

Moroccan Anti-Atlas Amazigh Children's Play and Toy Heritage in a Developmental and Intercultural Perspective

By Jean-Pierre Rossie

ABSTRACT

The author wants to promote the recognition of Amazigh Anti-Atlas children's culture and other North African and Saharan children in the countries where they live. As part of the heritage of humanity, children's cultures have great developmental and pedagogical potential for intercultural and pedagogical activities locally and in a Western and non-Western context.

As a sociocultural anthropologist and after fieldwork in 1975 in the Tunisian Sahara, I concentrated on children's play, games, and toys in the Sahara and North Africa. From 1992 until 2000, this research took place in central Morocco among Arabic-speaking and Amazigh-speaking families. Since 2002, I have been among Amazigh (Berber) children living in the Western part of the Anti-Atlas Mountains.

The goals of the author's research and writing are to record, archive, analyze, and distribute written and visual information on Saharan and North African children's toy and play heritages and documenting their evolution. This article and the author's research are intended to promote awareness for, interest in, and the use of children's culture, especially their play, games, and toys in this region and worldwide. The author's research recognizes children's rights and the vital role of children as active participants in the society they grow up. Finally, this article seeks to stimulate the integration of North African and Saharan children's cultures into humanity's tangible and intangible heritage.

Keywords: Amazigh, child, development, intercultural, play, toys

Recently, the ethics of the research on and with children became an urgent topic. Wanting to observe and photograph young children during play, an ethnographer will get a quick reply, "they relate, or they withdraw." Participant observation is impossible without being trusted by the

children, their families, and the neighbors. They feel respected and appreciated when seen as valuable informants and producers of objects and knowledge. I obtained permission for research on children from mothers, fathers, or other adult caretakers. The interested

reader can find more details on this research's ethical and methodological aspects in a recent publication (Rossie et al., 2021, 454-465).

In this article, I will not describe the games and toys of the concerned children. However, this is no problem as this information is available in several books of the collection *Saharan and North African Toy and Play Cultures* (Rossie, 2005-2013), a series of toy catalogs (2015-2016) and in the article *Amazigh Children's Toys and Play Cultures* all available on the Internet.

The second section discusses three topics related to playing and toy-making of Amazigh children: toy-making materials and techniques, relations between children and between children and adults.

The third section looks at the role of local play and toy activities from a developmental perspective. In Anti-Atlas rural communities, children often live in multilingual and multicultural environments, speaking Tashelhit but learning Moroccan Arabic from a young age. Moreover, the media, tourism, and importing foreign objects and ideas promote a multiculturally vibrant environment. Three topics are discussed:

- the local play culture concerning the development of children, families, and communities
- the influence of sociocultural change
- the situation of local children's culture within the Moroccan school

The fourth section refers to an academic field of growing importance, intercultural and global

education. It proposes concrete examples of using Moroccan and Tunisian Sahara children's play and toy-making activities in some Western and non-Western countries. These workshops aim to stimulate insight, empathy, and creativity and show the richness and creativity of children living in African rural areas and popular quarters of towns. This positive image of African children gained by seeing and experiencing their toys and games contrasts with the negative image shown in the media.

Finally, I put forward some concerns about the future of Moroccan children's play and toy-making activities. These views proceed from my conviction that play and toy-making activities can have a decisive role in North African children's development and promote an intercultural understanding of a global level.

Amazigh Children's Play and Toys

Describing Amazigh children's play and toys living in the Anti-Atlas Mountains is not feasible here, but it is easily accessible on the Internet. This section discusses the cultural and social aspects of Moroccan Amazigh children's play and toy culture. These aspects are materials and techniques for toy-making, the relations between children and between children and adults in play and toy-making. *In Toys, Play, Culture and Society*, the same topics are analyzed in detail for Saharan, and North African children (Rossie, 2005/2013, 19-80, 117-136) and especially about Amazigh Anti-Atlas children in *"Make-believe play among Amazigh children of the Moroccan Anti-Atlas"* (Rossie et al., 2021).

It is not an exaggeration that Anti-Atlas children experience and learn most about their natural, animal, and human environment through their play and toy-making activities. They use material of mineral origin (sand, stones, clay), vegetal origin (cactus, leaves, flowers, reed, branches, fruits, nuts), animal origin (bones, snail shells, hair), and human origin (hair). Moreover, they are specialists in re-using all kinds of waste material. The child's and a playmate's body also becomes a self-evident means of playing.

In Moroccan rural areas in general and in the Anti-Atlas, children's leisure activities are often outdoor and collective activities. In these regions and from about three years onwards, playgroups become next to the family, the primary social organization for children. Mixed playgroups with girls and boys up to about six years old are regularly playing under the supervision of an older girl, exceptionally of an older boy, whereby the young ones engage in parallel or collaborative play. What young children experience and learn through their playful relations with same age or older children is without any doubt of fundamental importance in the development of their lives and the relationships they will build out as adolescents and adults. Moreover, these relationships significantly influence socialization, cognitive and social functioning development, communicative skills, convictions, morality, and beliefs. In playgroups, it is in these children's societies that girls or boys learn most games, venture to make toys, integrate the rules managing playgroups and those underlying gender differences, learn the non-verbal and verbal child culture, and so on. Situations of

informal learning regularly occurred when making observations.

At about six years, children progressively escape the control of an older child and start organizing their playgroups with peers, although there can be quite some age difference. The composition of these groups is based on kinship and neighborhood, something that strengthens the cohesion between its members. From that moment on, comrades of age become an essential reference group, and long-lasting friendships are built that may continue into adolescence and even adulthood. Although mainly composed of same-sex children, mixed groups can occasionally be found.

Amazigh children's play is intimately linked to the real world where they grow up, and the author has not documented play unrelated to reality. Therefore, it is sure that young children learn much about their natural and human environment through the games they play and the toys they make. Nowadays, one may find imported dolls, robots, and soft toy animals in villages, referring to an unreal world. However, when children play with these toys, it almost always refers to a natural person or animal. Another aspect of the real world typical of these children's outdoor play is a confrontation with risk and risky behavior. Something Western children are lacking when their parents strive toward a 'zero risk' situation. Research on young children's play and toy-making activities in the Anti-Atlas show these activities mainly take place in a friendly, positive, and cooperative atmosphere. Nevertheless, one should not idealize

these playful relations because they are not always harmonious, cooperative, and conflict-free.

A particular aspect of adults' reaction to children's play and playgroups is that they rarely interfere except when the children disturb them too much, need help, or when a dispute or other situation becomes dangerous. However, the fact that adults rarely interfere in children's play and toy-making activities does not mean that the adult world is absent from the children's play world. On the contrary, children's games enact mothers, fathers, grandparents, other family members, teachers, workers, traders, singers, musicians, and other individuals. This children's interpretation of adult life promotes the transmission of the lifestyle of older generations and the keeping up of the existing sociocultural system. Doll play and other rural children's make-believe games relate, with few recent exceptions, to an idealized version of local adult life. For example, the dolls often represent socially valued characters in locally enviable situations during wedding play. The fact that many toys and games their rural parents and grandparents played are still played by their children and grandchildren proves that intergenerational communication is going on. However, the influence of change is growing fast. Nevertheless, this transmission is much more based on contact between older children and adolescents with younger children than between adults and children.

There is one period in the year when Moroccan parents and other adults traditionally offer children toys, sweets, and new. Ashura is a ten-day feast at the beginning of the Muslim year. Less important periods when children may

receive gifts are the Mussum, the yearly village or town feast with its fair and popular festivities, and the Mulud, the anniversary day of the Prophet Muhammad. On these occasions, adults sometimes make a toy for a child. Nowadays, an adult might buy a toy when visiting a village or town market. Children's anniversaries often pass unnoticed, at least among popular class families in rural areas. However, change is going on, among other factors stimulated by the anniversary feasts on Moroccan television.

In general, most adults are indifferent to children's play and toy-making. This detachment exists in Anti-Atlas families and among preschool and primary school teachers. The lesson schedule in preschool and primary school classes offers almost no time to play. This situation is the case for the expensive private preschools, one-class preschool schools run in a garage or a home, and the private and the official primary school.

Play and Toys in Child, Community, and Education Development

In this part I want to promote the study, recognition, and use of local play activities and toys in the development of Moroccan children, their families, communities, and the educational system teaching these children.

The Child, its Family and Community, and the Indigenous Play Heritage

We should view the role of play and toy-making activities in the development of Moroccan children through a holistic approach to girls and boys within their natural, material, cultural and social milieu. The age of the children under

discussion goes from three to fifteen years of age. In villages and rural centers, they mostly live in multicultural and bilingual or multilingual environments, especially when their mother tongue is an Amazigh language. Already in preschool but entirely in primary school, the teaching language is Arabic, and basic knowledge of French is taught. A particular situation occurs when some parents and other adult family members speaking an Amazigh language decide to use Moroccan Arabic with their children, arguing that this will offer them a better start in primary school. But even in such cases, children are impregnated by the Amazigh culture and language of their families and playgroups. In this context, it is necessary to mention the importance of the children's mother tongues as expressed in UNESCO's International Mother Language Day (Heugh, 2017). In the Anti-Atlas, the toy, high tech, and entertainment industries, the media and tourism, together with many imported items, all influenced by Chinese, Egyptian Arabic, English, and French languages, and cultures, stimulate the integration of foreign cultural and linguistic entities.

International organizations promoting the development of children and stimulating a locally adapted educational system put forward the following principles:

- Respecting local child and family identities and cultures.
- Relating actions to the family and local environment.
- Using young children's mother tongue.
- Involving children in their development.

- Stimulating children's resilience.
- Helping children develop physically, socially, emotionally, intellectually, and morally through playful activities.

These principles demonstrate the need to respect, study, promote, and use children's cultures in formal and informal education and the strategies of organizations and associations that address children, women, and families. Maybe it is necessary to add to the saying that *children are the future of a country*; another saying, *development that neglects children's participation has no future*. Knowing that play, games, toys, and other forms of entertainment like storytelling, music, dance, and feasts are essential in children's lives, we should recognize them for their great value and utility for an ecologically, culturally, socially, and educationally adapted development.

In the author's publications on children's play and toy-making activities, several cultural and social topics are discussed, such as signs, meanings, communication, rituals and festivities, the influence of gender, child-child relations, child-adult relations, and continuity and change. Two fundamental aspects are briefly analyzed here as they directly relate to education: gender differentiation and the relationship between children. From six years onwards, girls and boys mostly create separate playgroups in which they experience role models and develop an identity in the company of same-sex peers. Nevertheless, one must be cautious with generalizing statements as the gender cleavage can sometimes be overcome, for example, when a girl infiltrated a boys' playgroup by proposing to clean their play area

(Rossie, 2008, 150-151). The doll and household play of Anti-Atlas girls and the toys they make for these games strongly refer to the duties and tasks of rural women: fetching water, molding corn, baking bread, preparing oil, washing linen, and spinning, weaving, and dressing up. In their play, girls exchange information, discuss roles, and experience feelings about womanhood and men-women relations. The make-believe play of Moroccan boys refers mainly to jobs and tasks of adult men in construction work, farming, and trading (Rossie, 2008) or to being police officers, soldiers, vehicle drivers, and technicians (Rossie, 2013). Playing with peers and somewhat older girls or boys certainly promotes the transmission of information and the discussion of viewpoints.

The play environment of little boys and girls usually is limited to the space adults can oversee (fig. 1). Older children like playing at some distance from home (fig. 2). A distinction must also be made between boys and girls, as boys enjoy more freedom and time to play than girls. Older boys are sometimes found kilometers away from home. Older girls must stay closer to home,



Figure 1. Sisters' household play, eighteen months and three-years-old, Ighrem-n-Cherif, Morocco, 1994, photo by the author (Rossie, 2008, 116).

be available to help a mother or look after small children and remain under tighter control.



Figure 2. Boys' percussion orchestra on the road to the harbor, 2005, Sidi Ifni, Morocco, photo by the author (Rossie, 2013, 249).

During the day and evening, children from about three years spend a lot of time outside their homes. They often group themselves in small children's societies based on family and friendship ties according to age. Toddlers mostly remain under the control of a girl or even a boy six years or older. From the age of about six years, mixed groups concerning sex and age become differentiated in girl groups and boy groups, and it is then that peers become an essential reference. These playgroups have great importance in the holistic development of children. Outside the home and in interaction with youngsters, children learn most games and venture to make toys, many linguistic and other skills are trained, and child culture is transmitted. Moreover, they socialize to the rules that manage relationships between peers and younger and older children or girls and boys. Undoubtedly, the knowledge, experience,

and skills acquired outside the home and in playgroups offer a valuable resource that any development action and teaching must consider based on the indispensable respect for the child's culture and sociocultural environment.

In *Rural Moroccan Children's Play and Toys in Multicultural and Multilingual Environments*, the reader will find a discussion on different social and interpersonal aspects, cultural and linguistic aspects, individual aspects, and material aspects based on a detailed analysis of three long videos made in 2002 in and around Sidi Ifni (Rossie, 2003, 6-16).

The Influence of Economic and Sociocultural Change

The times that rural Amazigh children grew up in isolated villages, rural centers and monolingual and mono-cultural communities are gone for long. Since then, the change from tradition to modernity has proceeded consistently quicker. These youngsters nowadays live in multicultural and multilingual environments. The recent high-tech products, like smartphones, Facebook, and WhatsApp, are seldom unknown to primary school and even some preschool children. Therefore, it is inadequate to study these children's play and toy heritage as belonging only to tradition while neglecting the evolution play practices and toy-making have undergone (Rossie et al., 2021, 446-453).

There was enough evidence to support the claim that Anti-Atlas girls' play, and toy-making activities remained linked to tradition for a longer time than was the case for boys who quickly integrated technological innovations. However,

one can no longer uphold this statement as it is contradicted by girls' make-believe play referring to daughters of emigrants, European female tourists, and Egyptian belly dancing. New interests and concerns are also expressed like modern health care, the situation of disabled persons, going on holiday, and migration. Moreover, making dresses for their second-hand plastic dolls inspired by Moroccan and European fashion is becoming popular among rural girls (Rossie et al., 2021, 446-454).

A long-standing and significant factor in the evolution of rural children's play and toy heritages is related to the desertion of the countryside. A substantial change in children's culture occurs when a family leaves its village and settles in an urban environment or when a town expands its perimeter by urbanizing neighboring villages. When this happens, not only the available play areas and materials change but also the socio-cultural references, so crucial in make-believe play. The establishment of primary schools and so-called preschools and the growing enrolment of girls in these educational institutions also play an essential role.

The growing influence of globalization on children's culture, especially their play and toy heritage, relates to several factors. It becomes more challenging to observe rural children making toys primarily because of the massive import of toys made in China and second-hand toys imported from Europe. For one or two decades, this situation combined with a fundamental change whereby children receive industrially produced toys on market days and during festivities like the popular *Ashura* and

Mulud feasts. Nowadays, parents and other family members may also give toys to a child for its birthday. All this offering of toys to children promotes an attitude whereby making toys oneself becomes obsolete, and toys increasingly are expected to be gifts from adults (Rossie, 2005/2013, 130-131).

Television, Smartphones, and digital video media bring Anti-Atlas children in contact with the way people eat, dress, play, go to school, travel, and celebrate in different Moroccan regions and other countries. Watching movies, videos, and comics from the United States, Brazil, Egypt, England, France, Japan, and Mexico exposes them to new cultural and linguistic influences.

European tourists and tourists of Moroccan origin living abroad directly and indirectly influence the ideas and behavior of Amazigh children. This indirect influence is seen in recent girls' doll play (fig. 3).



Figure 3. Doll play about French tourists at the beach, Douar Ouaraben, Morocco, 2006, photo Khalija Jariaa (Rossie et al., 2021, 106-108).

Notwithstanding the reality of the evolution of Anti-Atlas children's play heritage away from tradition and towards modernity, many play and toy-making activities popular in the times of parents and grandparents are still found regularly in rural communities. However, it remains to be seen what the result will be in one or two decades of the recent changes introduced by the toy and entertainment industries and by high-tech innovations. Nevertheless, evolution did not create much conflict between the old and the new at the beginning of the 21st century.

The Moroccan School and the Local Play Heritage

Parents and educators should integrate child culture in general and especially the local play and toy heritage into developing an adapted formal and informal education. The reader will find a more advanced analysis of examples of using children's play and toy heritages in developing countries and of the situation in Moroccan preschools and primary schools in two publications (Rossie, 1984, 2011).

The strategy stipulating pedagogical actions should relate to children's experiences is clearly stated in the Moroccan *Charte Nationale d'Education et de Formation* (1999). In translation from French, article 3 reads as follows: the educational system is rooted in Morocco's cultural heritage. It respects the variety of its regional components that enrich each other, and it preserves and develops the specificity of this heritage in its ethical and cultural dimensions. Article 6 says that achieving the objectives requires considering children's psychic,

affective, cognitive, physical, artistic, and social expectations and needs.

The first article of the *Loi n° 05-00 Relative au Statut de l'Enseignement Préscolaire* (2000) states that preschool education should guarantee all Moroccan children the full equality of chances facilitating their physical, cognitive, and emotional development and developing their autonomy and socialization. Referring to this wish to preserve and develop the specificity of the Moroccan cultural heritage through education, one can stress that play and toy heritages should be used to entrench the education system in local realities.

Formal and non-formal education can benefit significantly from a well-considered use of play, games, and toys. If this is true for the Moroccan school, it is even more so when education must adapt to Amazigh children enrolled in preschool or primary school. Talking with children about their play and toy-making activities will establish a positive relationship between teacher and child and reduce the gap between child culture and family environment. It is indicated to start from the knowledge children acquired about their natural and human environment to teach lessons about these topics. This information gathered from children can also be used to develop moral, aesthetic, and physical education activities. The verbal component of games, such as specific words and expressions, riddles, dialogues, and songs, represent a gold mine for the development and learning of language. Physical education teachers, can include several games of skill-development dexterity, equilibrium, suppleness, speed, strength, and self-control in the curriculum

(Rossie, 2011, 15-16). Suppose one wishes to use the local play heritage. In that case, one should not only be interested in the content and form of games but also in their physical, material, technical, linguistic, aesthetic, and moral aspects.

The *Alliance de Travail dans la Formation et l'Action pour l'Enfance* is a non-profit and non-governmental organization founded in 1986 at the University of Rabat. Among the fourteen fundamental principles of its educational vision, at least four are directly related to the eventual use of children's local play and toy heritage:

1. Starting from the child in preschool activities.
2. Exploiting the pleasure of playing as an educational tool
3. Opening to the child's environment and using it pedagogically.
4. Working in small groups.

Concerning working in small groups, teachers should recognize that children are familiar with this situation because of their involvement in children's playgroups. The author is convinced that researching spontaneous playgroup dynamics will help develop an adapted preschool pedagogy.

An evaluation study initiated by the Moroccan Ministry of Education and UNICEF offers a diagnosis of the preschool establishments by analyzing the current situation, comparing it with preschool systems in some Developing and Developed Countries, and offering realistic proposals for ameliorating the preschool in

Morocco (GEF, 2014). When discussing the role of play activities in the preschool of other countries, this study stresses that all analyzed models show that children's play activities are fundamental (7-8). Still, it also states that play is not a priority in about 80 % of the Moroccan preschools, contrary to reading and writing (13). In the conclusions of this study, one reads that a significant obstacle to creating a high-quality and generalized preschool education in this country comes from the lack of a preschool vision proposing curricula based on educational principles. It also mentions that learning through play should be a pedagogical priority (17).

I would emphasize that a change in mentality in preschool education recognizing the socio-cultural and educational value of local play and toy heritages in Morocco and other North African and Saharan countries is necessary. It needs to be complemented with campaigns to change parents' ideas about this new strategy. A member of ATFALE wrote that teachers and parents display a negative attitude towards play and toys in school. This situation creates an essential obstacle to the modernization of preschools, also because parents sometimes expressed reluctance at paying for their children to play in the Qutab [koranic school]" (Bouzoubaâ, 1998, 16).

Using local play heritage from an intercultural and educational perspective

From an intercultural and global education perspective, I discuss this pedagogical field of growing importance, reflecting on my attempts to use Moroccan and Tunisian Sahara children's

play and toy-making activities. This use is realized in workshops with children, children and adult family members, pupils, students, teachers in training, appointed teachers, and volunteers. These activities took place in museums, toy libraries, children's libraries, preschools, primary schools, university settings, and sociocultural associations in Argentina (fig. 4), Belgium, France, Greece, and Italy (Rossie, 2005, 219-239; 2013, 262-289; 2016).



Figure 4. Toy creating workshop with pupils and teachers, 2010, Instituto de Formacion Docentes de Bariloche, Argentina, photo by the author (Rossie, 2013, 278-280).

The universality of the major categories of games, such as make-believe play, construction play, games of skill, games of chance, and the toys used in these games, favors a comparative approach. During these workshops, it has been easy to stimulate insight, empathy, and creativity in the youngsters and adults by showing them the richness and creativity of Moroccan rural children's play culture. The positive image of African children transmitted in such workshops contrasts with the often-negative images of

miserable or starving African children shown in the media as if these messages reflect the only reality of childhood in this continent.

In 1992, the author's intercultural activities ended because of his research in Morocco. Still, they resumed in July 2008 when being invited by the Museum of Childhood of the Peloponnesian Folklore Foundation in Nafplion to develop an educational program related to Anti-Atlas children's play heritage. Inspired by toys Amazigh children had made, Nafplion children between six and twelve created their toys during six workshops. These Greek children made masks and dolls with natural and waste materials searched for in the park surrounding the museum. Since then, using natural and waste material to create masks, dolls, and possibly other types of toys such as vehicles has been a recurrent theme in the author's workshops.

Helpful information and activities on Global Education are found on the website *Global Dimension. The world is your classroom and Global Learning Programme*. On the website of Think Global, which manages these, one reads:

We believe that people need to be equipped with the skills, values, and capabilities for global challenges like environmental sustainability, human development, and conflict resolution. Learning about global issues leads to more tolerance and understanding. This in turn can lead to actions for a better world – which in turn we can reflect on and learn from.

Examples of the role of children's play and toys for global education are found on: <https://globaldimension.org.uk/topic/play-and-toys>.

Next to organizing workshops or seminars and giving lectures, the author donated about 1200 toys to museums and sociocultural organizations in Australia, Belgium, France, Italy, and Portugal. Except for the about forty toys from Ghrib children of the Tunisian Sahara, all the other toys belonged to Moroccan children. Children made the great majority of these toys with natural and waste material. An extensive and longstanding exposition was built in Torino (Italy) (fig. 5), Moirans-en-Montagne (France), and a smaller one in Safi (Morocco) (fig. 6).



Figure 5. Moroccan consul visiting the exposition *Rêves d'Enfants*, Torino, Italy, 2010, photo Roos van Wassenhove.



Figure 6. City children at the youth center of the Fondation Orient-Occident, Safi, Morocco, 2009, photo by the author (Rossie, 2013, 262-268).

The primary reasons to offer these toys to Western institutions are the preservation and disclosure of this vanishing children's culture. Among other reasons is the lack of interest of Moroccan cultural institutions in these great toys and their integration into humanity's tangible and intangible heritage. A description of the concerned toys is given in a series of books called *Saharan – North African – Amazigh Children's Toy Catalogs* (2015-2016), available on the Internet.

It is essential to link an *intercultural approach to play*, which fits his research, to a *playful approach to the intercultural*. It is imperative because individual people cannot survive in a multicultural and interdependent world. Survival is impossible if they do not understand the *specificity* of living in one's community and the *universality* of living in other societies. Employing children's play and toy heritages from around the world for educational and socio-cultural activities offers a nonthreatening, positive, and joyful way to relate children and adolescents to other forms of life and the natural and socio-cultural environment in which populations thrive.

And Finally ...

This article started by stating the importance of the cultural and social aspects of Anti-Atlas Amazigh children's play and toy-making activities, stressing that these activities are fully integrated into local natural and human environments. The ethnographic data makes it possible to offer an overview of these children's play heritage. Still, at the same time, one should

not overgeneralize the findings to the whole of North Africa. Nevertheless, what may be said about Anti-Atlas children may also be said about other Moroccan Amazigh-speaking and Arabic-speaking children. There is a great need for other scholars' research to augment, validate or invalidate the proposed information.

The sections' Amazigh Children's Play and Toys' and 'The Child, the Community, and the Local Play Heritage' have shown that Anti-Atlas children's outdoor play experiences are important factors in their physical, cognitive, and communicative, emotional, and social development. Moreover, all this occurs through children's efforts and active interpretation, not passive imitation. Moreover, the socializing benefits are rather collateral events because children do not play to become socially adapted or ameliorate skills; they play for the fun and well-being it procures.

Observing children's games and how they make toys, talking with them about their play culture, and considering their playful experiences is an excellent way to integrate children's viewpoints and illustrate children's participation in their culture and community.

Noticing the growing influence of the school, media, toy industry, and high-tech products in the lives of Anti-Atlas children, the author has the feeling that several traditional play and toy-making activities will become obsolete or forgotten in the forthcoming decades. In this context, the Moroccan preschool and primary school could play an essential role by recognizing the value and role of children's play heritages.

Research by Moroccan researchers on this vital aspect of childhood would undoubtedly reinforce the information on local children. Some research on children becomes available through dissertations and theses written at Moroccan universities. Still, their themes are often about negative aspects of childhood, such as abandonment, ill-treatment, exploitation, and delinquency. There is an urgent need for research on positive aspects of childhood, such as creativity, cooperation, and physical and intellectual development. Creating a documentation and research center on children and a childhood and toy museum in Morocco could be a significant step forward, just as has been the case in Argentina, Brazil, India, and Turkey.

The living conditions of Moroccan rural children and those of children living in mass consumption societies show advantages and disadvantages. Both situations must be compared using the Amazigh children's play and toy heritage for intercultural and global education. Ignorance about peoples and cultures in a world where one eats and buys things imported from many 'exotic' nations is a contradiction and stimulates distrust and fear. Luckily children often keep an open mind. Using foreign children's play and toy cultures is a friendly and non-stereotyping approach to childhood in developing countries. In doing so, it is necessary to avoid two pitfalls: On the one hand, idealizing the situation of these children because they create great toys, are masters in using natural and recycled material, and have many playmates; on the other

hand, lamenting their situation by looking only at negative aspects such as the problematic sanitary, medical, economic, and educational situation in which these children grow up.

Lester and Russel (2010, p. 52) writes in *Children's right to play. An examination of the importance of play in the lives of children worldwide*:

Play has an essential role in building children's resilience across adaptive systems – pleasure, emotion regulation, stress response systems, peer, and place attachments, learning and creativity. These benefits arise from play's unpredictability, spontaneity, nonsense, and irrationality, and also from children's sense of control. Adults need to ensure that the physical and social environments in which children live are supportive of their play; otherwise, their survival, well-being, and development may be compromised. This does not necessarily mean providing specific services, although there may be circumstances where this is appropriate. But it does mean avoiding the temptation to dismiss play as frivolous, restrict it through fear for and of children, or control and appropriate it for more instrumental purposes.

I entirely agree with this statement. But I must add that when using children's play, games, and toys for sociocultural and educational purposes, adults must be aware that the children need to remain in charge of the playful activities so that it does not turn into a training exercise. He also

wants to stress that children have an active and essential role in communicating, transmitting, and adapting aspects related to developing individuals, cultures, and societies. Therefore, one should also recognize their contributions next to promoting their rights.

Acknowledgment

I sincerely thank the two Anti-Atlas Amazigh collaborators, Khalija Jariaa and Boubaker Daoumani, who participated in the research about Anti-Atlas children since 2002.

REFERENCES

- The author's documents are freely available on two websites: Academia.edu: <https://independent.academia.edu/JeanPierreRossie> and Scribd: https://www.scribd.com/jean_pierre_rossie
- ATFALE (1992). Le jeu dans l'institution préscolaire. Guide d'activités pour le préscolaire. Rabat: Alliance de Travail dans la Formation et l'Action pour l'Enfance, Faculté des Sciences de l'Education, Université Mohamed V. <https://www.facebook.com/Atfale-231671280235636>
- Bouzoubaâ, Kh. (1998). An Innovation in Morocco's Koranic Pre-schools. Working Papers in Early Childhood Development, n° 23, The Hague: Bernard van Leer Foundation.
- Charte nationale d'éducation et de formation (1999). Morocco. <https://www.mcinet.gov.ma/sites/default/files/documentation%20iscae%20rabat%202018.pdf>
- GEF Global Education et Formation, Cabinet de conseil en éducation et formation (2014). Diagnostic et Evaluation de l'Etat Actuel du Préscolaire : Synthèse. Rabat.
- Heugh, K. (2017). Lessons from Africa prove the incredible value of mother tongue learning. Australia: The Conversation. Academic rigour, journalistic flair. <http://theconversation.com/lessons-from-africa-prove-the-incredible-value-of-mother-tongue-learning-73307>
- Loi n° 05-00 Relative au Statut de l'Enseignement Préscolaire (2000). Morocco. <http://www.unesco.org/education/edurights/media/docs/b6e70d437edc203732f7da102046e617ba23bdb3.pdf>
- Rossie, Jean-Pierre (1984/2003). Games and Toys: Anthropological Research on Their Practical Contribution to Child Development. Aids to Programming UNICEF Assistance to Education. Notes. Comments... Child, Family, Community, N.S. 147, Paris: Unit for Co-operation with UNICEF & W.F.P., UNESCO, reedited in 2003.
- Rossie, Jean-Pierre (2003/2013). Rural Moroccan Children's Play and Toys in Multicultural and Multilingual Environments. Paper prepared for the Symposium "Studying Children's Play, Development and Education in Bicultural Contexts", College of Education, University of Illinois at Chicago, Chicago Circle Center, April 18th, 2002, SITREC, Stockholm: Royal Institute of Technology.
- Rossie, Jean-Pierre (2005/2013). Toys, Play, Culture and Society. An anthropological approach with reference to North Africa and the Sahara. SITREC. Stockholm: Royal Institute of Technology.

Rossie, Jean-Pierre (2005). Saharan and North African Toy and Play Cultures. Children's Dolls and Doll Play. SITREC, Stockholm: Royal Institute of Technology.

Rossie, Jean-Pierre (2008). Saharan and North African Toy and Play Cultures. Domestic life in play, games and toys., SITREC, Stockholm: Royal Institute of Technology.

Rossie, Jean-Pierre (2011). La cultura lúdica de los niños amazigh marroquíes y las cuestiones del desarrollo (traducción Stela Maris Ferrarese). In Ferrarese Capettini, Stela Maris. El Sembrador 3, Neuquén (Argentina).

Rossie, Jean-Pierre (2013). Saharan and North African Toy and Play Cultures. Technical activities in play, games and toys. Braga: Centre for Philosophical and Humanistic Studies, Catholic University of Portugal.

Rossie, Jean-Pierre (2015-2016). Saharan – North-African – Amazigh Children's Toy Catalogs. Braga: Centre for Philosophical and Humanistic Studies, Catholic University of Portugal. (2015-2016).

Rossie, Jean-Pierre (2016). Using North African children's play culture for pedagogical and sociocultural applications. Play & Folklore, 66, Melbourne: Museum Victoria.

Rossie, Jean-Pierre (2019). Amazigh Children's Toys and Play Cultures. Fourth World Journal, volume 18, 1.

Rossie, Jean-Pierre, Jariaa, Khalija, Daoumani, Boubaker & Fassoulas, Argyris (2021). Saharan and North African Toy and Play Cultures. Make-believe play among children of the Moroccan Anti-Atlas. Braga: Centre for Philosophical and Humanistic Studies, Catholic University of Portugal, 2 volumes.

This Article may be cited as:

Rossie, J-P., (2022) Moroccan Anti-Atlas Amazigh Children's Play and Toy Heritage in a Developmental and Intercultural Perspective. *Fourth World Journal*. Vol. 22, N1. pp. 55-69.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Dr. Jean-Pierre Rossie

Dr. Jean-Pierre Rossie is a sociocultural anthropologist born in Belgium (1940). He studied social work (1958-1961 and African ethnology at the State University of Ghent (1963-1968) where he received his doctorate. He is an Associated researcher of the Centre for Philosophical and Humanistic Studies at the Universidade Católica Portuguesa, Faculdade de Filosofia, of Locus Ludi. The Cultural Fabric of Play and Games in Classical Antiquity, University of Fribourg, Switzerland, and of the Centre Euro-Africain des Etudes et des Enquêtes de Terrain Faculté des Lettres et des Sciences Humaines, Université Cadi Ayyad de Marrakech, Morocco.