DÜNYADA VE TÜRKİYE’DE DEĞİŞEN ÇOCUKLUK

CHANGING CHILDHOOD IN THE WORLD AND IN TURKEY

III. ULUSAL ÇOCUK KÜLTÜRÜ KONGRESİ BİLDİRİLERİ
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Yayına Hazırlayan
Prof.Dr. Bekir ONUR

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CHANGING TOYS AND PLAY IN A CHANGING AFRICAN CHILDHOOD

JEAN-PIERRE ROSSIE

Abstract

In the preliminary notes a brief overview of my research on Saharan and North African play, games and toys, and of the used methods and sources is given. Then follows an attempt to discuss the topic of changing childhood in an African 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.

Examples of toys and play activities, I have found during my fieldwork among children from Morocco and the Tunisian Sahara, will illustrate several factors influencing their toys and play activities. These factors of change are schooling, gender differentiation, adult interference, television, emigration, tourism, industrialization and consumptive society.

After this analytical approach some general remarks from a socio-cultural, historical and socio-semiotic perspective are proposed. These remarks came to the foreground in account of my own research and the research of other scholars studying childhood and play in a broader African context.

Finally, some problems and limitations of the research will be mentioned and attention is to be drawn to possibilities for using such research in the field of intercultural and peace education, and informal and formal education.

1. Introduction

Already during my studies to become an africanist my major topic of interest has been childhood and socialization resulting in a doctoral thesis “Child and Society. A Study of the Process of Socialization in Patrilineal Central Africa” written in Dutch in 1973. Between 1975 and 1977 I did fieldwork among the seminomadic Ghrib from the Tunisian Sahara for three periods of three months with the purpose of studying children’s upbringing and socialization. It is during
my first field trip that I experienced the advantage and the usefulness of participating in children's playgroups. So I decided to concentrate on children’s play activities and toys in the first place, thinking to use the collected data and the established relationships as an adequate entry into the broader topic of childhood (1). However, due to changes in my professional life I have not been able to continue this research among the Ghrib.

Having elaborated a quite complete analysis of the Ghrib children’s play activities and toys, I started to look in my spare time for information on Saharan and North African play, games and toys in the related literature (2) and in the Musée de l’Homme in Paris where I found in the reserves an important collection of toys from these regions. Following another change in my professional life, I could start in 1992 to conduct yearly research periods of several months in Morocco, especially in rural areas and popular quarters of towns, a research that is still going on.


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. Additionally a few human ethological methods were used in the Tunisian Sahara, especially the minute to minute recording of longer observation periods and indirect filming (3).

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. After wards, 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 activities and the toys of the 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 I have elaborated, that a more objective and representative view of the play, games and toys of Saharan and North African children can be worked out. I only hope to have offered a first and valuable contribution to make this happen.

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Since I have been introduced to social semiotics by Theo van Leeuwen in 1997, I have tried to apply this approach in looking for "how meaning is produced and communicated in specific social settings" (Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996, Reading Images. The Grammar of Visual Design, Routledge, London, New York, p. 264) when analyzing my data on Saharan and North African children’s play, games and toys (4).

Calling myself a sociocultural anthropologist means that I predominantly look for the cultural aspects and the social environments of children’s play activities. This sociocultural viewpoint is also related to a historical perspective whereby the topics of continuity and change and the study of links and ruptures between past, present and future become important. This historical perspective came especially to the foreground when analyzing the distribution in time and space of a typical type of toy-animal, modeled in clay and having its two front legs assembled into one trunk (fig.1), as I was able to show that this toy tradition extends from the Niger bending in Mali to the Mauritanian Sahara and spans a period of more than two thousand years (5).

As research in non-Western societies mostly stresses the collective, that what is common to the members of a social entity, so did my own research until the moment I needed to reflect on individuality when invited to give a lecture at the ‘1° Biennale del Gioco e del Giocattolo. La Creatività’ in Torino, Italy, in November 1988. Since then, I am paying more attention to individual differences and differences between playgroups instead of focusing almost exclusively on conformity and reproduction (6).

Although I do not want to oppose a local African 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 and interpretation of the collected data not to rely on presuppositions and to avoid a Western biased approach. But even if I hope to have succeeded to do so for the greater part, only other researchers and especially researchers from the concerned region can verify this.

I want to stress another point of view one should always keep in mind when studying toys and play, namely that 'there is play without toys but no toy without play'. Unfortunately, there exists much 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 certainly is easier to get information on a toy than on the play activity for which it is used.

2. Changing African Childhoods

Although it is neither easy nor simple to evoke the evolution of African 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 African childhood and at the same time the play activities and toys of African children. 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 African populations show such a diversity, as well within as between countries, that speaking of Africa and of African childhood 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 real situations.

Nevertheless, I want to put forward some statements concerning childhood that as far as I know are valid for most African 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 who 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 ludic heritage, 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 (7);

- the quite autonomous extended family system in which African children traditionally did grow up has often been broken open as new agents of socialization came to the foreground, the state controlled youth centers and the European schoolsystem in particular (for a discussion of the influence of the European schoolsystem see Lancy; David F., 1996, Playing on the Mother-Ground. Cultural Routines for Children's Development, The Guilferd Press, New York-London, p. 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 as is the case in other spheres of life like technology, economy or law (8);

- the authority of the parents and of the family elders, although sometimes criticized in private, is seldomly openly questioned;

- the role of the peers and the 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 phantasy;

- 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 (9).

A Moroccan author 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 (10).

I could offer some generalizing examples of changes in children's lives based on my own experience of changing childhood in the Tunisian Sahara in the 1970s and in Central Morocco in the 1990s (11). However, I am convinced that 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 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.
# Changes in Childhood Over Three Generations within a Central Moroccan Rural Family, Midelet Region, 1940-2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Changes in Childhood</th>
<th>Grandmother</th>
<th>Mother (A)</th>
<th>Mother (B)</th>
<th>Mother (C)</th>
<th>Son (A)</th>
<th>Daughter (A)</th>
<th>Daughter (B)</th>
<th>Son (B)</th>
<th>Son (C)</th>
<th>Daughter (C)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Born</td>
<td>In 1940 At home</td>
<td>In 1962 At home</td>
<td>In 1968 At home</td>
<td>In 1973 At home</td>
<td>In 1981 At hospital</td>
<td>In 1985 At hospital</td>
<td>In 1988 At hospital</td>
<td>In 1987 At hospital</td>
<td>In 1989 At hospital</td>
<td>In 1997 At hospital</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magical practices (1)</td>
<td>Fully applied during childhood</td>
<td>Fully applied during childhood</td>
<td>Applied during first 40 days</td>
<td>Applied during first 40 days</td>
<td>Applied during first 40 days</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical care (2)</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children actual planned</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children death before age</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age or wished age at marriage</td>
<td>14 year</td>
<td>18 year</td>
<td>15 year</td>
<td>17 year</td>
<td>- (3)</td>
<td>20 years at earliest</td>
<td>20 years at earliest</td>
<td>- (3)</td>
<td>- (3)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic tattoo (4)</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used language</td>
<td>Local Tamazight Berber (5)</td>
<td>Local Moroccan Arabic (5)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living place</td>
<td>House with garden in small village</td>
<td>House without garden in small town</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobility</td>
<td>No change in living place till marriage</td>
<td>Moving from French lead mining center to small town and then to small village</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Moving from small town to small village</td>
<td>No change in living place</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Small town-village-other small village</td>
<td>Village-other small village-small town</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Big town-small village-small town</td>
<td>Big town-small village-small town-same village</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House members</td>
<td>Parents, children, paternal and maternal aunt</td>
<td>Parents, children, maternal grandmother when widow</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grandparents, parents, children, till few years ago also two unmarried sisters of the father</td>
<td>Parents, children until divorce (1990), then grandmother, mother, boys, two unmarried maternal aunts, and two unmarried maternal uncles till 1998</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grandparents, parents, child, now no grandparents (2000)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water supply</td>
<td>Well outside or in irrigation canal</td>
<td>Well in house</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Well in house</td>
<td>Well in house</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Public fountain in street of small town, well in village house, running water in small town house</td>
<td>Running water in town houses, well inside village house</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electricity</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes in town, no in village</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
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<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Television</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>From 14 years</td>
<td>From 7 years</td>
<td>From 3 years</td>
<td>From birth</td>
<td>From birth</td>
<td>From birth</td>
<td>From 5 years</td>
<td>From 3 years</td>
<td>From birth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toys</td>
<td>Only traditional mostly selfmade toys</td>
<td>Traditional mostly selfmade toys with very few exceptions (7)</td>
<td>Almost no traditional and no selfmade toys but market or shop bought plastic toys, mostly imported toys (8)</td>
<td>Mostly traditional and selfmade toys until moving to town (9)</td>
<td>Rare traditional, no self-made and few imported plastic toys (10)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schooling</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Till 5th year of primary school</td>
<td>Till 5th year of primary school</td>
<td>Till 5th year of secondary school</td>
<td>Starting 4th year of secondary school</td>
<td>Starting 5th year of primary school</td>
<td>Starting 1st year of secondary school</td>
<td>Starting 4th year of primary school</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distance from home to school</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Primary school Year 1-2: 10' Year 3-5: 1h</td>
<td>Primary school Year 1-2: ½ h Year 3-5: 1h</td>
<td>Primary school Year 1-3: 10' Year 4-5: 1h</td>
<td>Primary: 10' Secondary: 1h</td>
<td>Primary: 10'</td>
<td>Primary school Year 1-2: ½ h Year 3-6: 10'</td>
<td>Primary school Year 1-3: 10'</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
(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 introcuced 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 ethic 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 Tamazight language. The grandparents also speak Moroccan Arabic with their grandchildren. Although the younders of the third generation understand Tamazight 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 of the exceptions was a plastic cat with wheels and a turnable head. The traditional toys made by adults are next to the spinning 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 watergun. 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 actual 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 Tamazigh Berber 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 litterature, songs, music and dances, which are only replaced by a limited Moroccan Arabic heritage transmitted by the Berber 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 them and with their parents. As an example, the household of the grandmother, the mother (B) and her two sons have left their village in 1996, shortly preceded or followed by the households of some directly related maternal and paternal relatives.

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 did become part of these children’s life.

9. Limitation of the household members to the nuclear family, although sought after especially by the 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 the 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 five 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 the small towns but also in the 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 selfmade or adult made toys to bought industrial toys is linked to urbanization but since a 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 seem to 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 (12) and schooling, but also of tourism, all promoting Westernized ideas and attitudes by underlining the importance of individual achievement and consumption.

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 schoolsystem. Yet, all adults mentioned in the microscopic analysis state that the authority of the adults over the children surely has diminished and that the children have acquired a greater ability to challenge this authority and to resist formerly automatic corporal punishment in case of disobedience.

3. 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 African children also influence their ludic heritage. 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 consumptive society (13).

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 seventies, 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 which 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. 1). Some fifteen years later, in 1991, the facial features now designed by the school going girls themselves are well elaborated (fig. 2). At that moment, another innovation in the making of female dolls did also come up. Therefore the Ghrib girls have made use of one of the waste products of the consumptive society, a consumptive society that has succeeded in integrating the Ghrib 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 (14).

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. According to the necessities of their fantasy play, the doll was dressed as a baby, a young girl or a young woman and she listened to 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 MAD (0.6 EUR or 0.7 $), 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 women 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 to show me how she transformed, as a girl of about nine years old, the plastic doll from Hong Kong, China or elsewhere, into a real bride of Marrakech.

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 at 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 doll’s house, 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 figuring cups of tea.

A real novelty for rural Morocco are, as far as I know, the doll’s house 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 doll’s house that overcomes her mother’s objections (fig.3). The doll’s house is a cardboard box with four little windows and a door, cut out in the four sides, decorated with curtains at the inside. 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 doll’s house, often plays at marriage with such a doll’s house and a bride doll. The bride doll is as peculiar as the doll’s house. 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. 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 closely at the doll one will remark 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.
In Moroccan rural villages one finds today as well the self-made doll as the imported plastic doll, a plastic doll sometimes adapted to local ways by giving it a self-made dress (fig. 4). 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 Ergoubi 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.

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 touristic objects. The same evolution, but more likely referring to the toy-animals and toy-cars made by the boys, can be observed in other Moroccan and African touristic places, possibly changing a child’s play into child labor.

Another example of the influence of tourism on children’s toys is already a lot older and related to the beautiful dolls’ houses of the girls of the small town of Oualata in the Mauritanian Sahara. 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 dolls’ houses of Oualata will become souvenirs intended for tourists... They are ugly, the children do not play with them and their function has completely changed (175 ans d’ethnographie à Neuchâtel, Musée d’Ethnographie de Neuchâtel, 18 juin - 31 décembre 1967, 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 the ludic is not from today in North Africa and the Sahara as Herber mentions in 1918 the selling of European dolls in Moroccan towns (Poupées marocaines, Tiré à part des Archives Berbères vol. 3, fasc. 1, p. 65-82, Publication du Comité d’Études Berbères de Rabat, Paris, Éditions Ernest Leroux , p. 80) and Dupuy writes in 1933 that German toys are sold in Tunisia during the ashûra festivities (“Les jeux des enfants tunisiens”, in Outremer, Paris, V, p. 308-319).

The evolution of North African and Saharan dolls refers to the ludic activities of girls as boys only rarely make dolls (15). But the evolution of toys representing means of transport and technology on the contrary refers to the sphere of ludic activities of the boys (16).

In the 1970s when the Ghrīb lived a more or less seminomadic life; their boys liked to play with and to make a sometimes mounted toy-dromedary. But for a toddler just a piece of wood would do to represent the symbiosis that existed over centuries between the Ghrīb and their dromedaries of which they were renowned breeders. In the second half of the 1970s it was obvious that different toys and games of the Ghrīb boys were influenced by the evolution of their community from...
nomadism to sedentariness, such as playing at being a village merchant or at irrigating a miniature oasis garden. 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. There were also some self-made toys, called bicycles, with which their owners ran over the sand dunes. But more popular were the toy-cars as in the case of the Peugeot collective taxi made with wet sand (fig. 5). And young boys identified so much with this prestigious item of modernity that they became a living car (fig. 6). Now that the oasis of El Faouar, were most of the Ghrib 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. When this toy selling will expand, it certainly will cause a regression of toy making by the Ghrib children themselves.

A truly important consequence of the impact of sedentarization and modernization on Ghrib 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 Ghrib boys but it reflects the reality of children’s games and toys among the Ghrib 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 with the boys, Ghrib 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 restricted to the sphere of ludic activities. In the primary school of El Faouar, established in 1960, there were no Ghrib girls attending the lessons. Gilbert Claus wrote in 1983: “Actually, the Ghrib 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.” (“The Pastoral Ghrib of the North-Western Tunisian Sahara. Causes and Effects of the Transition from Nomadism to Sedentariness”, in Liber Memorialis Prof. Dr. P.J. Vandenhouw 1913-1978, Seminarie voor Etnische Kunst, H.I.K.O., Rijksuniversiteit te Gent, Gent, p. 137-138).

This distinction between the ludic activities of boys and girls among the Ghrib reflected a growing disparity between the childhood of boys and girls and consequently between the male and female living conditions. Indeed, Ghrib 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, Ghrib 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 Ghrib families. As a result, nowadays, many Ghrib girls are attending the primary school of El Faouar. 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 small towns one can see boys making toy-
animals with local material such as palm-leaves, reed, wood, courgettes or clay.
Two little boys of five and seven years living in Goulimima, a small town in central
Morocco, made in September 1994 some toys in clay among which a mule, a
snake, a bird, a cat, a scorpion and a lizard. 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 do 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 Melilha 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, a girl of about three-years-old, standing in front of her house in the
same town of Midelt in November 1998, did hold a teddy in her arms.

Although locally made or imported plastic toy-utensils, toy-weapons, balls,
dolls and toy-animals, 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. In this context I would like to stress the importance of the influence of
North African emigrants, an influence that also can be observed in the case of
children’s toys. When these emigrants return to visit their family they do
not bring with them useful presents only but also prestige presents, among which
European dolls, toy-animals, toy-weapons, bicycles, etc.

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 of Tabenattoute near Midelt replaced by a wooden
stick in November 1997.

As in the whole region, motos (fig. 7), cars and trucks fascinate Moroccan
boys, as well city boys as those of remote areas. A young shepherd ran in June
1994 with his elaborated toy-car over the road from Tiznit to Tarfayaute in South
Morocco. This car uses as wheels two floaters of a fishing-net. Another boy from
the village Douar Fzara near Kenitra made in 1993 an elaborated truck using
thrown away oil filters as wheels.

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. 8).

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 Ghrib family living in El Fauar 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. 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.

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 changes occur most of the time by two ways: by using local materials and techniques to create toys referring to new items, for example the just mentioned toy-telephone in clay or a tractor of cactus pieces (fig. 9), and by using new materials and techniques to produce toys referring to local themes, for example plastified electric wire to make a dromedary and its rider.

As the evolution towards a consumptive society is slowly but surely moving on in North Africa and the Sahara, many children whose parents cannot afford to buy good quality toys and therefore often buy uncomplete, damaged or poor quality second hand 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. These cheap toys can be dangerous for children as safety control for toys is lacking in the region. This commercialization of toys also stimulates the attitude of looking at toys as gifts from adults to children, an attitude that until recently was as good as non-existent.

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 ludic functions it should have according to the child;
- change because of environmental influences, such as other available materials, 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...


Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen stress the influence of Western visual communication, such as television and advertising, on traditional visual forms (1996, Reading Images. The Grammar of Visual Design, Routledge, London, New York, p. 4). This influence is clearly found in the play activities of Moroccan children, especially when boys are enacting aggressive play sequences copied from Kung Fu and other action films. When 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 surely will have a greater impact on self-made or locally produced toys.

According to Juliette Grange, children’s toys and games have inertia for changes and conserve old customs (1979, “Histoire du jouet et d’une industrie. Une tâche impossible...”, in Jaulin Robert, Jeux et jouets: Essai d’ethnotechnologie, Aubier, Paris, p. 234). Although this seems to be true for North African and Saharan toys and games, one should never forget that the technological, economic and sociocultural evolution of the societies in this region has influenced this ludic heritage. 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’.” (Dahlberg G., Moss P. and Pence A., 1999, Beyond quality in early childhood education and care: postmodern perspectives, Palmer Press, London, p. 180-181, as quoted in Evans Judith L., 2000, “Parent participation: what’s it about?”, in Early Childhood Matters, The Bulletin of the Bernard van Leer Foundation, June 2000, n° 95, p. 7-17, p. 8).

However, it is clear that the ludic activities of the girls remain longer within the sphere of tradition than those of the boys who willingly find inspiration in technological innovations and sociocultural 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.
Through their imitative or fantasy games, children not only react to changing situations in their natural, material and sociocultural environment but they can also foresee them. A phenomenon Alain Polcz called “anticipating play” (Summary of his lecture The Anticipating Play, 16 ICCP-Congress 1987, International Council for Children’s Play, Suhl, 12-16.10.1987, p. 1). The playing of the Ghrib and Moroccan boys with imitation cars, motors or telephones, in a period when these technological items are still seldom, certainly make these boys better acquainted to them.

I feel inclined to say that in the sphere of ludic activities, where ancient and new types of toys and games mix daily, 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, “Children’s game and toys preferences: a cross-cultural comparison”, in International Play Journal, 3, p. 59).

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 MAD (5 EUR or 6 $) 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.

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 has 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 not found one made recently by a city girl in Morocco. 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. In June 2000, I found another example of the 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 viewed 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 all keep this packaging with them. In his book on Kpelle childhood David F. Lancy notes that the children could be quite innovative (p. 178). The same creativity is also showed by other African children such as those from the Waso Boraana of Kenya (Aguilar, 1994, p. 34).

4. Conclusion

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 the older children’s knowledge and experience onto 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 be equally supported.

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 the museum collections enlarges this period and in this case of the Saharan and North African play activities and toys the covered period spans the whole twentieth century. The available data show that the children from these areas 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 a changing African childhood can be adequately illuminated by studying the evolution of these children’s ludic activities (17).

Before rounding off this article, it is 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. Another unfortunate restriction lies in the fact that the toys are too frequently described as objects and not as instruments of play. So, the ludic 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. Another
limitation is directly linked to my fieldwork as the information gathered here only speaks of 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 the Saharan and North African children’s ludic heritage and its evolution than is achieved here.

Taking into account these limits, 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 ludic heritage 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.

Although the theme of games and toys, as well on a scientific as on a practical level, receives very little attention in North Africa, it is sure that the development of preschool education and pedagogical innovation will necessitate the taking into account of the play activities of children, and it is here that a study of local play activities and self-made toys can find its major utility (18). But I think that my research can also be useful for cross-cultural analysis, for intercultural and peace education and for making this Saharan and North African ludic heritage to become part of the children’s global cultural heritage.

The usefulness of the Saharan and North African ludic 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 pedagogy, peace education or mundial education, for example in Western Europe where many immigrants from these regions settled down decades ago (19).

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 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 imitation of the Ghrib girls and boys of the Tunisian Sahara. In this series of slides are shown and the reality and the imitation of this reality in the ludic activities. The themes evoked are the life in the desert, the oasis, the animals, the household, the spinning, the weaving and the modernization of nomadic life. After the children have seen and commented 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 little groups. Each group made something to create an oasis village.

Some children made a copy of the houses they did see on the slides, others made a palm tree, a well, a dromedary and so on. The materials at their disposal were waste materials, plasticine, building blocks, green pipe cleaners and cardboard tubes of kitchen rolls. As I mentioned at the beginning of the session the relationship between the transhumance of Saharan nomads and that of the modern nomads of circuses and fairs, some children created with Lego blocks a caravan pulled by a horse with its rider.

Another task was to find among plastic animals those who 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.

Since this experience, I used the same approach to the intercultural from the first to the sixth year of the primary school, each time during one hour. In the class I used a video of twenty minutes on the way children from Kenya in East Africa live and play, a video realized 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 the making of 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.

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, 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.

What I found very stimulating and useful in these ludic 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 until then was unilaterally negative and based on images of sick, miserable or from hunger dying children, images one did see again in the news on Black Africa in 1998, as if this is the only reality of Third World children.

The results of these pedagogical actions have convinced me of the certainly limited but creative possibility to use ludic 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. But already in 1989, the Workgroup for the Encounter of Cultures of the Division of Education of the Council for Cultural Cooperation of the European Council included in its recommendations for intercultural pedagogical activities the theme of play and toys (GROUPE DE TRAVAIL POUR LA RENCONTRE DES CULTURES, 1989, Expériences d’éducation interculturelle. Pistes pour activités pédagogiques interculturelles, Conseil de la Coopération Culturelle, Division de l’Enseignement Scolaire, Conseil de l’Europe, Strasbourg, p. 9-10).

Therefore it is necessary to link an ‘intercultural approach of the ludic’, into which fits my research, to a ‘ludic approach of 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 and the universality and the specificity of the living conditions of his own group and of the other societies all over the world. I hope that this way the youngsters and the adults can function in a more appropriate manner in the multicultural societies that have developed recently in today’s larger cities.

Finally, I would like to direct the attention of researchers and research institutes, especially those linked to non-western societies, to the evolution of childhood, play and toys in rural areas and in popular quarters of towns. I have the
impression that there not enough efforts and means are invested into research on children's cultures. Yet, if the situation of children and parents should improve in these areas and if the desertion of rural areas has to be diminished, a better understanding of childhood and its evolution will be indispensable.

Notes

(1) This fieldwork and my research up to 1992 has been financed by the Belgian National Foundation for Scientific Research, Brussels.

(2) The analyzed ethnographic, linguistic and other literature can be found in my book Saharan and North African Ludic Heritages. Commented Bibliography on Play, Games and Toys, NCFL website: http://www.hh.se/ide/ncfl/Publications.html

(3) In 1975 I had the opportunity to go to the Arbeitsstelle fur Humanethologie of the Max Planck Institut fur Verhaltenswissenschaft in Percha bei Starnberg (Germany), where Irenäus Eibl-Eibesfeldt introduced me to human ethological research and lended me the necessary film equipment. The filming among the Ghrib resulted in a 16mm 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 16mm color film on the making of a doll by a girl (1975). I have given these unpublished films to the archives of the Nordic Center for Research on Toys and Educational Media. There exist also a published video on the making of Moroccan dolls: Rossie Jean-Pierre, Rossie Souad, Björn Sterner, 1998, Homemade Dolls from Morocco, Nordic Center for Research on Toys and Educational Media, 18 minutes.


(8) An interesting example of as well the continuing influence of traditional childcare among the Samburu and Turkana of Kenya 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, note 17).

(9) 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 fiancée. 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. At this moment robots of the Terminator kind are the best sold ("Le marché du jouet", 1993, in Enjeux, le Magazine de l'Entreprise et de l'Économie, n° 58, novembre, Maroc, p. 32-38, p. 35-36).


(12) The industry and services closely or distantly related to the child make a real effort to change the values and attitudes of the Moroccan middle class stimulating directly the individuality of their children and youngsters (see underlined text), their insertion in the Western way of life and their participation in the post-industrial culture and the consumer society, as clearly signified in the photomontage serving as flashy eye-catcher of the publicity material for a children’s fair as described below, 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 that, according to the French advertisement, 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 will take 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, a.o. a children’s fair for children between two and eighteen 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 will present their new products. A children’s fashion show is to be organized with the participation of several children. Activities and games will also be available. Other child related activities are programed 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 of 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 - http://news.central.co.ma - toute l’actualité marocaine 24h sur 24h en langue française, 9 July and 9 August 2000 - http://news.central.co.ma/promo/planete/default.asp.

The heading for this advertisement of a Salon de l’Enfant, 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 16 and 26, 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 cheerleader 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 the children of the different Moroccan regions, as if the natural environment of the sunny beach and the sea have become unadapted for this purpose.

(13) For my talk at the congress a series of 59 slides has been used. However, most of these photographs can be found in the figures illustrating my books.

(14) Gilbert J.M. Claus told me that the Ghrib girls actually also make doll heads cut out in a piece of cardboard or whole dolls with textile fabrics. All the information on the Ghrib from 1978 onwards has been told to me by dr. Gilbert J.M. Claus, Department of African Languages and Cultures, University of Ghent, Ghent, Belgium.


(17) Interested readers can also find information on African childhood, play and toys, and its evolution in the following recent documents:


*Early Childhood Matters*, the Bulletin of the Bernard van Leer Foundation, The Hague, the Bernard van Leer Foundation can be contacted at http://www.bernardvanleer.org – email: registry@bvleerf.nl (the bulletin *Early Childhood Matters* can be obtained free of charge).


(18) For a discussion of preschool education in Morocco see El Andaloussi, 1999 (see note 17).

List of Figures

1. Girls holding their dolls, the one on the left tried for the first time to design a face on her doll, 1975, Ghrib, Sahara, Tunisia, photo by the author.
2. Female doll with a plastic flask as head, 1991, Ghrib, Sahara, Tunisia, photo by Gilbert J.M. Claus.
4. Female plastic doll, 1996, Ignern, Morocco, photo by the author.
5. Toy-car made with wet sand, 1975, Ghrib, Sahara, Tunisia, photo by the author.
6. Becoming a taxi and the driver, 1975, Ghrib, Sahara, Tunisia, photo by the author.

The photographs shown in this article are in black and white.

Hereafter the original colour photographs are reproduced.