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SANATOY PLAY
Belgium

CALL FOR INTEREST

The website <http://www.sanatoypplay.org> is about children's play and toys in North Africa and the Sahara. It contains many articles, photographs and PowerPoint presentations. It is dedicated to research on play and toy making activities of children (3-15 years) in rural areas and popular quarters of towns. The period covered goes from the beginning of the twentieth century till today. This way the topics of tradition, continuity, change as well as globalisation are studied. Gender, socialization, interpersonal relations and creativity are important themes.



Clay toys. Anti-Atlas 2005

The four sources of information are:

- Fieldwork on the Ghrib children in the Tunisian Sahara, in 1975 and 1977.
- Fieldwork on Moroccan children from 1992 till today.
- The collection of Saharan and North African toys of the Musée du Quai Branly in Paris.
- The ethnographic, linguistic and other bibliography of the geographic area concerned.

The research results are found on the website and in the collection Saharan and North African Toy and Play Cultures with volumes on dolls and doll play, on the animal world in play and toys and on domestic life in play and toys. A synthesis is given in Jean-Pierre Rossie (2005). *Toys, Play, Culture and Society*. An anthropological approach with reference to North Africa and the Sahara (see the website for details).



horses and men made with nuts of the argan tree, Anti-Atlas, 2005

The main purpose of this research is fourfold:

- To assemble the information found in disparate bibliographical and museographical sources and to engage in fieldwork on Saharan and North African children's play activities and toys, several of these quickly becoming obsolete or forgotten especially in urban areas.
- To make this information on play and toys and the sociocultural context in which they occur available to those interested in the field of childhood, children's culture, folklore and the tangible and intangible Heritage of Humanity.
- To create a bibliographical, visual and museographical documentation on Saharan and North African children's play and toys.
- To promote the interest in and use of children's culture, especially the play and toy culture, in Saharan and North African countries and for intercultural or global sociocultural activities and education.

I would like to stress the idea that:

“While sometimes suffering under poverty, sickness and oppression children are at the same time active participants in creating the society and culture in which they grow up. Therefore, children’s culture should be rightly recognized as an integral part of the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity”.

The above-mentioned statement is partially based on the fact that the UNESCO program for safeguarding the tangible and intangible Heritage of Humanity (<http://portal.unesco.org/culture>) does not contain any project related to children’s culture. Under the section: Intangible Heritage of Humanity: 90 representative elements (<http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/index.php?pg=00011>) I found nothing on children’s cultures or play and toy cultures and only one link to children: the Kankurang, Manding Initiatory Rite, Gambia - Senegal. In this project only the role of adults is mentioned.

My purpose with this Call for interest is to come into contact with other scholars and practitioners interested in children’s culture, especially children’s play and toy culture. I would also like to exchange information and discuss the topics of children’s creativity, e.g. through self-made toys, research on Majority world children and their cultures, the anthropology of children and childhood, using children’s play and toy cultures for intercultural activities and global learning... and to promote the recognition of children’s culture as part of the heritage of humanity.

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blowing bubbles Tan-Tan2007

violin andguitar:Anti-Atlas2005

composite horse, Pre-Sahara, 2003
reed, nails and waste plastic material

goats, Anti-Atlas, 2004iron wire fra-
me, goatskin, waste material