaile Mwamba of the Salvation Army Pre-school in Lusaka (1996: 21), one reads:

¹ David F. Lancy discusses the problem of using local culture and play forms in education in his book on Kpelle childhood in Liberia, 1996: 197-198.

For generations children have played with sand, water, soil, mud, clay, stones, sticks, twigs, corn husks, nuts, fruit, leaves and flowers. But today, shop-bought toys predominate. Yet it is more important than ever for our children to value the Earth's resources. If we can foster their awareness from their earliest days, their future will be more secure. To occupy, amuse and educate young children it isn't necessary to buy expensive toys - an important consideration in these difficult times. Masses of cheap play materials are readily available if you have a bit of imagination, a lot of patience and the readiness to allow children to play 'messily'.

One could also think of promoting the interaction between traditional games and toys and Western pedagogical games and toys to develop an adapted pedagogy. An example of this interaction is found in the study of Chantal Lombard on the toys of the Baoule children in a rural African society. Her research was related to a program of the government of the Ivory Coast to develop the educational system based on a redefinition of pedagogical values. Chantal Lombard notes that her analysis is based on two statements. First, so that the traditional creativity can be integrated into the school as ferment for children's development it is necessary to open the school whereby it becomes a place of encounter between traditional culture and scientific knowledge instead of being a place of disruption. Second, so that the traditional creativity acquires a new dimension and enriches modern thinking it is necessary that the school brings the children to another level of mastering the material environment and that it reconciles technology with creative imagination (1978: 209).

As far as I know, it is in Algeria and Morocco that there seems to exist an attempt to integrate some local play culture in the school, although at a different level. In Algeria there has been an attempt to integrate some traditional games in the field of physical education. Youssef Fates, who defended a thesis at the Université Paris 1 on the topic of sports in Algeria, writes that the Direction of Studies, Research and Coordination of the Ministry of Youth and Sports of Algeria has organized a national inquiry with questionnaires throughout the country in order to receive information on the games and those who play them. Besides the fact that this inquiry should have led to the elaboration of a reliable document related to local realities, the Ministry wanted to start a project for the

animation of youngsters based on the use of traditional games and sports. Moreover, these games and sports should become a means of mobilizing the popular masses in general and the youth in particular. Unfortunately, Youssef Fates had to note in 1987 that the results of this inquiry had not been analyzed so far (p. 18). So one can assume that this attempt to integrate local games in physical education and in the animation of youngsters has not gone beyond the level of good intentions.

In Morocco another attempt to valorize the play and toy culture could become a reality through the collaboration of two projects receiving subventions from the Bernard van Leer Foundation, an international foundation that centers its efforts on the development of low cost initiatives based on the participation of local communities and directed towards the welfare and education of socially and culturally disadvantaged children between 0 and 8 years. The two organizations are the *Alliance de Travail dans la Formation et de l'Action pour l'Enfance*, *ATFALE* or child in Arabic, based at the Mohamed V University in Rabat, and the Ministry of Education whose project is directed towards the 36,117 *kuttab* or Koranic preschools who care for some 800,000 children between two and six years in 1994-95 (Bouzoubaâ, 1998: 5).

Those two projects work together to give training to the personnel of these *kuttab*, untrained as they are to work with this age group and for whom no on the job training existed. During the training attention is paid to different topics such as language, health, arithmetic, methods and organization of the school, but also to the topic of games and toys. For this Brigitte El Andaloussi made an activity guide on play in the preschool, a first version published by ATFALE in 1990 and reprinted in 1992 (ATFALE, 1992) and a reworked version published by Gaëtan Morin éditeur - Maghreb in 1997 (El Andaloussi, 1997). In the first version one found the following direct reference to Moroccan traditional games quoted hereafter in a translation based on the French original: it is important that the teacher knows the traditional games of the region where she is working and that she stimulates their expression in her institution as these games present a real interest on several levels. The more the children will be provided with schooling, the less the traditional games learned in the family, in the streets or the fields will be transmitted to the young child notwithstanding their indisputable value for the child's development. Indeed, these traditional games partially contain the

collective memory of a country; they promote children's creativity and initiative and offer possibilities to maintain relationships between children of different age groups (ATFALE, 1992: 10). Although I regret that this important paragraph, being the only one on this topic, has been left out in the 1997 version - whereas the other advices found in the short 1992 chapter "Jeux traditionnels" remained in the new chapter "Quelques conseils pratiques" (El Andaloussi B., 1997: 10) - it must be said that the preschool teachers' interest in the local child culture is now stimulated in relation to the "comptines", the counting and nursery rhymes and songs (El Andaloussi B., 1997: 9). Discussing what the teacher can do to develop the practice of the counting and nursery rhymes and songs, one reads that she or he should look for all that exist in her/his cultural patrimony. Therefore the teacher should make a collection, enriching it through exchange with other colleagues and by asking mothers for the little songs they sing to their children (El Andaloussi B., 1997: 9).

A conversation at the Reeducation Center of the Save the Children Fund of Marrakech in February 1992, with Amina Drissi who participated in an information seminar of this preschool project showed that the Moroccan play and toy heritage was somehow integrated in the training. But I found a more precise indication for this when visiting the Preschool Resource Center in Kénitra. This center, located in November 1993 in a classroom of the Shuhada primary school of this city, showed how a preschool class could be organized so as to better adapt to modern pedagogy. In the dolls' corner I not only saw imported plastic dolls but also dolls with a frame of reed dressed in the local fashion (left wall) and made by participants in the training proposed by ATFALE (fig. 139).



For the promotion of pedagogic innovations the working out of activity corners in the kuttab is of great importance. "Setting up activity corners where children participated by bringing recycled materials also mobilized teachers, children and parents. The 'food store', 'dolls' and 'health' corners were among the most popular and most frequently found corners". Moreover, the meetings at a Resource Center also served the purpose to stimulate the making of low-cost educational games and toys (Bouzoubaâ, 1998: 10, 12). So, although the direct reference to using Moroccan children's play culture disappeared from the 1997 activity guide for the preschool it is to be hoped that stimulation to use this patrimony still continues in the training programs.

No doubt the local children's own toy and play culture should play an important role in the preschool. A role the more important as the participation of parents in the preschool forms an integral part of these projects. These parents might be stimulated to participate for example by asking them to help with making and repairing toys, as this has been done in other developing countries (*Bernard van Leer Foundation Newsletter*, 1991: 14). The 1997 activity guide mentioned above now offers a response to this possibility. Under the heading promoting the making of traditional toys by parents so that they may transmit these toys to their children, it is said that as the toy industry has ruled out all traditional techniques of toy production the preschool should use the mothers' knowledge to make dolls or the fathers' knowledge to make carts using natural and waste material. The low cost aspect of self-made toys is also mentioned. Agreeing strongly with this viewpoint I want nevertheless to stress that the dominance of the toy industry is not as strong in Moroccan villages, rural centers and popular quarters of big cities as it is claimed for the Moroccan children of the wealthier classes. First of all many Moroccan children still live in rural areas where making toys even by children from preschool age remains a common activity and where the creation of the traditional doll and of animal figurines still exists sometimes even in the first village outside a small town. Secondly, research in small towns like Goulmima, Khemisset, Midelt and Sidi Ifni shows that although some types of self-made toys and especially the traditional dolls have disappeared other toys, e.g. the self-made vehicles, still exist today. In relation to the dolls made by girls it is so that I only saw once in a city, namely Sidi Ifni, a six-year-old girl spontaneously

using the traditional cross-shaped frame of reed or sticks then dressing it with rags (Rossie and Daoumani, 2003, Video 1). However, a common procedure is the replacement of the traditional frame by a cheap plastic doll but dressed with rags by the girls. Thirdly, even in the popular quarters of big cities like Agadir, Kénitra or Marrakech I have found children, more often boys than girls, making some toys themselves.

Witnessing the children's skills in making toys it would be really useful that a preschool teacher tries to find out what the children already know and can do. This way an important pedagogical rule can be applied, namely starting from the child's own experience in his own milieu. Next to the parents one should also build on the older children's experience and interest in making toys. A preschool teacher could even find useful help in creating pedagogical and other toys for her practice by integrating older children, who are the real toy making experts, in this effort.

Reading some observations on the kuttab made by members of ATFALE, one measures the importance of the obstacles that must be overcome before these preschool institutions can make profit of the creativity that Moroccan children show in their playful activities. "Cramped on benches behind their desks, facing an imagined blackboard in semi-darkness, they are unable to move about and fulfill their need for play. Nor is there any playground" (Bouzoubaâ, 1998: 6). Introducing a new pedagogy that takes into account the specificity of the child and its playful creativity is made still more difficult in view of the following statement by Khadija Bouzoubaâ (1998: 12):

Parents sometimes expressed reluctance at 'paying for their children to play in the kuttab'. They looked for an immediate return on their investment such as seeing their children write a few letters of the alphabet and recite Surats from the Koran.

Returning to ATFALE's activity guide on play in the preschool and especially to the concrete examples of games played inside, games played outside, language games and team games mentioned in the technical sheets (El Andaloussi B., 1997: 53-78), these examples could serve very well for trying to find among the games played today by Moroccan Amazigh-speaking and Arabic-speaking children games that match the pedagogical objectives mentioned for the games proposed in

this guide. Actually the mentioned games do not seem to refer to the play experience of most Moroccan children and it is wishful thinking to believe that many preschool teachers will be able to find and use local children's games. The making of a supplementary guide filling the gap would be a real help to preschool teachers but also to primary school teachers teaching the first years and even for volunteers working with children in vacation colonies and youth houses. Although certainly more difficult one could also try to find among Moroccan children's games or inspired by these, activities and themes to develop pedagogical games as those presented by Brigitte El Andaloussi (1997: 13-51). The same can be said of another activity guide for the preschool, namely the one on the physical activity of the small child. Alain Léonetti who wrote this interesting guide says in the context of a physical education centered on the child's needs that to be able to do so the spontaneous play activity of the child must be favored (1997: 3). Yet, the proposed examples do not reflect the Moroccan children's play experience but are linked to a European background. The use of physical activities and games from such a background certainly has its value but supplementing it with examples based on the local play and toy culture would make possible the integration of children's spontaneous play in the Moroccan preschool.

According to Harinder Kohli, director of the World Bank for the Maghreb, the most urgent needs in the social sphere are to be found among the rural populations, especially the women and children (the Casablanca's weekly paper *l'Economiste*, 1993: 30). Any social policy for the children and their mothers can only succeed when it takes into account the socio-cultural reality in which they live. One modest but effective means to do this is to relate to the playful experiences of rural children in the social and pedagogical activities set up for them. At the level of the rural school this could help this institution to be less an agent of uprooting, as Moroccan scholars including Haddiya El Mostafa (1988) qualified it, and to become a link between the rural community and its development.

In the study *Child Survival and Development in Africa*, Ibinabo S. Agiolu-Kemmer (1992: 7-8) writes:

Can we not build upon the traditional system's emphasis on early development of vocational and life skills? Is it not possible to incorporate culturally relevant experiences and traditions into the curriculum alongside the conventional subjects for all the levels of the school system? The mothers of the Ntataise project in South Africa may not have found the preschool so difficult to understand if they saw project workers helping their children to construct models of houses, trucks and familiar animals, or perhaps teaching them to make clay pots and pans... (many) practical skills can be taught to children within the context of play. Natural objects such as sand, clay, water, sticks, straw, seeds, bottle tops, empty packets and tins are easily available in most communities. Children need to play with toys and objects they can destroy and put together again in the process of playing with them. When we donate expensive toys to community pre-school centres in order to encourage cognitive stimulation of the children, mothers and project workers are afraid to allow the children to play with them because they do not want the toys to get spoilt. Children gain a lot from constructing their own toys using discarded packets, containers, tires and so on. Many of us have been impressed by the model trucks, cars and aeroplanes which African children, especially in rural areas, construct on their own without much guidance from adults.

In another country and continent, e.g. India, a project supported by the Aga Khan Foundation teaches day care workers "how to use creative but low cost materials to stimulate a child's thirst for discovery" (*Bernard van Leer Foundation Newsletter*, 1993: 3).

The analysis of the traditional toys of India and the efforts to use these toys for therapies for handicapped children elaborated a.o. by Sudarshan Khanna of the National Institute of Design at Paldi Ahmedabad, India, have roused my admiration and clearly show yet another way to use local toys and games. In two books *Dynamic Folk Toys* (1983) and *Joy of Making Indian Toys* (1993) Sudarshan Khanna presents toys made by Indian children or other toy makers. Just as for the Saharan and North

African toys, some of these Indian toys are peculiar to their region of origin and others are variants of universal types of toys. As a professor at the Faculty of Industrial Design, this scholar stresses the elements of technology and the scientific principles that are at work in the elaboration of and playing with these toys. Another Indian scholar, Arvind Gupta, has written several remarkable booklets on using local toys and the way in which they are made and function to promote innovative experiments for learning science and mathematics.

About the actual situation and the future of these traditional Indian toys Sudarshan Khanna (1987: 13-14) writes:

The earnings of most dynamic folk toymakers are very low. Their clients come from poor communities for whom they have to keep the price to a minimum. Low economic returns are one of the reasons for massive dropouts. The other factor is the inroads made by the mass-produced, factory-made plastic toys. Despite the low returns and the absence of any institutional support, dynamic folk toymaking is still alive but flickering. At present, there is hardly any design development but a lot of toymakers are aware of the importance of creativity and innovation in their profession. The dynamic folk toys are of such importance, it is sad that these have been neglected by society. But in recent times, some realisation has dawned among educationists and child development experts that factory-made toys cannot replace the artisans' toys which express our cultural roots. Our society will have to accept that toymakers have a much wider role than merely being producers of playthings. It is now high time that the artisan is recognised as a professional in his own right. A lot needs to be done to heal the damage done to the field of artisan-made toys. Some years ago, the Development Commissioner of Handicrafts, in collaboration with the National Institute of Design, had formulated proposals which would revitalise the sector. It is necessary to build toy museums, training centres and marketing tie-ups at the state as well as national level. It is essential to create ways and means by which talented toymakers, innovative educationists and committed designers team up to salvage this sector of our design heritage.

Since then Sudarshan Khanna has succeeded in establishing within the National Institute of Design a specialized center for research on toys and for the development of local craftship in this field.

This scholar also participated in the Unesco-Workshops organized by the German non-profit making association *Fördern durch Spielmittel - Spielzeug für behinderte Kinder*, in translation Stimulation through Play - Toys for Handicapped Children (website: <http://www.spielmittel.de>, consulted on 13.10.2004). The aim of this project is to develop toys for children's rehabilitation. From the letter of invitation to the fourth UNESCO Symposium, Workshop and Exhibition in the fall of 1996, I quote the following about the background and aim of this project:

There are so many handicapped children on the planet that we feel it necessary to create a framework whereby the conditions for these children can be improved continually and more effectively. It is particularly important that handicaps are detected at an early stage, and considered. In this way, the children's mental and physical development can be encouraged from the beginning and their integration can be supported. Toys and learning aids play an important role in early childhood. Only good and suitable toys are needed which encourage to play as well as meet the highly functional and structural requirements of this task. With these ideas as a starting point, the Project Toys for Children's Rehabilitation was proposed in 1989 to be a contribution to the World Decade for Cultural Development and was recognized as a "World Decade Activity" by Unesco (registration N° 079). Within the framework of this Project, three Unesco Workshops have already been held. The participants of these Workshops developed a variety of designs for toys and created several prototypes. These drawings and models have been exhibited on various occasions in Germany and abroad. Many seminar results were published in 1992 and 1995 in a two-volume handbook Toy Workshop/Toys you can make yourself for handicapped and non-handicapped children. The fourth Unesco Workshop will continue this interdisciplinary experience. Again, new ideas and prototypes of toys and learning aids will be developed. This workshop will also make the results available to the parents of handicapped children and the teachers and staff of institutions where handicapped people work. The

toy designs will be published, after having them carefully tested, in one or more handbooks with building instructions. Thus, great attention will be attached to turning designs into toys without using excessive amounts of materials or complicated techniques. We would like this Workshop to offer practical and theoretical help, but also moral support to specialists from countries having only small resources available for the development of toys.

Through this UNESCO project it becomes possible to develop new and interesting ways to use traditional and self-made toys. I hope that one day some Saharan and North African toys will come to serve the purpose of creating culturally and socially adapted toys that can be used in the rehabilitation of handicapped children and the development of other children as well.

I have yet to mention a Tunisian initiative. When I revisited Tunisia in 1987, I talked with some officials of the Musée des Arts et Traditions Populaires in Tunis and the Musée du Bardo in Carthage, this after I noticed that in these museums and that of Sousse one saw nothing or almost nothing that referred to childhood or toy and play culture. At that moment a growing interest in these topics was revealed, which resulted in the creation of a research group on Tunisian games and toys. Although I have had no further news of this research group after the organization of a conference in Carthage in 1989 and the publication of the results of this conference (*Jeu et Sports en Méditerranée*, 1991), it is to be hoped that its ambitious aims will materialize.

In a chapter called *The Education Revolution*, published by UNICEF in 1998, it is stated that a comprehensive approach of learning for life necessitates that “children must be able to express their views, thoughts and ideas; they need opportunities for joy and play; they need to be comfortable with themselves and with others; and they should be treated with respect” (p. 22).

This learning for life was described as follows (p. 18):

This is the basis of a series of new approaches to teaching and learning that are designed to make the classroom experience more fulfilling and relevant... What will be required are more fundamental changes in education policies and processes to instill and stimulate a lifelong love for learning. This will enable people to supplement or even replace the skills they learned in childhood to respond to new needs over the course of their lives.

How could one formulate a better statement for using children's creativity in making toys and in playing or even inventing games? A lot of skills acquired in childhood are learned and exercised in play and toy making activities involving peers, older children and sometimes also adults. If adults want to make the classroom experience more fulfilling and relevant, then isn't taking into account children's play and toy making experiences one of the best possible ways to achieve this? At least, if these adults do not control the children's spontaneous play activities too much, and do not change them into purely didactic exercises. In the UNICEF website *Teachers Talking about Learning* (www.unicef.org/teachers, consulted December 2004) the following is said in a section based on the *Vietnamese Multigrade Teacher's Handbook*:

Children love to play games. Given the opportunity, they'll make up rules for new games, using balls, bottle caps, or whatever's available as the raw materials. Games that involve role-playing, solving simulated problems, or using specific skills and information can interest children in the curriculum and in learning. Games can be structured to lead to active learning. And this learning can go right to the development of communication, analysis, decision-making, and other thinking skills (www.unicef.org/teachers see section 'Explore Ideas', then section 'Games from around the World').

In the next section 'Journal activity: Games for learning' teachers are stimulated to "create learning activities based on the games that children play".

Three examples from sub-Saharan Africa show that it is possible to use games and toys for a development better adapted to children's needs and to the context in which they grow up. The first example refers to a program using play and toy making activities in order to make the children aware of their rights and responsibilities in Zimbabwe ("We are also human beings...", 2001).

Elisa K. Lwakatare of the Tanzanian Ministry of Education and Culture presented the second example during the 2nd International Toy Research Conference organized by the Nordic Center for Research on Toys and Educational Media in June 1999. This preschool education coordinator spoke among other things about the necessity to make educational toys locally. This necessity was during the same congress also stressed by Arvind Kumar Gupta in relation to India. In his conference text Elisa K. Lwakatare (1999: 7-8) writes:

Toys serve an important part in human life in the socialization process through the activity of play. In other words, the use of imported toys encourages the development of cultural norms and values that are foreign to Tanzania. While some toys are suitable and could be adopted into Tanzanian culture, the accessibility is still limited due to low purchasing power of many Tanzanian families. The thrust of Education and Training policy in Tanzania as spelt out in the current education reform is to promote equitable access to quality education and training. This means equitable access to toys as educational materials. In other words making the use of toys as an integrated aspect of the educational communicative process. This can only come about by promoting local design and manufacture of toys, preferably, using local materials. The need for educational play materials, therefore, is enormous due to the promotion of pre-school education in this reform. The number of pre-schools in the country is growing rapidly. While they were only 247 in 1993, the number has risen to 3667 to date (1999). The rising in demand calls for an equal rise in supply of play materials if this level of education has to be adequately supported. This provision of educational materials (toys) must be backed with a thorough research in order to come out with the most suitable designs and economic use of materials.

Even though this Tanzanian policy of developing locally educational toys adapted to local socio-cultural and material conditions is in its beginning, it is already of great importance because it puts forward the problem and develops means to resolve it.

The third and up to now best example I know of, using local toy and play culture is described in *Early Childhood Matters* (Bouma, 2000).¹ This program for early childhood development is initiated, controlled and operated by Samburu parents of the Samburu District in Northern Kenya following societal changes linked to their semi-pastoral way of life. Traditionally the children were looked after and educated by grandmothers during the absence of the parents. These grandmothers care for the little children but at the same time they play with them and teach them poems, stories and songs. This is called the *lmwate* system, *lmwate* meaning enclosure.

Although “this system of childcare has worked for countless generations” it fell into disuse till the parents realized something had to be done for their little children looked after by only somewhat older siblings or remaining alone. After discussion within the community and with the grandmothers still knowing well the *lmwate*, they decided to create a modern *lmwate*. The parents made an enclosure with a big house for the little ones serving as rest place and refuge.

Based on the advice from the elderly, they made a number of toys, collected a number of songs, stories, riddles and poems, and designed and built play equipment. The toys included wooden and leather dolls and balls, clay and rattan animals, slings, rattles, catapults. The play equipment included climbing frames, raised platforms, miniature houses, swings, see-saws, hoops, crawling tunnels and so on... The programme is open every morning and can only be sustained by the input of parents. All the mothers take turns to work in the programme.
(p. 32-34)

¹ More information about the *lmwate* is found in Lanyasunya, A. R. & Lesolayia, M. S. e.a. (2001) *The El-barta child and family project*.

Soon the community-based Samburu Early Childhood Development Project, a joint project of the Kenya Institute of Education and the Christian Children's Fund, was supporting this modern *lmwate* system. This project not only offered training on early childhood development activities but also on health, nutrition and hygiene. Moreover, *Lmwate* Committee received basic medicines and supplementary porridge for the children's midday meal, including enriched porridge for those who suffer from malnutrition. Once the *lmwate* system functioned the project stepped back and confined its involvement to being available when the *Lmwate* Committee wanted some help (p. 34).

There is no doubt that this need for educational toys exists in North Africa and the Sahara and when I see all the toys made by Moroccan children still today it cannot be that difficult to find models for adapted educational toys that are cheap to produce and useful for preschools and primary schools. The remarkable development of preschool classes, for example in Morocco, could well make this necessary once school practice takes into account the value of children's play and toys, and this simply because Western educational toys are so expensive that most schools of the concerned regions have no means to buy them.

Any program that wishes to promote the well being, the development and the education of children could ameliorate its efficiency by using strategies that urge adults to listen to the targeted children and stimulate the participation of these children in the elaboration of the program. In a number of *Early Childhood Matters*, edited by the Bernard van Leer Foundation in February 1999, this foundation stresses: "In line with their age, cultural background and development opportunities, children are shown to be resourceful and valuable partners" (nr. 91, p. 4). In an article published in the same number, David Tolfree and Martin Woodhead strongly "argue for practitioners, researchers and policy makers in early childhood development to listen to children" (nr. 91, p. 19). In this context, the taking into account of children's play and toy making activities seems to be a very valuable way to listen to these children.

Following Flemming Mouritsen of the Danish Odense University in his working paper *Child Culture - Play Culture* the importance of research on children's play, games and toys clearly comes to the foreground. This scholar stresses the necessary shift from an adult perspective towards a child perspective: "Pedagogy has been based in

theory and practice on what children are to become, before anyone has taken an interest in knowledge of what children and children's lives are". I think that the development of such a children's perspective really can be stimulated by observing and analyzing the play activities, games and toys of children with as few adult presuppositions as possible.

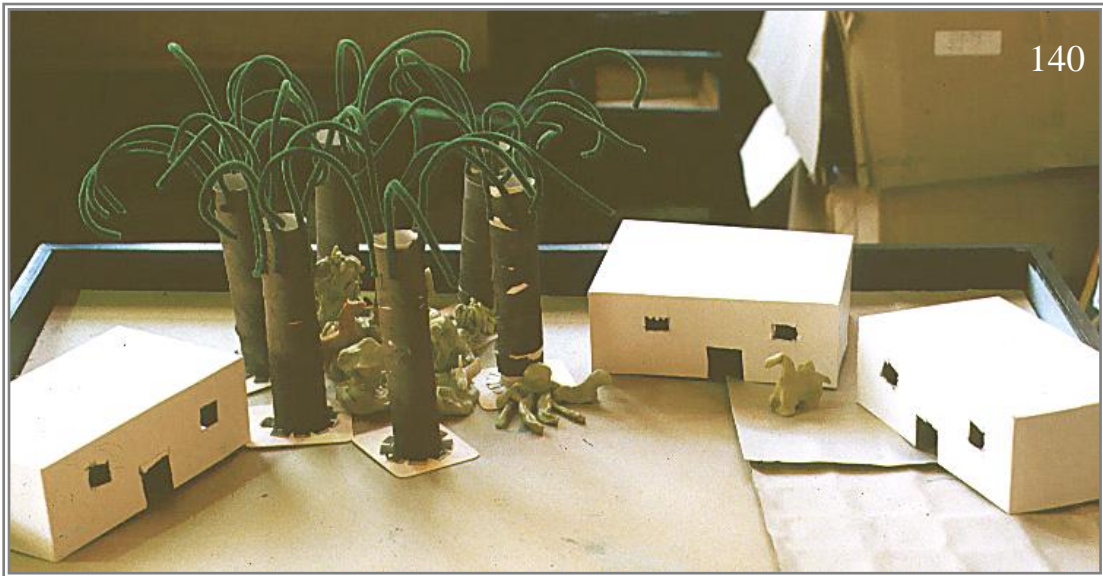
Finally, I want to direct the attention of researchers and research institutes studying Third World societies towards children and their culture in rural areas and popular quarters of cities as I have the impression that little effort is invested in research on these topics. Yet, if the situation of children is to improve in these areas and if the desertion of villages is to diminish, a better understanding of the children, their culture and environment and of the changes that affect them will be indispensable.

11.2 Intercultural and peace education in a Western context

The usefulness of the Saharan and North African play and toy heritage is not limited to North Africa and the Sahara or to the Third World as it is quite possible to integrate it in what is called intercultural or peace education, for example in Western Europe where many immigrants from these regions settled down decades ago.

As a volunteer of the Ghent Committee for UNICEF in Belgium, I worked out a small project I like to entitle "the world at play: intercultural education through toys and play". Within this project I started in 1989 to work with a preschool group of children of about five years. I showed them a short series of slides referring to the games of make believe of the Ghrib girls and boys of the Tunisian Sahara. In this series of slides the reality of the children's daily lives is portrayed as well as the interpretation of this reality in the children's play and toy making activities. The themes evoked are: life in the desert; the oasis; animals; the household; spinning; weaving; and the modernization of nomadic life. After the children have seen and commented on the slides, I asked them to look for some advantages of living in the desert and some disadvantages of life where they grow up as well as for some inconveniences of life in the desert and some pleasant aspects of life in their homes. The children spoke, for example, of the sunny weather, the free space, the availability of play-mates in the desert in contrast to the rainy weather, the danger of playing outside, the loneliness of a lot of children in Belgium or the scarcity of water, food, toys and luxury goods in the desert versus the abundance of all this in Belgium.

After playtime, the girls and boys were divided in several small groups. Each group made something to create an oasis village as seen at figure 140 on next page. Some children made a copy of the houses they saw on the slides, others made a palm tree, a well, a dromedary and so on. The materials at their disposal were waste material, Plasticine, building blocs, green pipe cleaners and cardboard tubes of kitchen rolls.



As I mentioned at the beginning of the session the relationship between the travelling of the Saharan nomads and that of the modern nomads of circuses and fairs, some children created with Lego blocks a caravan like that of figure 141. Another task was to find among plastic animals those that can live in the desert and the oasis. At the end, the children learned a little song with a more or less known repetitive simple melody but with adapted words. Then they walked around their oasis village while singing and imitating the walking of a dromedary (fig. 142).



Since this experience, I have used the same approach to the intercultural from the first to the sixth year of the primary school, each time in sessions of one hour. In the class I use a video of twenty minutes on the way children from Kenya in East Africa live and play, a video made for the Dutch Committee for UNICEF. This way some Ghent children were confronted with a quite different material situation and family life but they also saw that the Kenyan children are creative in making their toys. This brought more than one primary school child to express spontaneously its admiration for this creativity and know-how. After the video, the same way of opposing what the pupils like or dislike in their own life and that of the African children is worked through. As I give this intercultural program in the lessons of religion or lay ethics, the teacher often continues this approach in a subsequent lesson and/or gives the children the possibility to make toys with waste material they bring from their homes. So doing a small pedagogical project is elaborated possibly giving rise to an exposition of the toys, designs and stories realized during this intercultural education program. It also occurred that I was asked to enter a pedagogical project related to a specific theme such as 'water', 'waste and recycling', 'environmental protection', 'children's creativity'. In these cases I select a series of slides on play activities and toys from the Tunisian Sahara and Morocco to exemplify certain topics linked to these themes.

Another experience, I have lived through in April 1992, brought me into contact with two groups of completely or partially deaf children. The program lasted for half a day. As the possibilities of verbal expression are limited, I stressed the visual aspect by showing first the already mentioned video followed by a series of 50 slides on the life and the games of the Ghrib children. Afterwards the pupils of the specialized primary school made toys with waste material, musical instruments and so on, just as they had seen on the video and the slides. This first attempt clearly shows the usefulness of such an approach, although it would be necessary in order to be more efficient to insert in the pedagogical process an introduction of at least one hour to transmit to such deaf children the verbal information that makes the visual information more easily understood.

In the context of a UNICEF-day, organized by the Ghent Committee for UNICEF on May 10th, 1998, it became once more clear that children are easily stimulated by examples of toys made by Moroccan children to create themselves toys with waste material (fig. 143-144).



What I found very stimulating and useful in such playful approaches to intercultural education is, next to the stimulation of the creativity and personal effort of these Ghent children, the promotion of a more positive image of Third World children, an image that very often is unilaterally negative and based on images of sick, miserable or starving children, images one regularly sees on television, as if this is the only reality of Third World children.

The results of these pedagogical activities have convinced me of the certainly limited but creative possibility of using play activities and toys for an intercultural purpose. By doing this it may be feasible to prepare young children to become adolescents and adults less prejudiced towards the social, cultural or ethnic minorities or majorities living with them, on the one hand, and towards peoples and societies of foreign countries on the other hand.

Lazarine Bergeret of the International Federation for the Education of Parents shares this idea. In her article on dolls in the toy library she writes that the curiosity of those working there extends from the toys to all cultures, all latitudes, all periods, all civilizations and the enrichment of their information brings them slowly to look for a common message of humanity for which play could be a common language. If a toy library decides not to lend them out, maybe at least the dolls can be exhibited in the toy library just as it could be done in a school. Lazarine Bergeret continues by saying: often the teachers I could inform or stimulate to take advantage of the workshops, organized within the exposition on the dolls of the world in the Musée de l'Homme (in 1983), telephoned to tell me of their observation of an enrichment in the children's improvisations but also of a better understanding between children of different ethnic groups. It was not the anticipating choice of the parents that determined the style of the dolls but a first step towards a possible empathy through the sole confrontation with the dolls of the others. I cannot affirm or deny that it is necessary to have dolls in a toy library. Each team of toy library workers has to think about its own choices, however I know that each child writes its own history through the changing succession of its choices. And perhaps this history would be less violent if already during childhood the dolls of others were known and accepted (1985: 164, 166).

Lazarine Bergeret and I find ourselves in good company in this field as already in 1989, the European Council's Workgroup for the Encounter of Cultures, Division of Education of the Council for Cultural Cooperation, included in its recommendations for intercultural pedagogical activities the theme of play and toys (p. 9-10).

Therefore it is necessary to link an *intercultural approach to play*, into which fits my research, to a *playful approach to the intercultural*. This is essential as the individual of today, and surely the one of tomorrow, will find it difficult to survive in a local and world-wide environment, more and more multicultural and interdependent, if he has not learnt to develop a personality able to understand *both* the universality *and* the specificity of the living conditions of his own group and of other societies all over the world. I hope that this way youngsters and adults can function in a more appropriate manner in the multicultural societies that have developed recently in today's larger cities.

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All the photographs of the toys of the collection of the Département d'Afrique Blanche et du Proche Orient of the Musée de l'Homme have been made by M. Delaplanche, D. Destable, Ch. Lemzaouda or D. Ponsard of the Laboratoire de Photographie of the Musée de l'Homme.

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Appendix 1:

Scheme for a detailed description of play activities and toys

This scheme for a detailed description of play activities, games and toys is only intended as an aid for doing research, not as an exhaustive analysis of all aspects of these playful activities. Possible remarks and suggestions are welcome.

1 Name of the play activity (1)

- 1.1 Name in the local language in its original alphabet
- 1.2 Transcription
- 1.3 Translation

2 Origin of the play activity (2)

- 2.1 Indigenous, foreign
- 2.2 Ancient, recent
- 2.3 Recent variant of older game

3 Player(s)

- 3.1 Number of players
- 3.2 Sex (3)
- 3.3 Age (4)
- 3.4 Formal education
- 3.5 Reason for co-option into playgroup (age, sex, sibling, family member, neighbor, friend, school class member...) (5)
- 3.6 Structure of playgroup (according to age, sex, leadership, role distribution, cooperation, confrontation...) (5)

4 Spatial-temporal data

- 4.1 Place (interior, exterior; countryside, town; relief; field, wood, waterside, street, playground...)
- 4.2 Time of the year and/or of the day
- 4.3 Duration of the activity (6)
- 4.4 Frequency (exceptional, rare, common, very common)

5 Idioms (7)

- 5.1 Play activity without a narrative component
- 5.2 Play activity with a narrative component (corporal, musical, verbal expression; e.g. specific gestures, terminology, oral literature, songs)

6 Object(s) used for the play activity (8)

- 6.1 Name of object(s) (e.g. materials, tools, toys) (1)
- 6.2 Origin of object(s) (9)
- 6.3 Description of material(s) and tool(s) used (10)
- 6.4 Description of toy(s) and toy making process (10)
- 6.5 Maker(s) of toy(s) (11)
- 6.6 User(s) of toy(s)

7 Description of the play activity (12)

- 7.1 Start of the play activity
- 7.2 Rules
- 7.3 Stake
- 7.4 Process
- 7.5 Reward and/or sanction
- 7.6 Reaction of the player(s) and/or onlooker(s)

8 Remarks (13)

9 Audio-visual data

Design, photo, slide, film, video, sound recording

NOTES

- 1 As the transcription in Latin is only approximate of the local pronunciation, it is recommendable to make a recording of the names and other linguistic data related to the play activity. Next to a literal translation a free translation can be given. This free translation is based on the activity itself or on its resemblance with another (European) play activity.
- 2 This is not about discovering the origin of the play activity or toy as this is often plunged in the darkness of time but to determine if a play activity or toy belongs to tradition (grandparents generation or before) or is recent, local or imported.
- 3 Girls' or boys' play or toy only means that according to the children or adults the play activity or toy is for girls, boys or both sexes. If it is only for one sex this does not mean that occasionally a child of the other sex cannot engage in it.
- 4 The information on the age of the players is often approximate.
- 5 The factors determining the choice of the players and the structure of the playgroup are in North Africa and the Sahara determined by the residential and family structure. So most of the time children of the same paternal family or of the neighborhood play together, especially in rural areas. In the urbanized villages, the small and big towns the importance of kinship decreases and the importance of neighborhood, school relations and friendship rises. Age and sex as factors of co-optation and playgroup structure become more important from the age of about six years. To analyze the playgroup structure aspects such as playgroup without or with leader(s) and (follower(s), way of decision-making (agreement between players, imposed by a leader), way of inclusion or exclusion of a player can be looked for.
- 6 The duration of a play activity is difficult to determine as there sometimes exists a simple and more elaborate version. This information should give an idea of the average time as the length of the same play activity played at different times or by different children is quite variable.
- 7 Terminology, expressions, riddles, proverbs, stories, songs used in the play activity. If possible make recordings. They can also be of value for linguists and other researchers.

- 8 Play objects and toys are part of the play activities in which they are used, not separate items. So, even if a research concentrates on toys and the process of toy making, a (short) description of the concerned play activity should not be overlooked.
- 9 In relation to the origin of a toy, a difference can be made between the origin of the toy itself (locally made, made by national industry, imported) and the local or foreign origin of the model that inspired the making of the toy.
- 10 The description, use and role of the toys and other objects are normally given in the description of the play activity.
- 11 When a child or an adult (outside the commercial circuit) makes a toy reference is made to the age, the sex and the social situation of the maker, and possibly also to the relationship between the toy maker(s) and the child using the toy.
- 12 Mention if the complete version of the play activity is described or a simple version. It happens for example that the same game is played by younger children and by older children but according to more simple and more complex versions.
- 13 Here information can be given on the eventual relationship between the play activity/toy and the physical, economic, social and cultural environment in which the players live (e.g. the relation to the place of residence, way of subsistence, economic activities, family organization, customs, rites and feasts).

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Appendix 2: Autobiographical notes

Born on August 16th 1940 in the historical city of Ghent in Flanders, Belgium, I was raised in a middle class family together with four older brothers. It might be that my interest in children and youngsters, already present during my studies for social worker, is linked to my involvement in the scout movement first as child and youngster then as scoutmaster. Another line of interest already present at the age of about fifteen years has been Africa, especially Black Africa. So, I saw my studies for social worker from 1958 onwards as a preparation for entering the social services of what still then was called the Belgian Congo. However, the independence of the République Démocratique du Congo in 1961, the year I got my diploma, brought a quick end to this project. Wanting to go to Africa anyhow, I wrote to the embassy of many African countries and to some international institutions. One of the rare answers came from the UNESCO specifying that one needed a university degree. It is this letter that drove me to start studies at the ethnological section of the department of African Studies of the State University of Ghent in 1963, the year also that my first child out of four was born. Although the professor in charge of my end of studies dissertation warned me of the, according to him, lack of ethnological information on childhood, I was convinced of the contrary and wrote a study on traditional childhood in the Democratic Republic of Congo in 1968. Once finished, these culture-oriented studies did not offer much possibility to go to Africa either and so I decided to try to engage in scientific research. I was fortunate to be accepted by the Belgian National Foundation for Scientific Research with a research proposal on the Islamisation of the Wolof kingdoms in Senegal. However, financial problems made an early end to my research stay in that country in 1969.

Back in Ghent, I worked for two years as an educator of youngsters in problematic situations. It is during that period that I began to think of continuing my earlier research on African childhood. Accepted once more as a researcher by the Belgian National Foundation for Scientific Research I completed my doctoral thesis in Dutch on “Child and Society.

The Process of Socialization in Patrilineal Central Africa” in 1973. As this research was based on an extensive use of documents, I strongly felt the need to do fieldwork. Due to familial, financial and political reasons doing research in Central Africa did not seem feasible to me, so I asked my friend and colleague Gilbert J. M. Claus who was preparing his thesis on the Ghib semi-nomads from the Tunisian Sahara if I could join him. When he agreed, I proposed to the same research foundation a research on children’s socialization among the Ghib. My first research period of three months started in March 1975 and was followed by two other periods in the autumn of the same year and the spring of 1977. It is during my first stay among the Ghib that I came to realize the importance of children’s play and playgroups not only to gain information on childhood but also to become accepted by the children and their families. So, I concentrated on this aspect of the Ghib children’s culture making a detailed description of their play activities and toys, illustrating these with many slides and some filming.

After these eight years as researcher (1970-1978), I had to redirect my professional life. I was lucky to find in 1980 a suitable new field of activity in establishing, together with a Turkish colleague, the first municipal social service for Turkish and North African migrants of the City of Ghent. Because of this change of work environment, my corpus of games and toys of the Ghib children was at risk to remain unused. It is then that I started to search in the bibliography on North Africa and the Sahara for information on children’s games and toys. This search resulted in a commented bibliography. When visiting in 1982 the Musée de l’Homme in Paris a few exposed toys from Tuareg children and from some North African populations struck my attention. Knowing that in old museums the reserves contain much more than is exposed, I contacted the concerned department and found in the reserves a large collection of toys from North Africa and the Sahara bridging a period from the end of the nineteenth century till about 1960. Having obtained the permission of Dominique Champault, the head of the Département d’Afrique Blanche et du Proche Orient, I analyzed this collection in detail during my vacation periods.

In the middle of the 1970s an important change in my scientific affiliation gradually took place. Up to then I related myself to the field of African and Oriental studies, talking on a few occasion of childhood in Central Africa and then on Ghib children's play. Yet, as I felt isolated with my research topic I looked for new contacts. My first attempt to overcome this isolation was by participating in the OMEP World Congress in Copenhagen in 1975 where I presented a paper on "Children in Exceptional Situations in Africa" (Rossie, 1982). The same year I gave two lectures at the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences of the University of Geneva, one on the same topic and another on children's socialization in Central Africa. Moreover, I visited Irenäus Eibl-Eibesfeldt of the Arbeitsstelle für Humanethologie of the Max Planck Institut für Verhaltenswissenschaft in Percha bei Starnberg near Munich. This professor introduced me to filming according to his human ethological method what resulted in 1977 in an unpublished film of about one hour on relations between children and between adults and children among the Ghib of the Tunisian Sahara (film placed in the video library of the Musée du Jouet de Moirans-en-Montagne).

Meeting André Michelet in 1987, then president of the International Council for Children's Play (ICCP), introduced me to the world of play and toys. It is within this association that I really started to discuss my research results and that I was able to publish in French my first book on Saharan and North African children's dolls and doll play. It is also in this association that I met Brian Sutton-Smith who proposed me in 1993 to become a founding member of the International Toy Research Association (ITRA). When I came into contact with Krister Svensson at the first International Toy Research Conference in 1996 I finally found a scientific haven first within the Nordic Center for Research on Toys and Educational Media (NCFL) at Halmstad University in Sweden and from 2002 onwards in the Stockholm International Toy Research Centre (SITREC) at the Royal Institute of Technology in Stockholm. It is only with the help of these two centers that I have been able to make available my information on Saharan and North African children's play and toys.

No doubt this change in scientific references and contacts with associations and researchers from the fields of African studies and ethnology to the fields of child and play studies is clearly reflected in my work. It also has stimulated my endeavor to relate the play and toy

worlds of Saharan and North African children to the theoretical and pragmatic approaches of Western and non-Western play and toy scholars. For example more than one aspect has come to my attention and was worked out because of my participation in thematic congresses.

In 1990 I left the social service for migrants with the intention to devote my time more directly to write a series of books on Saharan and North African children's toy and play cultures and to engage in fieldwork. Looking for a new research field I chose Morocco among other reasons because I could rely on my friendly connections with a Moroccan family living in Ghent and having among its relatives a primary school headmistress in Marrakech. With the remaining money of a second research grant from the Belgian National Foundation for Scientific Research I went for a three weeks research trip to Marrakech in February 1992. The gathered information and the elaborated contacts with families in Marrakech and Imi-n-Tanoute as well as with the Faculty of Literature and Human Sciences of the Cadi Ayyad University of Marrakech seemed promising. So I decided to do research in Morocco through periods of more or less two months twice or three times a year. Except in the year 2001 that is what happened. Returning to Marrakech in October 1992, I was proposed the role of an extra in a movie to be filmed in the high dunes near Kénitra. Seizing this occasion to be near Rabat, I stayed after this experience in the Medina of Kénitra for about three years. Afterwards I moved to Khemisset and later on to Midelt. Returning to Morocco after a year of absence, I went in the beginning of 2002 for three months to Sidi Ifni, a small coastal town south of Agadir, where I already had made superficial contact with a few primary school teachers. Visiting one of these teachers in his mountain village school, I was contacted by a teacher of the first grade, Boubaker Daoumani, who expressed his interest in my research and wanted to collaborate. Returning to Sidi Ifni for a second period of three months in October of the same year, I settled down in a popular quarter situated on the slope of a hill facing the Atlantic Ocean.

Advancing in age steadily I see the end of this research and writing activities approaching too quickly, an end I nevertheless hope to be still years away. Pushed by this feeling and while commenting on the book of Shlomo Ariel (2003) or studying the book of Julie Delalande (2001) and the articles in the book of Julia Bishop and Mavis Curtis (2001), all

analyzing different linguistic, cultural and social aspects of children's play activities, I sometimes feel sorry to have to notice the little my work offers in comparison to all that needs to be done. Nevertheless, I feel comforted by the certitude that everything comes in its proper time and that one-day the past and contemporary toy and play cultures of the Saharan and North African children will be recognized as of major importance by the scientific, cultural and educational institutes of their countries. If I have been able to contribute to this for even a tiny part I shall feel gratified. Meanwhile, I feel supported by the interest shown by some colleagues for my research and its results. Yet, I also hope that play and toy scholars will try to integrate in their analyses and theoretical elaboration the available information on Saharan and North African children's play, games and toys.

Having stayed somehow a social worker and being since long a volunteer of the Ghent Committee for UNICEF I am concerned to find ways in which to make my information, photographs and toy collection useful on a social and pedagogical level. This resulted in the elaboration of what I like to call a playful approach to the intercultural. This concern also stimulated me to work out two temporary expositions one within the Ghent public school system (December 1982), the other in the Musée International des Arts Modestes in Sète, France (November 2001 – February 2002) and a permanent exposition of my collection of Ghrib toys in the Toy Museum in Mechelen, Belgium (1983-). Since my participation in the Agadir Summer University in 2003 new opportunities for action oriented research and practice in Morocco seem to come to the foreground but it certainly is too early to know if something will be realized through the established contacts.

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Back cover

In this book Jean-Pierre Rossie presents a vivid picture of the unknown but exciting world of Saharan and North African children's toys and play. He also links this important aspect of local children's culture to the Western debate on children's play with toys.

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<http://www.scribd.com> (search Jean-Pierre Rossie)

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The collection: *Saharan and North African Toy and Play Cultures*

- Children's dolls and doll play, 157 ill.
- The animal world in play, games and toys, 103 ill.
- Commented bibliography on play, games and toys

The collection: *Cultures Ludiques Sahariennes et Nord-Africaines*

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