

BRINQUEDOS TRADICIONAIS NA TURQUIA: COMPARAÇÃO ENTRE CENÁRIOS RURAIS E URBANOS¹

Müge Artar²
Ankara University

Resumo: A interação entre crianças e adultos em atividades lúdicas cria possibilidades para trocas espontâneas e necessárias de influências e para o desenvolvimento de sentimentos positivos recíprocos. O objetivo principal deste estudo foi traçar um panorama da atual presença de brinquedos tradicionais, comparando cenários urbanos e rurais, - uma aldeia de montanha e o centro da cidade de Bursa (Anatólia de Noroeste), Turquia. Pesquisaram-se se brinquedos industrializados eram vendidos nas aldeias e como as crianças dela reagiram a esta mudança. Os dados foram coletados através de entrevistas nos domicílios dos participantes e as respostas registradas com a permissão dos pais. As entrevistas passaram por análise de conteúdo. Os resultados mostram que os brinquedos feitos a mão estão em via de extinção, até nas aldeias, o que deve ser causado pela produção de imitações de brinquedos originais a preços baratos, mas também, pelo aspecto atraente dos brinquedos modernos, que têm um grande impacto.

Palavras-chave: Brinquedos; tradicional; industrial.

TRADITIONAL TOYS IN TURKEY: COMPARISON IN A RURAL AND URBAN SETTING

Abstract: The interaction between children and adults through playful activities creates possibilities for reciprocal spontaneous and demanded influences and for the development of reciprocal positive feelings. The main aim of this study was to find out the present situation of traditional toys by comparing the rural and urban settings - a mountain village and city center of Bursa (Northwest Anatolia), Turkey. It was questioned, if industrial toys were sold in villages, how village children effected this change. Data was collected by interviews in the houses of the participants, with the answers record permitted by the parents. Interviews passed by content analysis. Results show that traditional hand made toys are going to disappear even in villages. This may happen because of the imitations of original toys and their cheap prices but at the same time because of the attractive nature of modern toys have the big impact as well.

Key words: Toys; Traditional; Industrial.

Play with toys has a particular role in this picture and is vital for enhancing and fostering symbolic knowledge “in the individual mind... to stimulate the child mind to further growth and development” (Sutton-Smith, 1997, p. 7). Culture and tradition are critical in determining how much and in what ways children are allowed and encouraged to undertake such imaginative and cognitively enhancing play. Activities that involves toys; concrete items that children can touch, handle, manipulate, and interact with are all

being utilized with increasing frequency as an effective learning medium (Gallahue, 1982). Play with toys is hypothesized to be “mediated through social interactions and social traditions” (Sutton-Smith, 1986, p. 8) in several ways. First, cultural norms determine whether the play will be stimulated or whether it will be neglected (depending on whether adults consider it a good thing or a waste of children’s time).

• Ankara University Centre has realized the study reported in this paper for Research on Child Culture (CRCC).

Second, norms determine whether parent intervention will serve to conservatively preserve tradition or instead to instigate and foster independence and autonomy in girls and boys. Third, economic and

¹ Artigo recebido em 09/04/2006 e aceito para publicação em 30/06/2006.

² Endereço para correspondência: Muge Artar, Ankara Üniversitesi Egitim Bilimleri Facültesi, 06590, Cebeci-Ankara. E-mail: artar@education.ankara.edu.tr

historical conditions are critical resources for both physical and intellectual stimulation for play. Children play more in contexts in which they have models for what they can do, and hence they play more elaborately in complex, densely settled communities with schools and mass media. They also make toys more in contexts in which the economy and material world provide them raw materials in the form of natural materials and, best of all, trash—that is, wastepaper, wire, bottle caps, buttons, scrap lumber, cloth, tires, glass, cans, and so on—that can be fashioned into things to play with. The more plentiful the materials, the more children’s imaginations and inventiveness seem to be stimulated. Toy making is part of a dynamic process of culture change (Rossie, 1998) in both industrial and nonindustrial societies. From community to community, and without any adult involvement, news of new playthings can spread from one child to the next, creating fashions, fads, and crazes in the local, regional, and now global cultures of childhood.

Play does not necessarily require toys (Sutton-Smith, 1986) However, children’s play is both constrained and moderated by cultural forces and the availability within their culture of toys. “Play throughout history has been an overwhelming matter of playing with others, rather than playing with things.” (p. 170). So, playing with others from ones own generation and from older and younger generations reveals to be of the uttermost importance in the growing up and socialization of children.

The interaction between children and adults through playful activities creates possibilities for reciprocal spontaneous and demanded influences and for the development of reciprocal positive feelings. In every human context, play activities; games and toys seem to have served socializing purposes, namely the reproduction of roles, attitudes, customs and values from one generation to the next. They certainly reflect the culture and social organization of a given period and place, yet, they also offer avenues for change and innovation (Rossie, 1998).

Before discussing the sensitive topic of, sociocultural reproduction and continuity through toys, one should look to the history of play and toys. In a research made in thirty archaeological museums in

Turkey in 1989, the antique toys, which have been placed to museums after founded in excavations in Anatolia, were determined. It is seen that there is not a wide range of variety in antique toys since the production techniques and tools are limited. In that research antique toys in museums can be classified in five categories.

1. Infancy period toys: Rattle, stool, doll, puppet
2. Miniature home goods: Table, pots and pans, water jugs
3. Toy animals: Bird, chicken, rooster, bear, leer, bull, horse, ox
4. Vehicles: Car, wheel
5. Play objects: Knucklebone, die, top

These toys come from Bronze Age (3000-1200 B.C.), Assyria, Frig (750-300 B.C.), and Roman Periods. (30 B.C. - 395 A.D.) Rattles have been made from terra cotta, ceramics and bronze; knucklebones from bones, glasses, bronze and lead; spinning tops from terra cotta; pots and pans from terra cotta and ceramics; animals from terra cotta, ceramics and wooden. Because of the importance of domestic animals in daily life, it is seen that toy animals are given big importance in old Anatolian cultures. It is determined that the miniature home goods come in the second place.

In 1991 a traditional toy survey has been made in all over Turkey. In this survey, names of toys, kinds of toys, place of production, its definition, its size, its material, and its historical knowledge if there is were asked. Findings were classified in eight categories.

1. Dolls: Cloth doll, straw doll, grass doll, rope doll, knitting doll, corn doll, squash doll, egg doll, coin doll, stone doll, puppet doll, bride doll.

2. Cradles: Wooden cradle, metallic cradle, rattled cradle, mirrored cradle, swinging cradle.

3. Miniature home objects: Soil pots and pans, wooden churn, squash jug, laundry tub, coffee mill, dowry chest, basket.

4. Vehicles for transportation and work: ox-carts (beetled ox-cart, water buffalo ox-cart, camel ox-cart); cars (wire car, clay car, wooden car, squash car, turnip car, wheelbarrow, car with rudder); walking apparel; sledge; boat; plough; hoop.

5. Toys with music and sound: rattle, whistle, pinwheel, rattle toy, squash string, whistler jug.

6. Toy animals: Horse (stick), camel (wooden, cloth), donkey, cat, mouse (cloth).

7. Toy guns: Riffle (cane riffle, swaddling riffle); dart and arch (wooden, swaddling); wooden gun.

8. Play objects: Spinning top (with rope, with whip); yo-yo; knucklebone, kite (paper kite, hoop kite); ball (felt, clay, rope); tipcart; sling; marble (stone, glass, wooden, terra cotta).

When traditional toys in Anatolia are investigated, it is seen that the material used creates variety in the production. It attracts attention that the biggest variety exists on dolls. In Anatolia, doll and cradle have been the most common toys in all ages, so they have many varieties. It can be said that the society's desire to prepare girls to the role of motherhood is effective on this. At the same time, abundance of toy vehicles and work tools are the desire to prepare the future roles of boys. It seems meaningful that the both toy kinds are also common in antique ages. So it can be thought that there is continuity between the traditional toys and antique toys in Anatolia. In any case, it attracts attention that the two lists given above have a great similarity when we put them together. It can be said that traditional societies, which are dependent on agricultural economy, create almost the same toys and same play objects. The fundamental change in the toy and play culture appears with the industrialization and urbanization.

Despite the impact of computer games the word "tradition" hangs around toys like a ghost. Even within the mass culture that is so much more fragmentary than the traditional image of a family circle held together by sharing the simple meaning of toys, there are still strong signs of the adult wanting to connect with the child through toys. But in general nowadays; that kind of contact is more difficult to achieve. Many toys now only really have meaning for the children who read the relevant comic or have time to follow the convolutions of the relevant animated series on TV or films (Fleming, 1996).

Children today form an attractive consumer group for direct marketing. Television has become the prime medium for catching the young customers' attention, not only by direct advertisements but also by means of entertaining cartoons and other kinds of children's programs (Almqvist, 1997).

Both traditional and western toys are still available in Turkey, but this seemed to change in cities (Onur et al 1998) with the quite markedly impact of commercially produced toys. This study aimed to see if this change goes through to the villages as well.

The main aim of this study is to find out the present situation of traditional toys by comparing the rural and urban settings. This comparison done between a mountain village and city center of Bursa (Northwest Anatolia), Turkey. It was questioned, if industrial toys were sold in villages, how village children effected form this change.

Method

In each region 9 children and 9 mothers were interviewed. Total number of subjects in this study is 36. Children's ages vary between 6-12 and have an average of 9 and according to sex 10 girls and 8 boys involved in the study. While at the beginning of the study researchers aimed to interview both of the parents but it's hard to find fathers at home and hence they don't want to give information, so all of the adults interviews done with mothers. Mothers average age was 37.6 and all have at least preschool education. Children were asked what are they playing with; which toy is the loved one; if their toys are hand made or not; who are making their hand made toys for them; if they change something on their toys or not; where did they get their toys and what they think on traditional toys. Adults were interviewed similarly, but retrospectively. They were asked while they were a child what did they play with; which toy was the loved one; if their toys were hand made or not; who did make those toys for them; if they changes something on their toys or not; where did they get their toys and what are they thinking about today's toys.

The research done with qualitative methodology. Qualitative research has the natural setting as the direct source of data and it has

descriptive nature. Meaning is of essential concern to the qualitative approach.

Data was collected by conducting in-depth interviews with subjects in the houses of people in the samples. The answers were recorded with the permission of the parents. Interviews were analysed by deep content analysis.

Findings and Discussion

All the findings were given consequently according to the questions in the interview schedule by comparing village to city centre and mothers by their children.

When looking to the number or type of owned toys it is clear that city children owned much more toys than village children, and they vary in type too. City children have dolls, Barbie's, miniature kitchen goods, modern heroes (ninja, batman, Luke Skywalker, so on), electronic vehicles, computer games and play stations. Most of them (%80) don't remember how many toys they have but after they asked if they own this and this by the interviewer they replied as they owned all of them but it's hard to remember all. Village children remember (%100) how many toys they have and it is around 7-20 in an average of 11 toys for a child. They have dolls but not Barbie's, one of them have an imitation of it. They have balls, plastic dolls, kitchen goods, and non-electronic vehicles. None of them have computer games and play station. Both groups have little miniature toys from "kinder surprise" chocolate and a gum called "toy box". None of the city children have hand made toys and some of the village children (3 out of 9) have hand made toys. When we compare this findings with the previous generation eg: with their mothers; the difference is more huge than today. City mothers had 10-15 toys, but village mothers had 3-7 toys and %75 of them was hand made toys. Village mothers said that they were used to play with nature especially with soil; they made ovens, foods and kitchen good from soil. If we add the number of natural objects to the purchased ones the actual number is same with city mothers. They used to do dolls from home objects like cloth, straw and corns. The only purchased toys are balls and plastic dolls; 4 of them had these kinds

of imitation dolls and only one had original (who was his father worked in Germany). City mothers remembered that they used to play elastic most of their time (% 80) and they have dolls, kitchen goods.

By using all of this findings it is obvious that traditional hand made toys are going to disappear in cities as well as in villages in Turkey. "Global marketing of children's goods threatens not only in the economic realm, to displace indigenous cultural industries (television production, toy making, children's books, food, clothes and accessories), but foreshadows a subtle 'transformation' of children's cultural expression - sentiments, social attitudes, values and play forms." (Kline & Smith, 1993, p. 184). This finding is very much similar with the findings of Rossie, (1999). He was cited that "The commercialisation of toys making the more expensive industrially manufactured toys affordable only for middle class and high class families, creates a new distinction between Saharan and North African children, a distinction that did not exist when the toys were self-made. As the evolution towards a consumptive society is slowly but surely moving on in these regions, those children whose parents cannot afford to buy good quality toys not only will feel frustrated but at the same time they become less motivated to make themselves the 'devaluated' toys they usually play with. This situation results more than once in buying cheap toys of rather bad quality or even toys that are dangerous for children as safety control for toys are lacking in the region."

The best-loved toy is the second question of the interview; All of the mothers reported that they loved most, their dolls whatever they were made from. As all of the interviewed girls reported that they loved their dolls most. Boys reported different toys for this question. Most of the city boys (7 out of 9) reported that they loved play stations and village boys loved vehicles and balls.

For the hand made toys % 25 of city mothers have hand made toys and especially grandmothers and mothers knit these dolls for them. Village mothers stated that they know how to do dolls for them because it was easy to make it. And at the same time it was hard for their mother to do dolls because they had to work on the field. Village children have some hand

made dolls, some of which from her mother's childhood. Some children's grandmother's knit cloth doll for them and one grandfather teaches his grandson how to make a wire car. A boy who did a ship from a broken big car is a powerful example of the relation between doing toys for oneself and creativity. This finding seems to fit with the ideas of Rossie (1999). He stated "speaking of non-industrialized communities, it certainly is easier to give instances of the relationships between toys and the continuity of attitudes, behaviours and values in successive generations than to document on the relationships between the making of toys and the development of children's creativity". It's important to see that girls have more hand made toys in each generation. James (1993) also comes to the conclusion that girls are more oriented towards tradition: "The discourse of romantic love and stereotypical gender roles which permeate the games girls teach one another, therefore, act as a conservative force on girls' public aspirations. As each childhood generation passes its knowledge on to the next, the stereotypes of what it means to be female remain potentially unchallenged." (p. 200). And Rossie (1999) comments on this issue too "As girls are part of the female world they remain more bounded to tradition than boys do and this sociocultural reality is reflected in the making of toys. It probably explains why most toy making and most play activities related to technological and sociocultural change are found among boys".

The big toy's markets like Toy's R'us and toys shops are the places that were city children buy their toys for themselves with their parents. Parents stated that they buy toys as presents or a part of daily shopping. Some village children's toys also purchased from these shops (%30) but most of them buy their toys from *open market* of the village, which were weekly done. In the case of mothers; city mothers' toys were purchased from foreign countries as gifts and village children buy this balls and dolls from *village bazaar*. This commercialisation of toys also stimulates the attitude of looking at toys as a gift from adults to children, an attitude that until recently was as good as non-existent there. In order to understand the influence of industrially produced and imported toys and of the mass media, especially television, on the

toy making and play activities a conclusion endorsed by Kline and Smith (1993) when writing "we believe that the potential impact of global marketing on children's play styles and preferences points to the urgent need for more comparative cultural studies of children's play - studies which not only can document the unique character of patterns of play with traditional toys, but identify the potential forces which threaten these vital cultural patterns." (p.190). Rossie (1999), stated that "In relation to the adult-child relationship through a gift of a toy, so common in other societies more directed towards consumption, it seems that such a gift was, and often still is, exceptional in the Saharan and North African societies as the children in most cases make their toys themselves. If it is not the child itself, then it is a sister or brother, a female or male cousin who does it. And even if a mother or an aunt, a father or an uncle or whatever person makes the toy, it does not form part of a system of rewarding or tokens of affection. Only very exceptionally the toy becomes an object to be given as a present (1999). This situation contrasts with Western societies where toys did become gifts to children or as Sutton-Smith writes "the most important single interpretation of toys in the family must be that they are part of a festival (Christmas) in which gifts signify the bonds and controls within the family... parents use toys for the purpose of bonding, but also contradictorily for the purpose of solitarizing their children... parents say implicitly to their children "that we give you these toys in order to bind you to us, now go and play with them by yourselves". (1986, p. 21-41). As this author further clearly demonstrates, some of these gifts are soft toys, dolls and pets that the child will treat as imaginary companions in order to fill this impression of solitude (1986, p. 43-53).

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 from

Morocco, shown in this study, are sufficient proof for this (Rossie, 1988).

For the question whether they change anything on the toys all of the children (girls) and their mothers while they were child used to change their babies hairs, dresses and do make up. Mothers used to change their hand made babies because they are more cheap and easy to change. For this period mothers stated that their purchased babies were more important and their mother didn't permit them to change anything on them. One of the mother's said "yes I have babies but I don't remember that I played with them; only we put them on the shelf". Today's girl used to change everything with their babies and it's very easy to do this with Barbie and it's dresses and changeable parts.

Last question is the thoughts about nowadays toys and to children their parents toys namely "old toys". All the children think that old toys are not things to fun, even they don't understand how their parents play with them. But when we look to the all comments they don't said too much about this question in contrary mothers have a lot of thoughts about their children's "attractive, strange but lots of" toys.

All mothers think that their children have a lot of toys in village and in cities. Mothers stated that nowadays toys are very movable and interesting, one said "there are a lot of toys and all have different types my child have singing, talking and dancing dolls but she don't know their real meaning, I mean she can easily throw it away for me in my childhood it's impossible". In the city, mothers said that their children don't want to play with their toys they only want to play with computer games. This seemed similar with the Fleming speculation that "the whole techno culture is something that we all are increasingly take a part in the developed societies" (1996, p. 195). All the mothers think that today's toys are more electronic and changing very rapidly one mother said very remarkably sentence "even my own two children who were 16 and 8 have very different toys and they don't like their toys".

As a general view to the whole findings it seemed traditional hand made toys are going to disappear even in villages. This may because the effect imitations of original toys and their cheap prices

but at the same time the attractive nature of modern toys have the big impact as well.

References

- Almqvist, B. (1997). Letters to Santa Claus: An Indication of the Impact of Toy Marketing on Children's Toy preferences. Göteborg : NCFL.
- Fleming, D. (1996). *Powerplay : Toys as Popular Culture*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Gallahue, D. L. (1982). *Understanding Motor Development of Children*. New York: Wiley.
- James, A. (1993). "Let's all play nicely": The significance of motifs of separation and transformation in children's play". In C. Gougoulis (Ed.), *Special Issue on Children's Play* (pp. 161-169), Athens: Ethnographica IX.
- James, A. (1993). *Childhood Identities. Self and Social Relationships in the Experience of the Child*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Kline, S. & Smith, P. K. (1993). "A global play? Comparing US, Canadian, British and Japanese toy commercials". In C. Gougoulis (Ed.), *Special Issue on Children's Play* (pp. 183-191). Athens: Ethnographica IX.
- Onur, B., Çelen, N., Çok F., Artar, M. & Demir, T. (1998). *Toys and Playthings*. Brougere: Imprimera La Tresoriere.
- Rossie, J. P. (1988). "Games and toys among a Tunisian Sahara population. An example of the Contribution of Anthropological Research to Child Development". In *Games and Toys in Early Childhood Education* (pp. 53-75). Paris: Unesco-Unicef.
- Rossie, J. P. (1999). *Toys, Culture and Society. An Anthropological Approach with Reference to North Africa and the Sahara*. Halmstad: University of Halmstad Press.
- Sutton-Smith, B. (1986). *Toys as Culture*. London: Gardner Press Inc.
- Sutton-Smith, B. (1997). *The Ambiguity of Play*. London: Harvard University Press.