

Jean-Pierre Rossie and Khalija Jariaa

## Moroccan girls' play inspired by TV 'French tourists visiting Morocco'

The make-believe play described below was put on stage in the village Douar Ouaraben situated in the periphery of the town Tiznit in southern Morocco<sup>1</sup>. Khalija Jariaa<sup>2</sup> observed and photographed this play activity that took place near the house where she lives since her marriage (fig. 1).



According to the girls, the play's theme refers to French tourists, *tarumit n fransa*, visiting Morocco. The inspiration for this play comes from what the girls have seen on the Moroccan TV news and in a documentary series on tourism in Morocco. Additional information comes from TV ads, overheard adults' and adolescents' discussions and talk among peers.

One day towards the end of the school vacation, lasting for two weeks in the beginning of November 2007, the girls start playing at about nine o'clock in the morning till about twelve o'clock. In the afternoon they continue this play activity from about three o'clock till seven o'clock. The girls regularly play in the morning and in the afternoon at the back of the house of Latifa and Saadiya because then there is shadow there (fig. 2). They speak Tashelhit, an Amazigh (Berber) language spoken in the Anti-Atlas and Souss region.



On the photo above Fatim Zohra holds a mother doll and a daughter doll. Against the wall there is the small house delimited with stones. Five girls: eight-year old Latifa, her sister nine-year-old Saadiya, nine-year-old Fatim Zohra, eight-year old Habiba, and seven-year-old Atika regularly play together (fig. 3). For their make-believe play on this day they rearranged a small house.



To the bottom left of the above picture is the dining-living room where according to the girls there is a TV that however is not represented by an object. To the right of the dining room lies the bedroom which a bed, the cover of a fridge box found in the garbage. The room at right of the dining room will be used as kitchen and the last room is a bedroom. In relation to what the girls have seen on TV the small house represents an apartment for French tourists in Zagora at the edge of the Moroccan Sahara not far from the Algerian border. The boys playing nearby don't interfere with the girls' play. One boy is playing with a stone thrower and the other pushes a two wheeled car in front of him.

In the dining room there is another house made with a cardboard cover taken from the packing of tomatoes by Smaïl, an eight-year-old boy and the brother of Latifa and Saadiya (fig. 4). This toy house contains at the front left a kitchen with a sink made with aluminium paper. To the right of the kitchen there is a small fountain with rose water from the region of Zagora as seen on *amuddu*, 'travelling' in Tachelhit, a prize winning long standing Moroccan TV program describing in each episode about 40 minutes long a given Moroccan region or

location and paying attention to its history as well as its geographic particularities, inhabitants, nowadays situation and touristic possibilities. There are three bedrooms and in between two bedrooms lies the dining room and salon with a sofa and two low tables. Smaïl has given this house to his sisters. Yet, the girls don't play now with this small house.



All the dolls have been dressed and sometimes given hair by Saadiya with the help of her sister Latifa. The plastic dolls are found among the garbage dropped in the wadi or often dry river passing by Douar Ouaraben at about hundred meters from the house where the girls play. Saadiya has distributed the dolls to her playmates who give them back when they stop playing. It is also Saadiya who proposed the theme of the make-believe play. She clearly is the leader of the playgroup.

Saadiya arranges some dolls (fig. 4). These dolls represent French tourists: a mother and her little girl lying both near Smaïl's small house, the mother's neighbour with an orange dress and a Moroccan woman who is an acquaintance of the French women and has gone with them to the apartment in Zagora. At the feet of the mother doll and the Moroccan woman doll lays a perfumed soap with a flower on top of a table, a bottle of syrup and a tube of toothpaste. Before the table stands a bottle of perfume. On the yellow table lies a bouquet of flowers as those given to a beloved one. In the small plastic box at right of the yellow table there are some bottle stoppers and other waste material to be used by the girls. In the imaginary street in front of the apartment stands a self made Coca-Cola truck.

On figure 5 one sees a bed in a corner of the bedroom. In the room besides the dining room the girls have arranged a kitchen with all the utensils they need to play dinner and a used plastic bowl with flour below the girl's foot. The two Moroccan girls to the left and right of Saadiya live in Casablanca and came with their parents to visit family in Douar Ouaraben. They watch the playing girls but do not participate in the play activity.



Latifa, Habiba and Atika go to play in a small house to the left of the small house where they were playing. The three girls play as if they are going to eat at the house of the neighbours, something commonly done during festive days. Saadiya and Fatim Zohra continue to play on the same spot.

Figure 6 shows Fatim Zohra manipulating the girl doll and says: “Mama I want to sleep”. Saadiya holding the mother doll answers: “good, you know where the bed is”. Fatim Zohra asks in the name of the girl doll: “mama you are coming to sleep with me?” and Saadiya answers “I shall change my cloths, put on a pyjama and then I come to sleep with you”. The two girls from Casablanca look at the scene.



Somewhat later the play theme is changing. At the bottom right of figure 7 appears a doll representing a Moroccan housekeeper working for tourists which Saadiya gives the name of Jouma, Khalija Jariaa’s friend of about fifty years who does this kind of work. Saadiya plays the role of Jouma and Fatim Zohra the role of Veronique, an about thirty-year-old French woman staying regularly in Morocco and represented by the doll with an orange dress. The doll Jouma wears a scarf because according to Saadiya her hair should not fall into the food

while cooking. This episode is based on what Saadiya the day before heard Jouma telling Khalija about Veronique who asked Jouma to wear a scarf when doing the housekeeping.

After Saadiya has told this story to Fatim Zohra, Veronique (Fatim Zohra) takes her mobile phone, a plastic toy mobile phone made in China, and calls Jouma (Saadiya) who takes up her mobile phone, an empty toothpaste tube. Veronique tells Jouma to prepare dinner in the house in the Medina where she lives and adds that she will come and pick her up at eight o'clock in the evening. Fatim Zohra takes Veronique and puts her on a seat of the cars represented by part of a plastic train. Saadiya takes Jouma and puts her in Veronique's imaginary car on the seat represented by the other part of the train. At about half past five in the afternoon, the play activity ends because Saadiya's mother calls her in for dinner earlier than normal as they will walk to a garden in Tiznit.



In the village Ikenwèn the girls above ten years regularly look on the local Moroccan channel 2M at a program called '*dar u dekor*', house and decoration, broadcasted on Sunday evening around eight o'clock for about half an hour but often interrupted with commercial ads. In this

program they find ideas on how to organize and decorate their small houses according to new Moroccan standards.

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<sup>1</sup> The village Douar Ouaraben lies just outside the town Tiznit, a southern Moroccan town at the foot of the Anti-Atlas Mountains at 100 km from Agadir in the direction of the Sahara and at 18 km from the Atlantic Ocean. Douar Ouaraben with more or less 250 houses and 1500 persons is situated near the asphalted road to Sidi Ifni. Douar Ouaraben is increasingly becoming an urbanized village and in 2010 it became a new quarter of Tiznit. This village is nowadays only separated from Tiznit by a stroke of land about 400 meters long that will be build with houses in the coming years. In Douar Ouaraben there is a primary school and also three *rawd el affâl* (informal preschools). In the largest one, run by three young unmarried women and with some thirty children, children from the age of one year are accepted. This preschool is financed by the town of Tiznit but when a child is five the parents must contribute 50 dirham (5 €). The two other preschools, each run by an unmarried young woman, take children from the age of three years onwards for which the parents pay a fee of 60 dirhams (6 €) a month. The preschools and open from Monday till Friday, from 8.30h till 12h and from 2.30h till 17.30h. During lunch time the children go home although there is a possibility to leave the children in the preschool on demand. The children receive some training in Arabic, French, arithmetic and the Koran for about 30 minutes with in between time to play and eat. Beneath the age of three the children play and eat what their mother has prepared for them. Douar Ouaraben is undergoing the influence of the quickly growing and, according to Moroccan standards quite wealthy town Tiznit. Almost all houses have TV and about half of the households also have a parabolic antenna. Although the sea is not so far away the children don't have the possibility to go there except on very exceptional occasions. Some families have members who migrated to Europe and who more or less regularly visit their family. When doing so, they also bring some toys from West and South European countries and the behaviour and outfit of the adolescent girls of these emigrants certainly influence the local children and youth. No tourists are visiting Douar Ouaraben but since the beginning of 2011 a few camping cars stay overnight near the village.

<sup>2</sup> Khalija Jariaa developed since 2002 from being a housekeeper to an informant and an ethnographic research assistant. About 2008 she became a trained observer and since then does this independently making photographs and sometimes short videos with a digital photo camera. Her training and the supervision of her fieldwork is the responsibility of Jean-Pierre Rossie. The questioning of Khalija and the writing out of the observation protocol was done by Jean-Pierre Rossie with the help of Boubaker Daoumani. The languages used in this process are Tashelhit (Khalija Jariaa, Boubaker Daoumani), Moroccan Arabic and French (Khalija Jariaa, Boubaker Daoumani, Jean-Pierre Rossie). The final English version has been written by Jean-Pierre Rossie who is also responsible for the research and its results.