

Comparing play and toys from  
Greco-Roman antiquity with  
traditional play and toys  
from rural North Africa

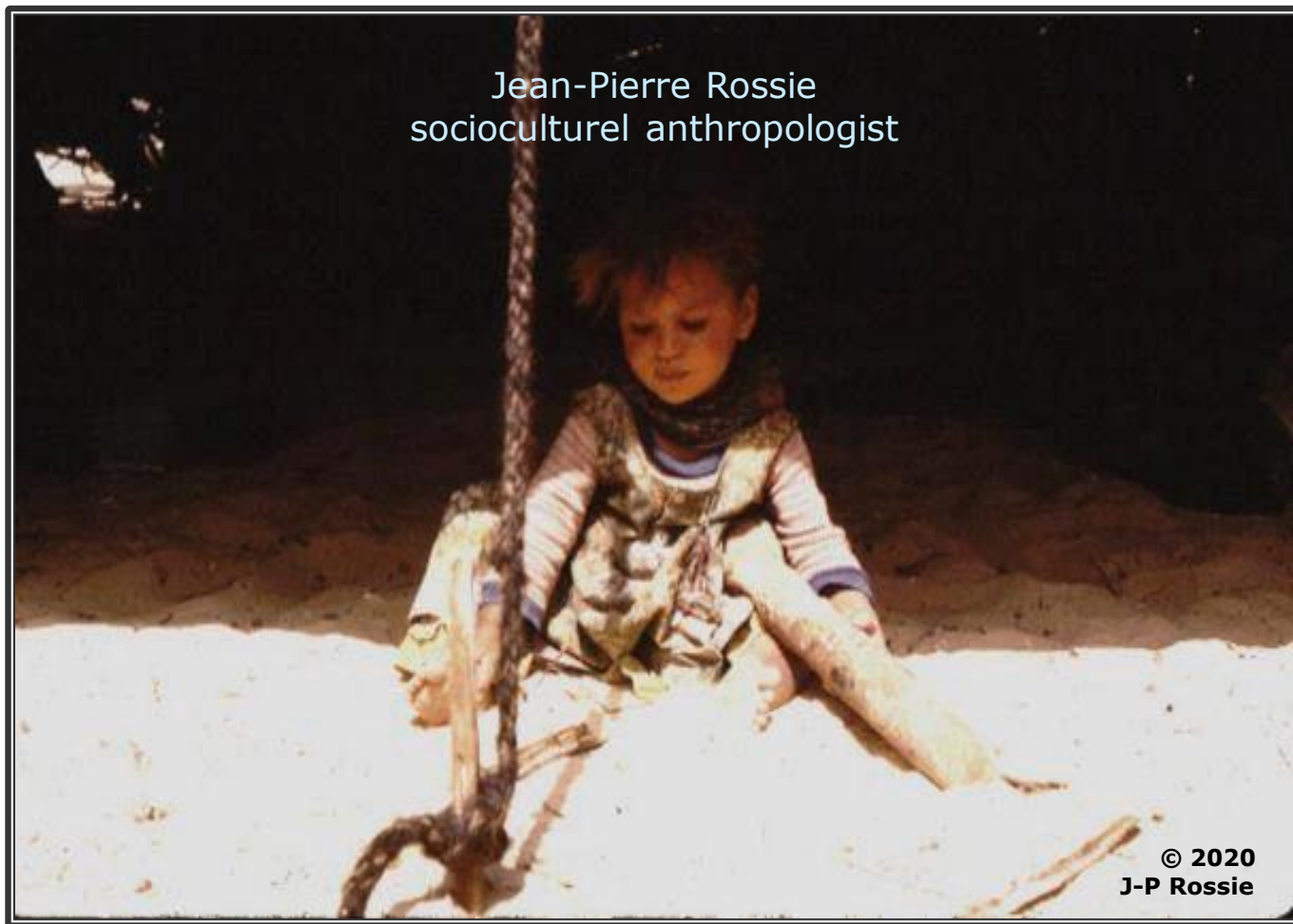
Jean-Pierre Rossie  
Associated member of Locus Ludi

Working document for

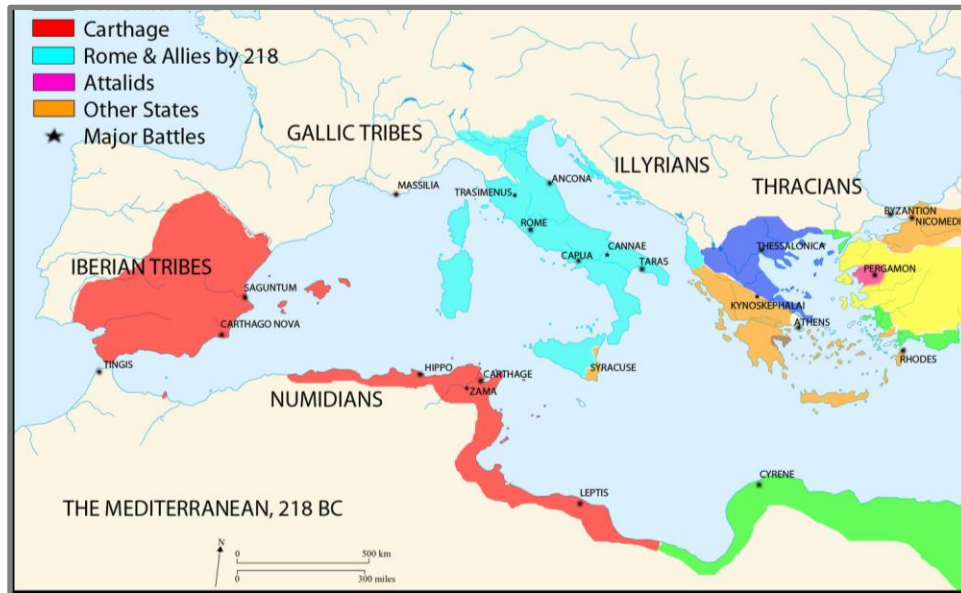
Images at stake: cultural transfers and continuity  
CUSO doctoral program Historical Anthropology  
Ancient and Modern Worlds – 25 October 2019

ERC Locus Ludi. The Cultural Fabric of Play and Games  
in Classical Antiquity (741520)  
<https://locusludi.ch>

University of Fribourg  
Fribourg, Switzerland  
2020

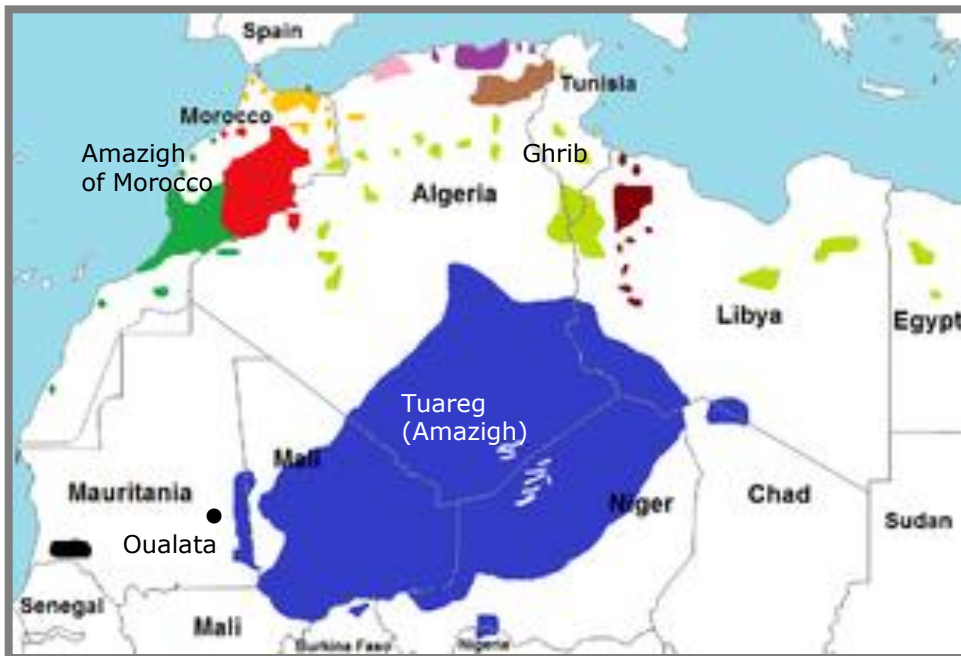


Tunisian Sahara 1975



map of the Mediterranean  
in 218 BC

Wikimedia map

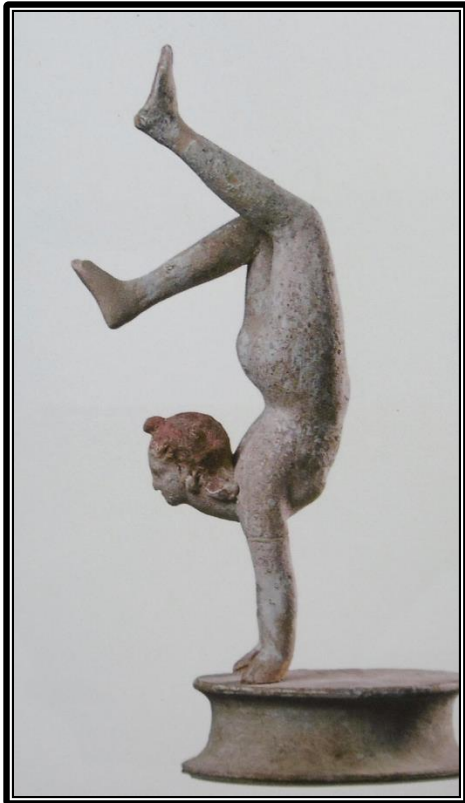


localization of the Amazigh  
and Ghib and of Oualata  
in North Africa  
and the Sahara

adapted Wikipedia map

## Sources of the illustrations

### Play and toys from Greco-Roman Antiquity



Archaeological research published in  
*Ludique ! Jouer dans l'Antiquité* (2019)  
*Les Dossiers d'Archéologie* (1992, 168)  
*Archéothéma, Histoire et archéologie* (2013,31)  
*Archéologia*, (2017, 553;2018, 571) ...

### North African and Saharan play and toys

Fieldwork in the Tunisian Sahara (1975-1977)  
and in Morocco (1992-)

Analysis of a large collection of toys  
from North Africa and the Sahara  
at the Musée de l'Homme in Paris  
(transferred to the Musée du Quai Branly)

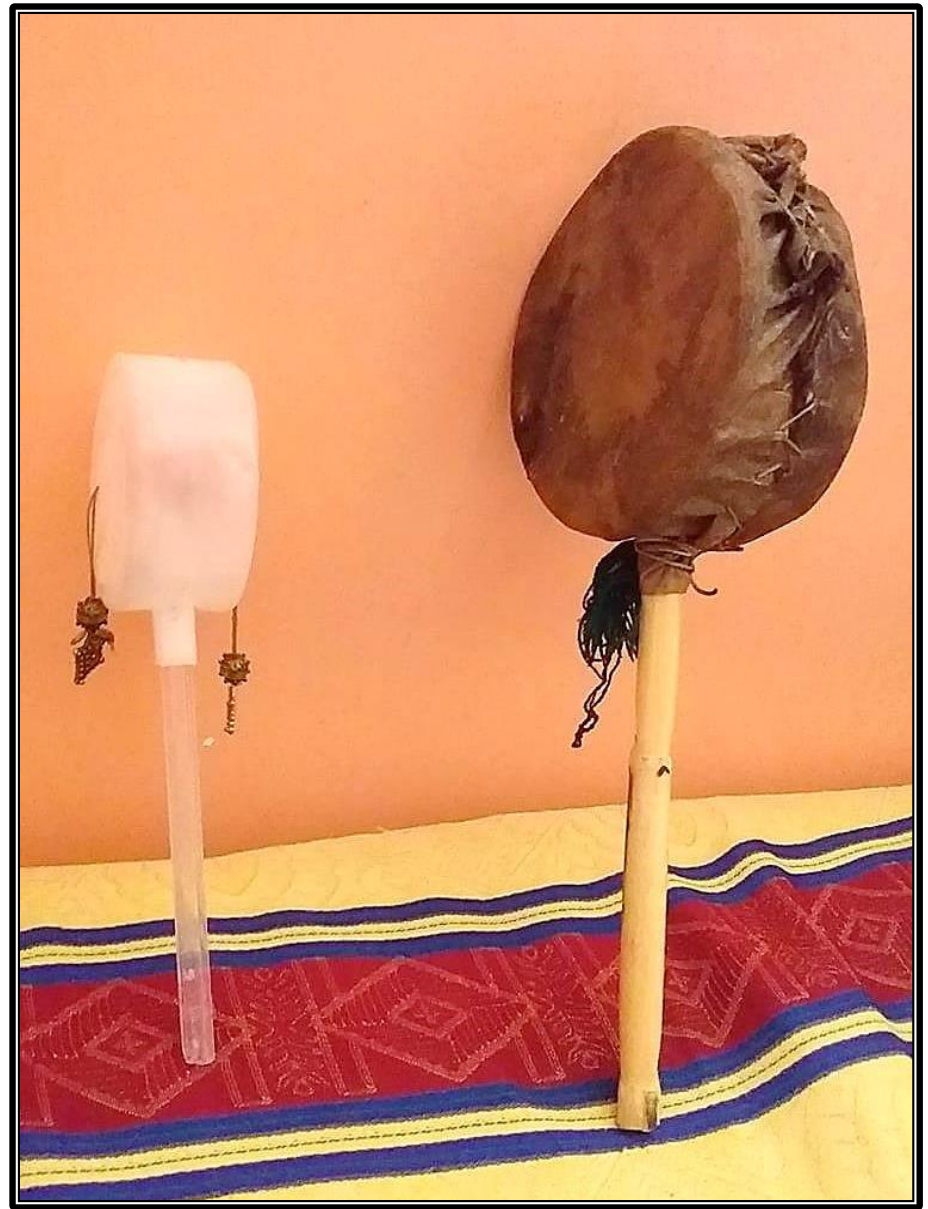
The bibliography referring  
to the regions concerned







Little boy brandishing a rattle  
Athens, Greece, 5th century BC



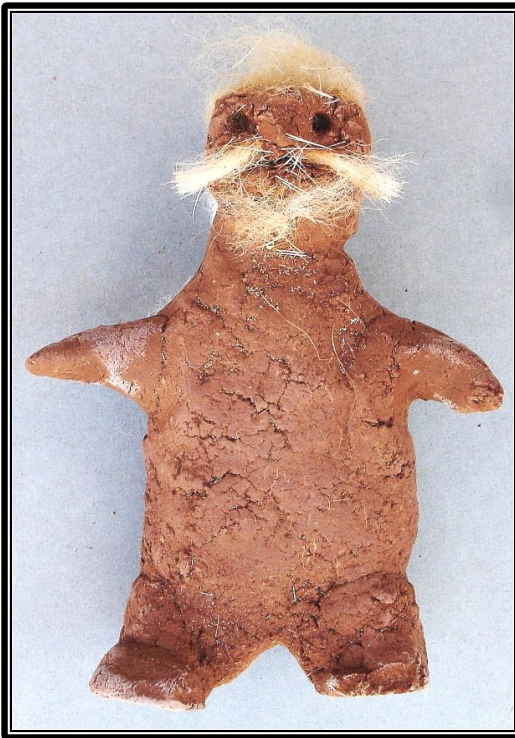
A mother recreated two types of the traditional rattle  
Anti-Atlas, Morocco, 2018



Articulated terracotta dolls, Greece, late 5th-early 4th century BC



Male dolls  
clay soil  
Anti-Atlas  
2001-2005

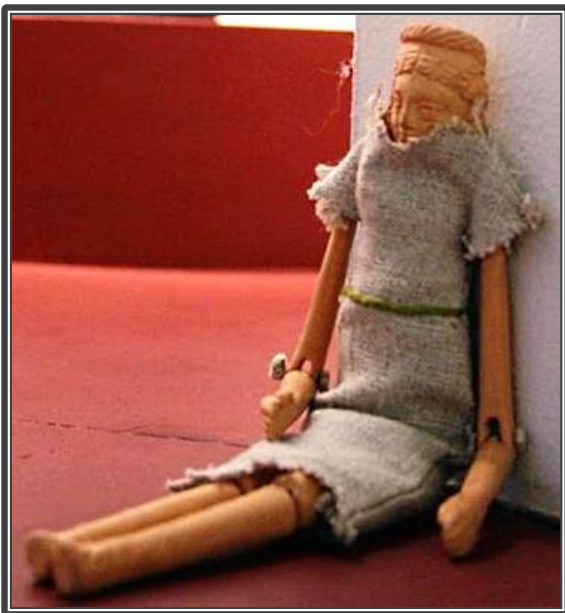


Female dolls  
clay soil  
Anti-Atlas  
2007





Dressed  
Roman doll  
Tarragona  
III<sup>e</sup>-IV<sup>e</sup> c. AD



Girls' dolls  
Anti-Atlas  
2005  
2006  
2005





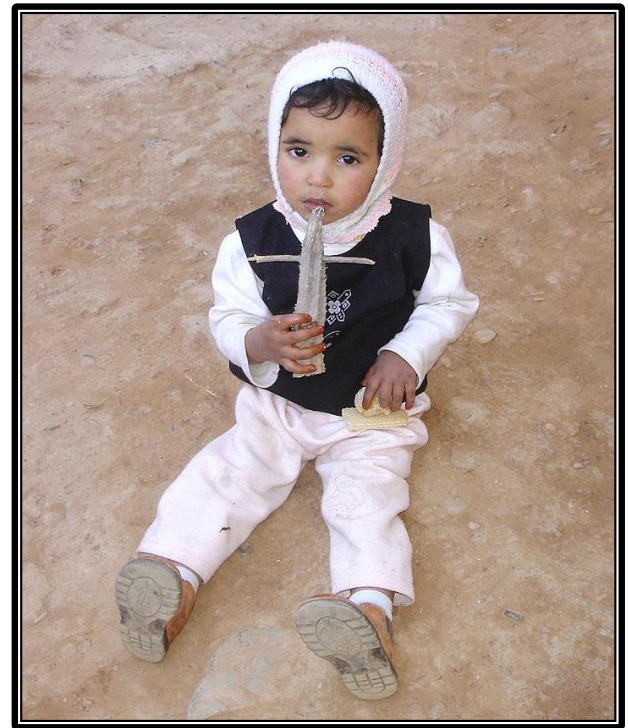
Wedding  
feast play  
Anti-Atlas  
2007



Couple  
in bed  
Anti-Atlas  
2005







Male doll dressed to dance, Anti-Atlas, 2005    Doll created by a little girl, Anti-Atlas, 2006



Argan nut figurines, Anti-Atlas, 2006





Belghenja to implore for rain, Anti-Atlas, 2007



Belghenja doll of a girl, Anti-Atlas, 2007



Dolls for Ashura, bone frame, Anti-Atlas, 2008



## Small houses for the play activities of girls and boys

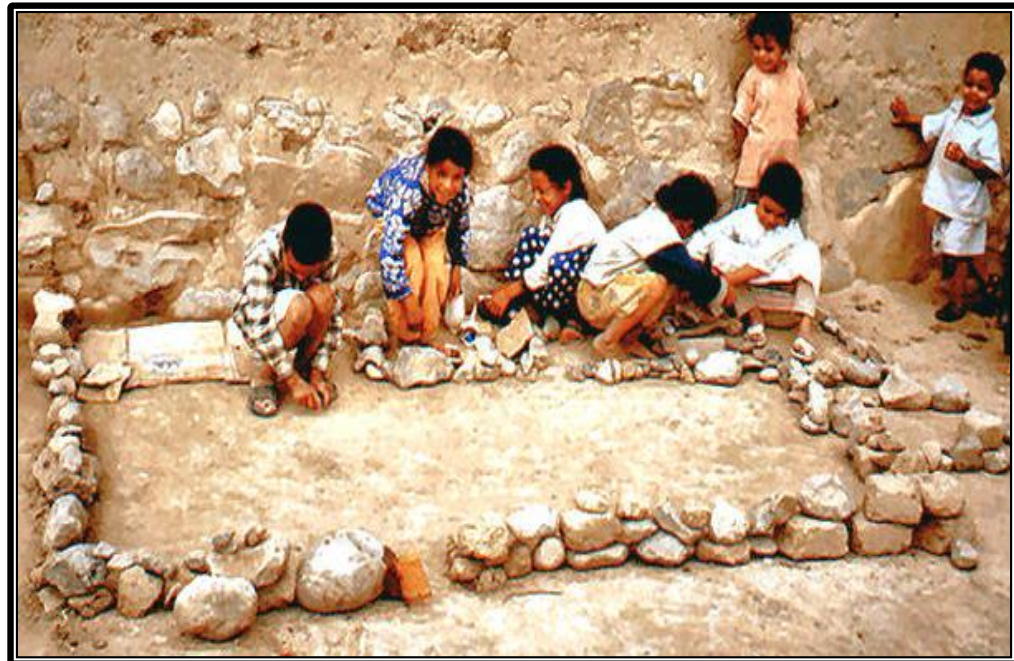
Regarding the small houses,  
Horace mentions the play activities of a  
young child, among others the  
construction of small houses  
(Dasen, 2011, p. 53)



Moors, Oualata, the work of a maid, 1936



Wedding feast play, Anti-Atlas, 2002



Small house for doll play etc., High Atlas, 1999



Toys for dinner play in the tomb of the little girl from Eretria (Greece), 330-270 av. J.-C.



More rustic furniture in simple clay is also very common (Durand, 1992, p. 16)



## Toys for dinner play of North African girls



Terracotta, Rif, North Morocco, 1908



Ghrib, Tunisian Sahara, 1975



Argan paste, Anti-Atlas, 1980



Moors, Oualata, the work of a maid, 1936



Girls 6 to 8 years old, Anti-Atlas, 2011



Terracotta, Anti-Atlas, 2006



Terracotta animals found in children's graves, Gallo-Roman era



Dove



Cock



Dog

# Animals in clay soil, Anti-Atlas, 2001-2005

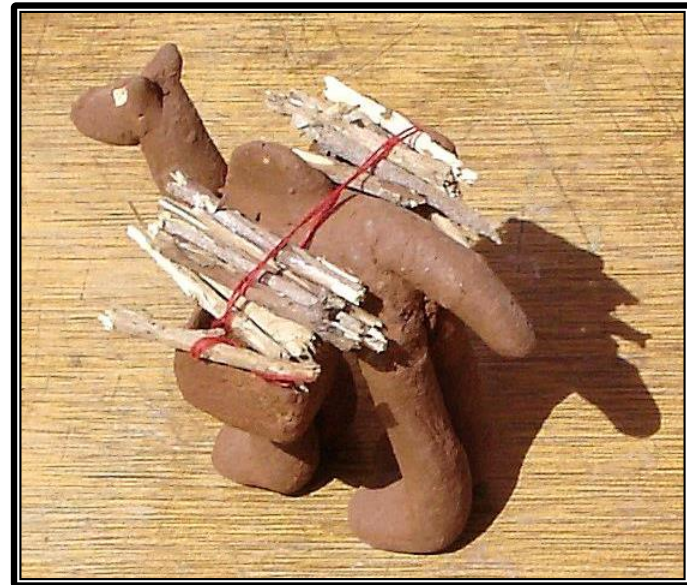
Bird  
Fish



Goat  
Cow  
Sheep

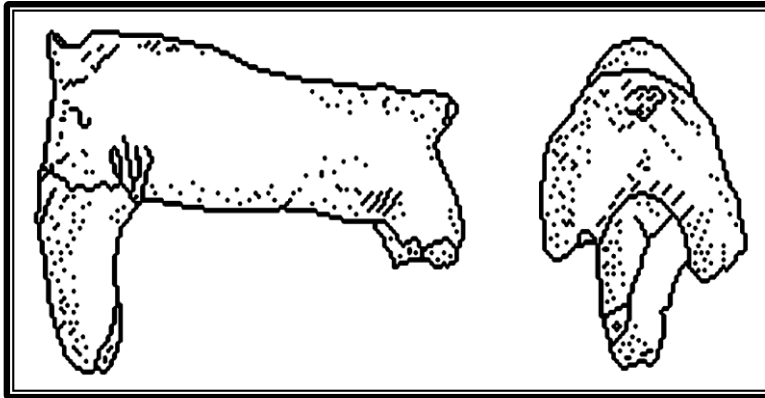


Horse  
Dromedary

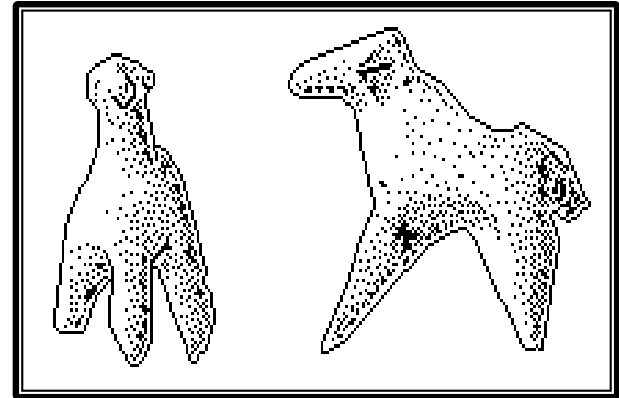


## A two thousand year old Saharan tradition

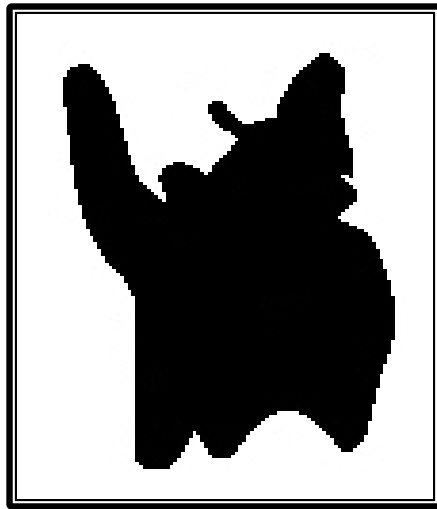
Three-legged toy animals: archaeological and ethnographic data, 100 BC - 1980



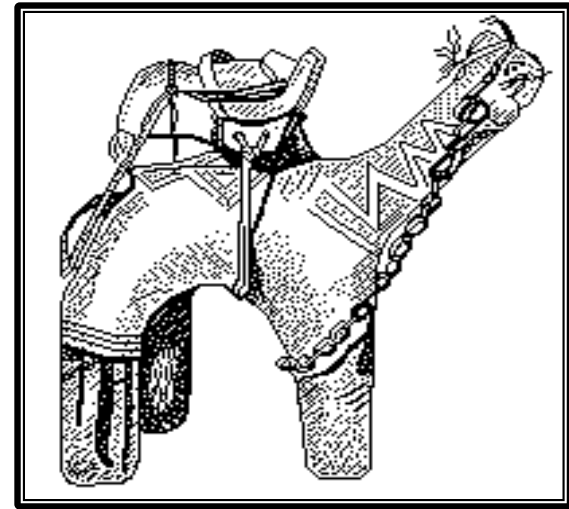
Toy dromedary, Jenné, Niger Delta, Mali  
100 BC to 1400, S. & R. McIntosh (1982)



Toy sheep, Niger River, Mali, 1904  
Lebeuf et Pâques (1970)



Toy dromedary, Jenné, Niger Delta, Mali  
about 1980, S. & R. McIntosh (1982)



Toy dromedary, Tuareg children  
Tombouctou, Niger River, Mali, Gabus (1958)

drawings based on the original drawings of the mentioned authors





Dromedary, horses and oxen made by maids  
for children of the Moors in Oualata, Mauritania, 1936-1938

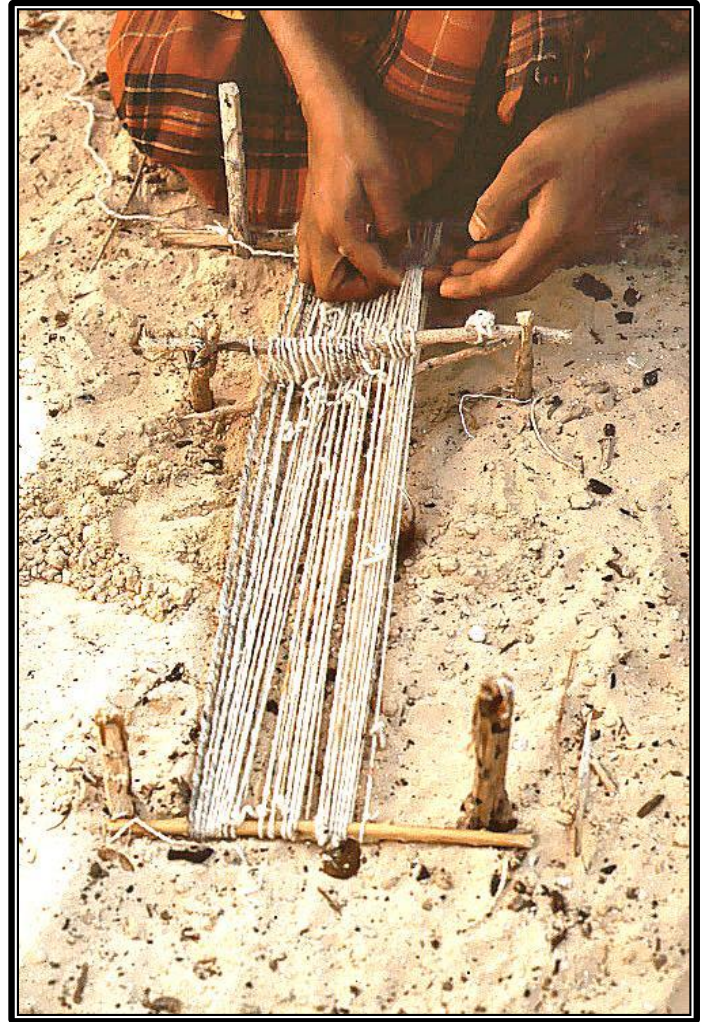


## Weaving loom

The furniture of several Fayoum tombs, kept at the Pétie museum in London, included the doll's wardrobe and various toys, such as a balloon, small weaving instruments or even dishes. Roman Orient, 4th century AD (Behling, 2013, p. 18).



Anti-Atlas, 2007



Ghrib, Tunisian Sahara, 1975



## Musical instruments



Reed or split cane cymbal  
Ancient Greece



Cymbals held between thumb and  
middle finger, Ancient Greece



Split palm branch cymbal  
Ghrib, Tunisian Sahara, 1975



Cymbals held between thumb and middle  
finger, Anti-Atlas, 2006



Tambourine, skin membrane  
bronze discs, Ancient Greece



Tambourine, Agrigento, Greece, 350-340 BC



Tambourine with small discs for girls  
pottery drum for boys  
used for the Ashura feast  
Marrakech, Morocco, 1992



Long flute



Aulos (flute), Attic cut  
Ancient Greece, about 490 BC

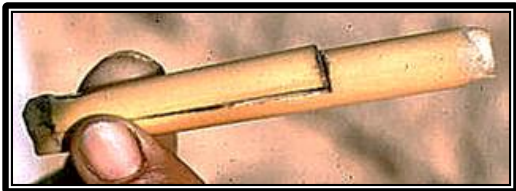


Grandfather's long flute,  
Moroccan Sahara, 2007

## Reed flute



Flute whose reed is entirely put in the mouth, Ancient Greece



Reed with cut strip



Reed flute, Ghrib, Tunisian Sahara, 1975



The reed is put entirely in the mouth  
Ghrib, Tunisian Sahara, 1975



## String instrument



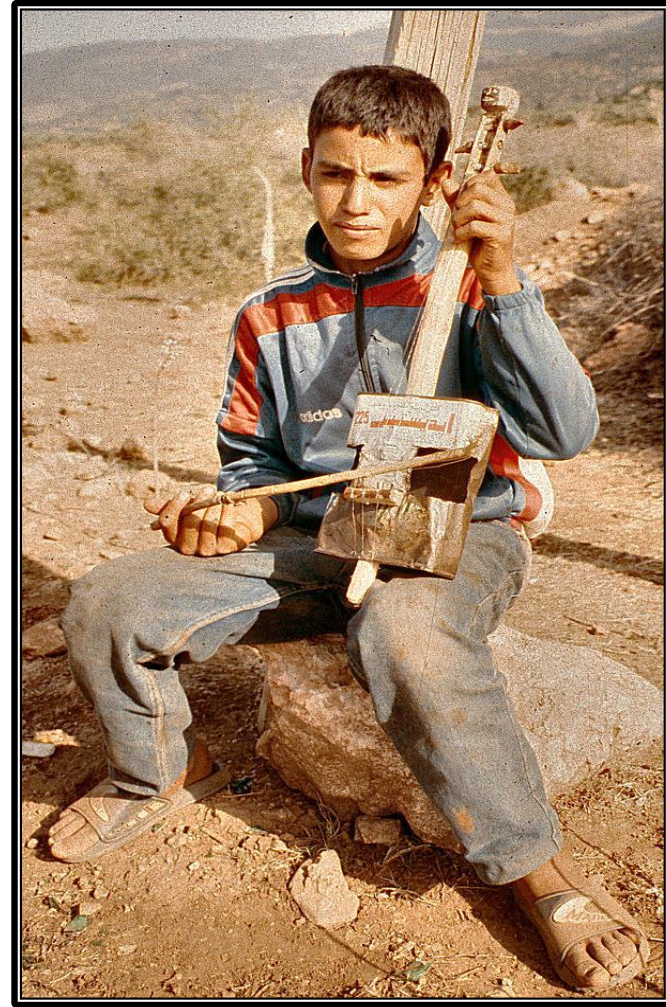
Pandure with  
three strings  
Ancient Greece



Lotar with three  
strings, boy 13 years  
Pre-Sahara, 2007



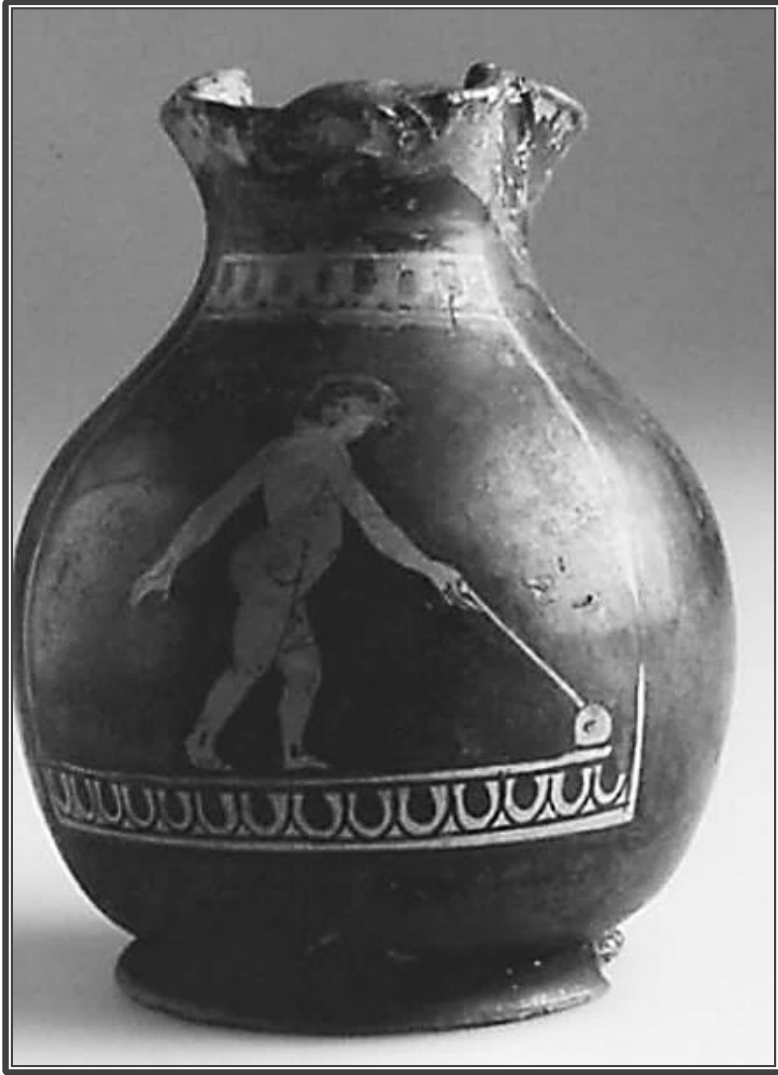
Amazigh (Berber) violin  
seven year old boy,  
Anti-Atlas, 2005



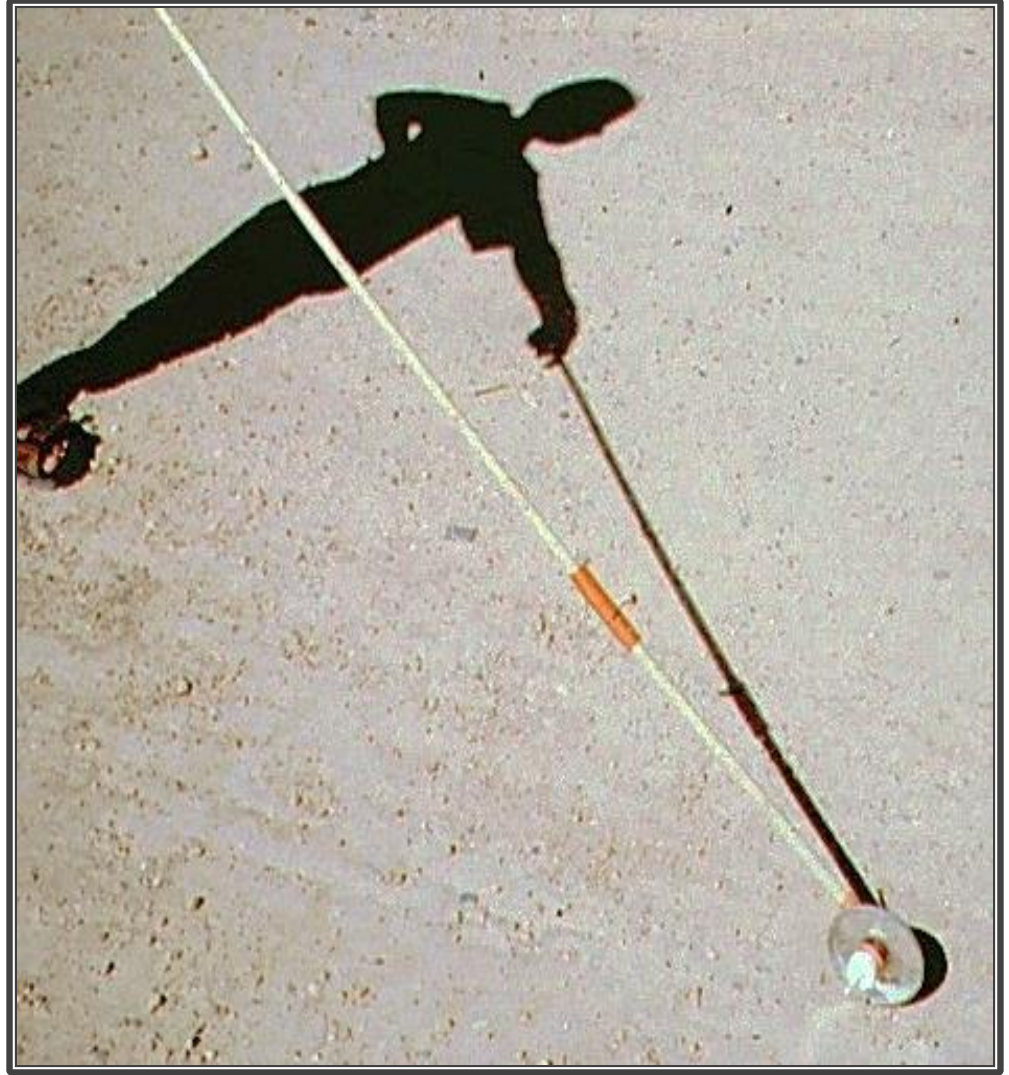
Amazigh (Berber) violin  
thirteen year old herdsboy,  
Middle Atlas, 1999



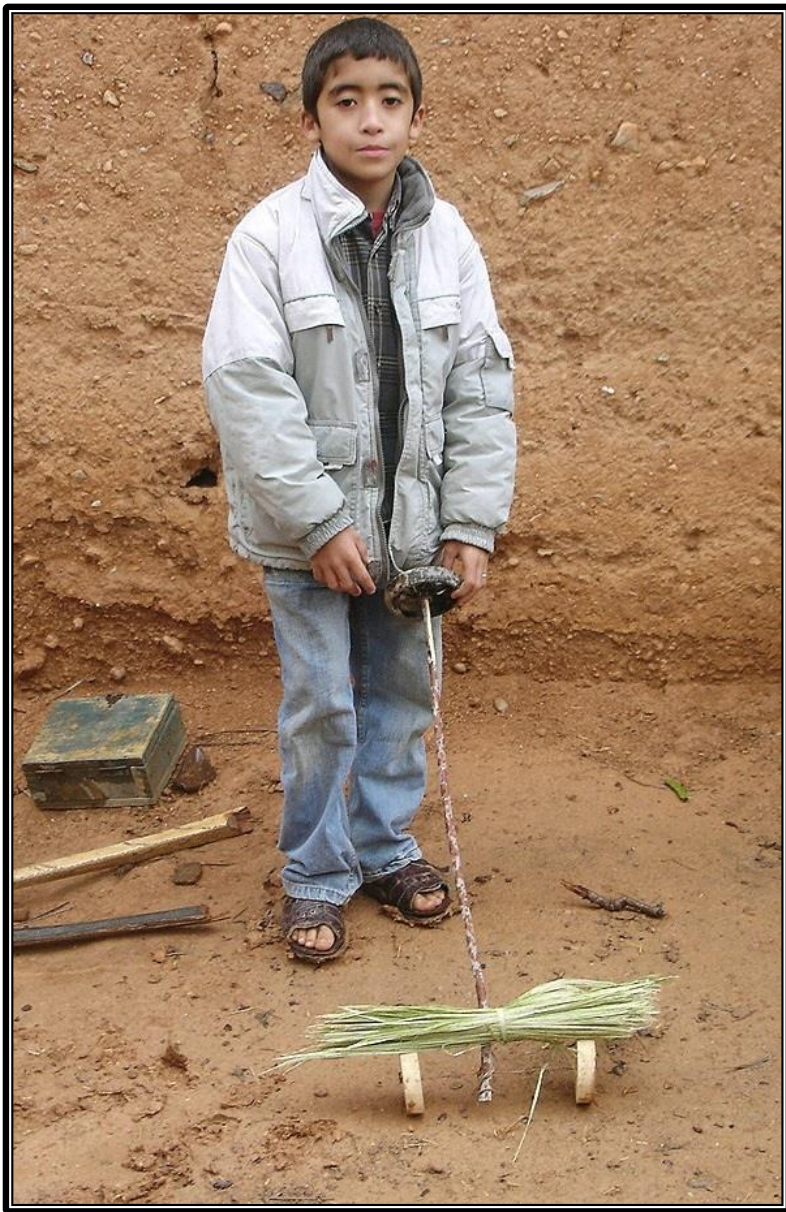
## Antique and contemporary wheeled trolley



Boy pushing his trolley with wheels  
Athens, Greece, 5th century BC



Boy pushing his trolley with wheels (car)  
High Atlas, 1999



Boy pushing his trolley with wheels (truck)  
Anti-Atlas, 2006



Girl pulling her trolley with wheels,  
Athens, Greece, Vth century BC





A boy runs with a hoop  
Athens, Greece, 440-435 BC

Running with a hoop



A boy runs with his hoop while shopping  
Anti-Atlas, 2019

## Game of the five stones

« Game of the five stones: practiced with five knucklebones (astragals). The goal is to throw them up and receive them back into balance on the back of the hand.» (Vespa M., 2019, p. 126).



Game of the five stones, Anti-Atlas, 2005



Game of the five stones, Anti-Atlas, 2012



## Circle game



Game with knucklebones, Greece, 500-475 BC

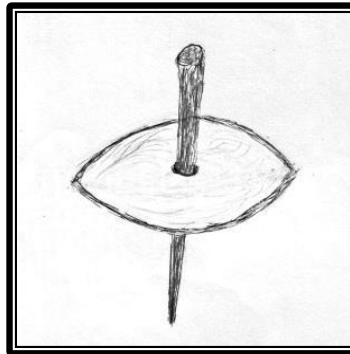


Game with shells, Anti-Atlas, 2012

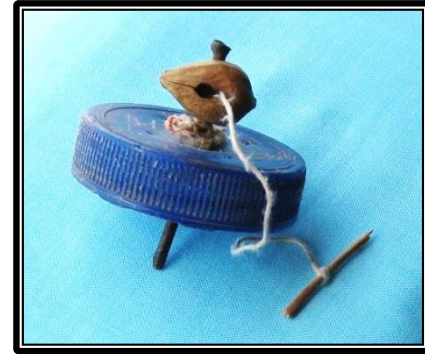
## Play a spinning top



Wooden spinning top  
Roman times



Spinning top with hole  
in nut, Anti-Atlas, 2012



Spinning top with hole in  
nut, Anti-Atlas, 2007



Spinning top of a bottle cap  
Kénitra, Morocco, 1994



Spinning top modeled in clay soil  
Anti-Atlas, 2008





Women playing spinning tops  
Athens, Greece, 5th century BC



Four and a half year old girl is ready  
to launch her spinning top, Anti-Atlas, 2017



## Play marbles



Marble track, Rome, forum  
temple of Venus and Roma



Marrakech  
Morocco, 1992



From traditional ball games  
to football games without rules



Athens, Greece, 450-400 BC

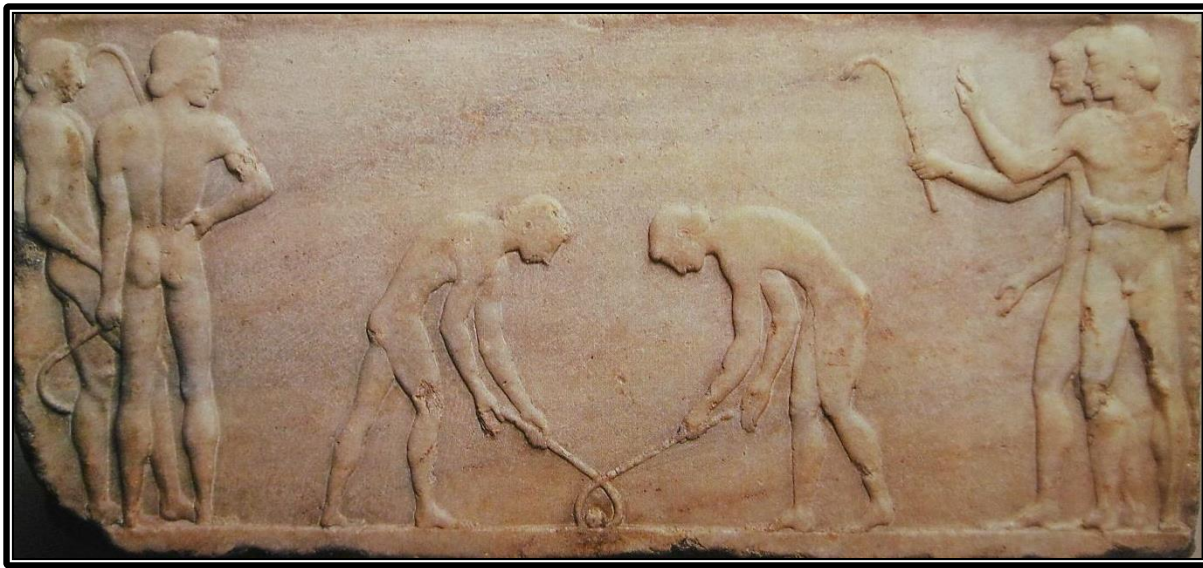


Ghrib, Tunisian Sahara, 1975

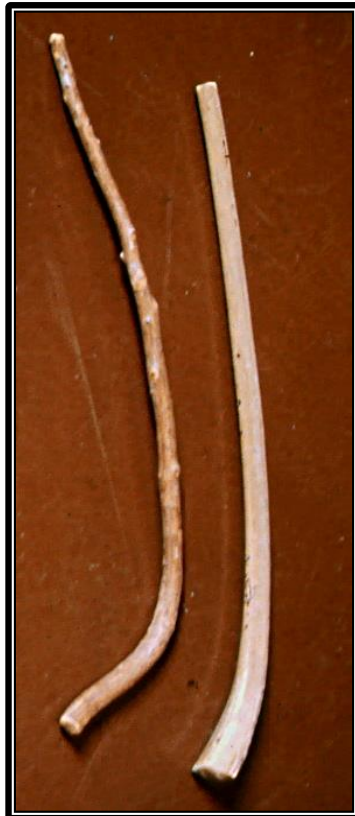


Anti-Atlas, 2006

Ball game with  
curved sticks  
Athens, Greece  
500 BC



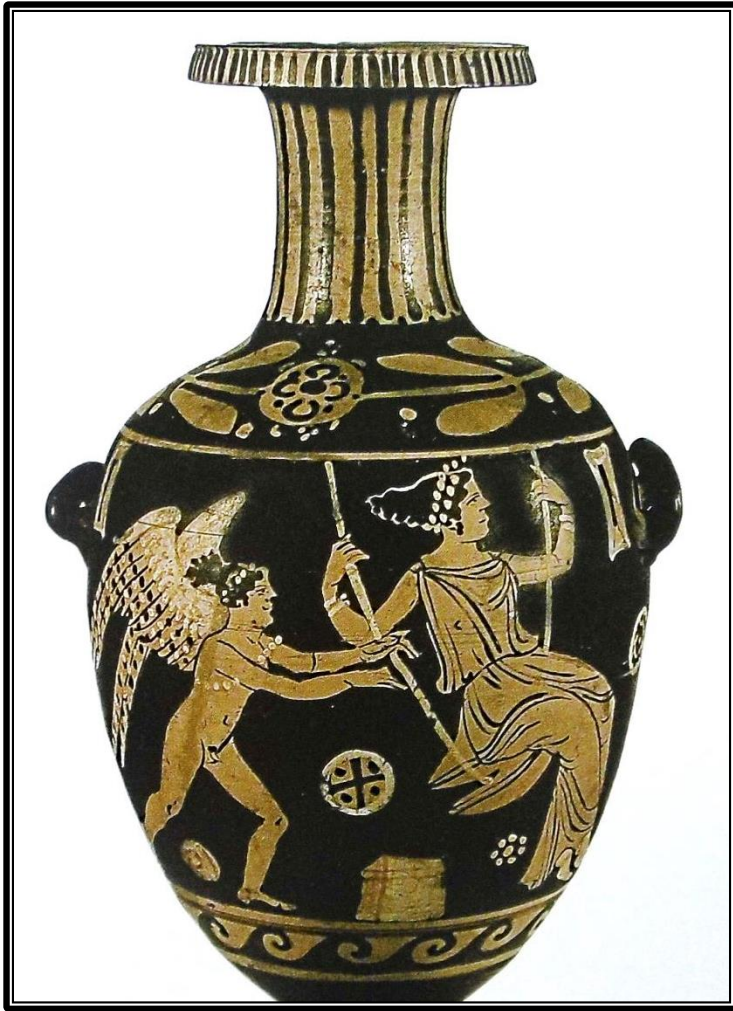
Curved sticks  
North Africa  
1930s



Balls  
North Arica  
1930s



## Being pushed on a swing seat



Girl pushed by Eros  
Greek, from southern Italy, 360-330 BC

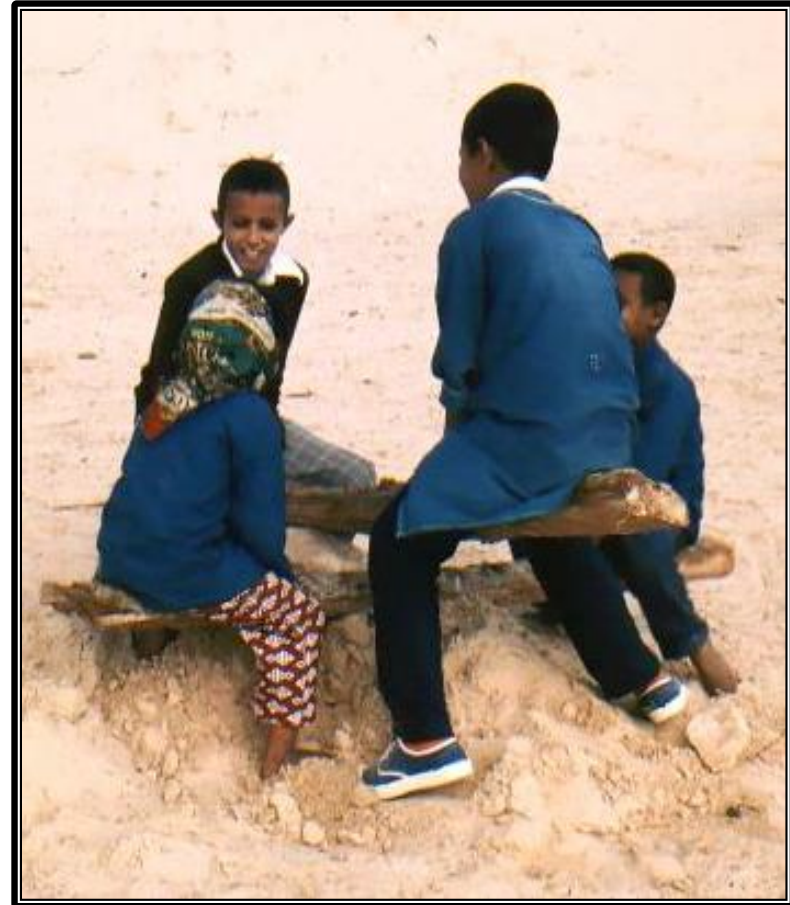


Girl pushed by a boy  
Kenitra, Morocco, 1994

## Seesaw and double seesaw



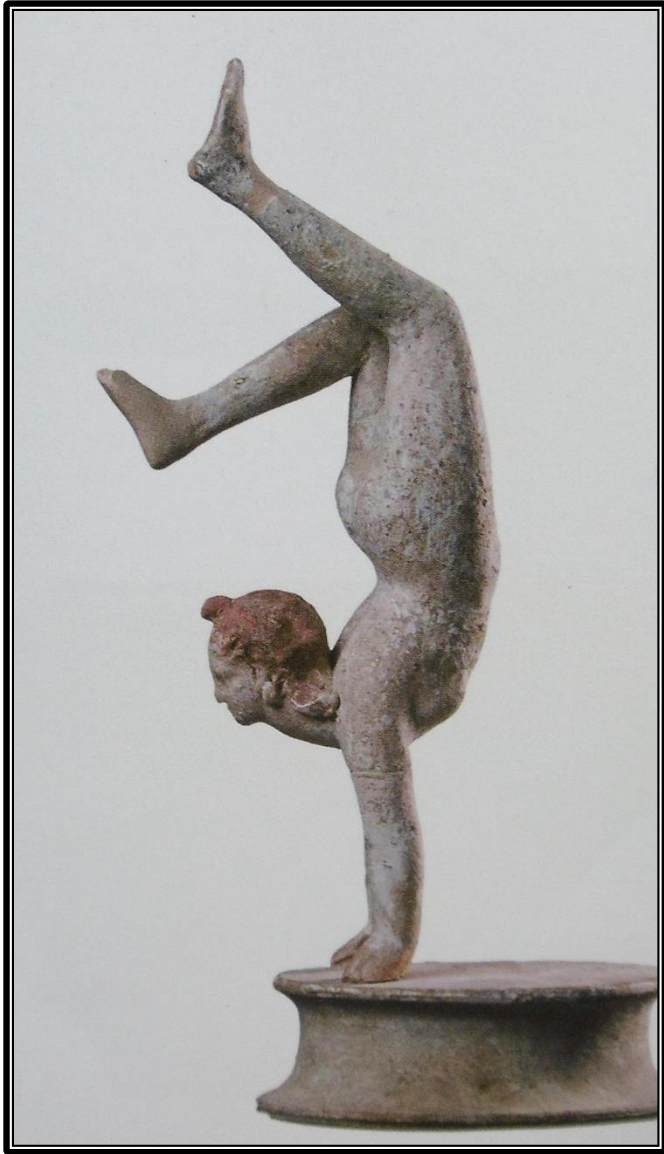
Two Erotes on a seesaw  
Greek, from southern Italy, early 4th c. BC



Three boys and a girl on a double seesaw  
Ghrib, Tunisian Sahara, 1975



Always acrobatics



Greece, late 4th century BC

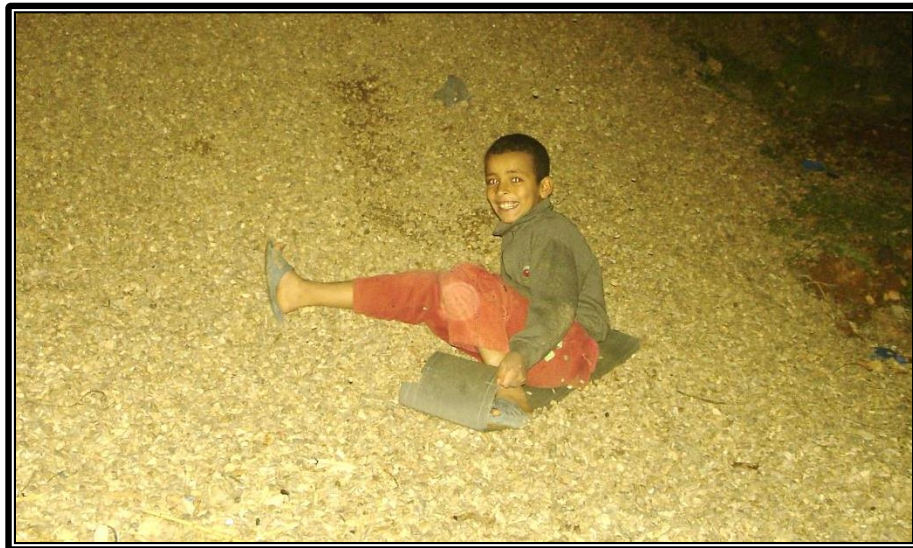


Anti-Atlas, Morocco, 2006





Essaouira, central Morocco, 2008



Anti-Atlas, 2010



Ghrib, Tunisian Sahara, 1975



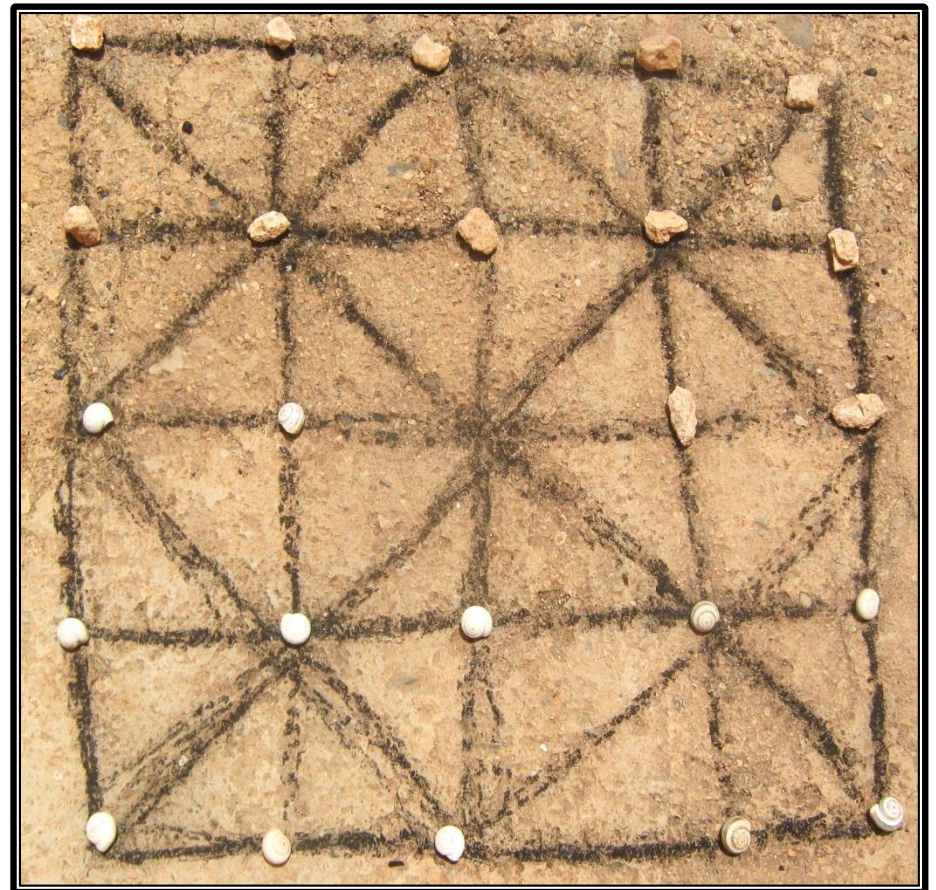
Moroccan Sahara, 2007





## Board game

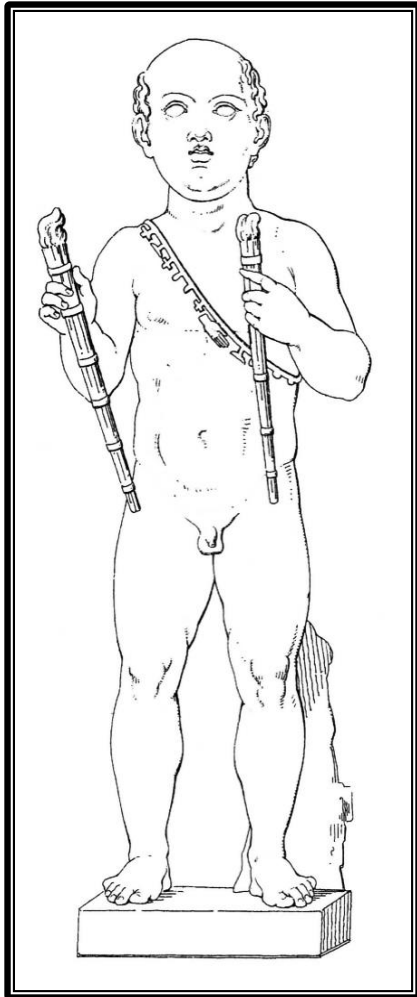
Athens, Roman era  
1st century AD





## Protective amulet

For babies and small children



Greece, 3rd century BC



Anti-Atlas, 2006

For the groom and a symbol  
of loyalty for the bride



Anti-Atlas, 2007



# Conclusion

This PowerPoint shows quite well the similarities between the games and toys of Greco-Roman Antiquity and those of the rural North African and Saharan world.

A remarkable similarity is found between the dolls for feasts and rites (11), the clay animals (15-16), the musical instruments (20-24), the cart (25), the hoop (27), the ball game with curved sticks (34), the swing (35) and the board game (39).

The reed flute of ancient Greece and that of the young ghrib adolescents (23) present an exceptional similarity in the level of the construction of this flute as well as in the way of playing it. However, even in this case it is impossible to choose between two hypotheses: a type of flute transmitted over the centuries or a separate invention. Transmission cannot be excluded because of the relations which existed in Antiquity between the Greco-Roman world and the Amazigh (Berber) world of North Africa. That a similar transmission is possible is proved by the three-legged terracotta animals (17-18) and the ball game with curved sticks (34) that cover more than two millennia.

Several games and toys from the two socio-cultural areas represent behaviors and activities of adult women and men and are linked to domestic, professional, ritual or festive life and the life of animals. Rare are toys and games, such as rattles and skill games, which are based on childish behavior.

However, the comparison of the games and toys of Antiquity with the games and toys of the rural North African and Saharan world is limited by contextual differences.

- Ancient information and objects related to games and toys often come from adults, while those from North Africa and the Sahara often come from children.
- Information on fun in Antiquity comes mainly from the elite, unlike that from North Africa and the Sahara from the working class.
- Toys from Greco-Roman Antiquity found in tombs are almost always made in durable materials and not perishable materials as is very often the case for North African and Saharan toys.

Finally, I think I can emphasize that the analysis of the similarities and differences between the games and toys of these two socio-cultural areas offer new and useful information and perspectives for the study of childhoods, play cultures and respective societies.

## **Populations concerned**

### **Populations of Greco-Roman Antiquity**

- Ancient Greek world from the 5th to the 3rd century BC (Attica, Evia (Euboea), Sicily, southern Italy...)
- Roman Empire from the 3rd to the 4th century AD (Aventicum, Lugdunum, Rome, Tarragona...)

### **Saharan populations**

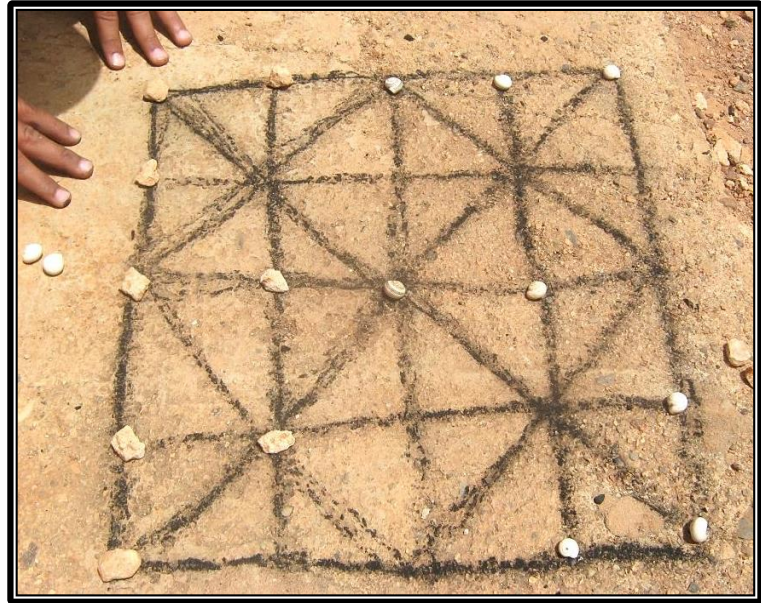
- Populations of the Niger River region, Mali, between 100 BC and 1980
- The Moors of the city of Oualata, Mauritania, from the 1930s
- The Ghrib of the Tunisian Sahara, a small semi-nomadic population in the 1970s

### **Moroccan populations**

- Amazigh (Berber) population of the Rif, early 1900s
- Amazigh population of the Anti-Atlas, the High Atlas and the Middle Atlas, 1992-2019
- Sedentary population of the Moroccan Sahara, early 2000s
- Population of the cities Essaouira, Kénitra, Marrakech, Midelt, 1992-2008



More detailed information about the images in this PowerPoint can be found in the document below



Comparing play and toys from  
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Jean-Pierre Rossie  
Associated member of Locus Ludi

Working document

Available on *Academia.edu*

<https://ucp.academia.edu/JeanPierreRossie>



## Acknowledgments

- ❖ Boubaker Daoumani
- ❖ Véronique Dasen
- ❖ Khalija Jariaa
- ❖ Marco Vespa
- ❖ Gareth Whittaker



View of the Anti-Atlas, Imou Argan village, Sidi Ifni region, 2014



## References of the slide images on play and toys in the Greco-Roman Antiquity

- 5 on the left: Antique chous 440-425 BC, baby holding rattle, London, British Museum, inv. 1910.6-15.4 - see Dasen, V. (2019). *Ludique ! Jouer dans l'Antiquité*, Gent, fig. 1, p. 15.
- 6 Articulated terracotta dolls, Greece, late 5th-early 4th century BC, from left to right: (cat. 2), Brussels, Royal Museums of Art and History, inv. A.306; (cat. 127) and (cat. 129), Milan, Soprintendenza per i Beni Archeologici della Lombardia, inv. Sambon n.260, St. 1574 and inv. Sambon n. 262, St 1576; (cat. 186), Zurich, Universität Zürich Archäologische Sammlung, inv. 2266 - see Dasen, V. (2019). *Ludique ! Jouer dans l'Antiquité*, Gent, fig. 1-4, p. 40-41.
- 8 top left: Terracotta reproduction of a Roman ivory doll found in Tarragona in a child's tomb, National Archaeological Museum of Tarragona - see photo URL <https://www.facebook.com/museesaintraymond/photos/a.140256209369220/855679801160187/?type=3&theater>
- 13 Toys for dinner play in the tomb of the little girl from Eretria (Greece), 330-270 BC, Louvre Museum, AGER, inv. CA 494 to 530, © RMN-Grand Palais (Louvre Museum) / Hervé Lewandowski - see Hasselin Rous, I. (2013). La dînette de la « petite fille » d'Érétrie : un jouet fonctionnel ?, P. 20-21.
- 15 Terracotta animal figurines (cat. 21, 22, 23, 24, 26), Lyon, Lugdunum-museum and Roman theaters, inv. 0.804.49 (rooster), 0.804.52 (rooster), 0.804.53 (dove), 0.854.54 (hen), 0.804.76 (dog) - see Dasen, V. (2019). *Ludique ! Jouer dans l'Antiquité*, fig. 8, p. 27.
- 20 top left: split reed or cane cymbal, Ancient Greece. In Smith, W. (1873), *A School Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities*. New York: Harper and Brothers, p.107 - photo © 2004–2019 ClipArt ETC, Florida Center for Instructional Technology.
- 20 top right: cymbals held between thumb and middle finger, Ancient Greece, Katakolo, Ilia, Greece, Museum of Technologies of the Ancient Greeks Kostas Kotsanas, Collection of musical instruments from Ancient Greece <http://kotsanas.com/fr/exh.php?exhibit=2104003>
- 21 above: tambourine, skin membrane and bronze discs, Ancient Greece, Katakolo, Ilia, Greece, Museum of Technologies of the Ancient Greeks Kostas Kotsanas, Collection of musical instruments from Ancient Greece <http://kotsanas.com/fr/exh.php?exhibit=2104002>
- 21 below: tambourine, Agrigento, Greece, 350-340 BC. J.-C. In Bellia, A. (2013). Oggetti sonori e strumenti musicali in Sicilia dal Neolitico al Bronzo Antico e dall'Età del Ferro all'Et Arcaica, Classica ed Ellenistica, fig. 5, p. 94.
- 22 on the left: flute, Ancient Greece, around 490 BC. In Consoli, M. E. (2018). Gli strumenti musicali in Virgilio. fig. p. 59.

- 23 top left: flute whose reed is fully placed in the mouth, Ancient Greece, Katakolo, Ilia, Greece, Museum of Technologies of the Ancient Greeks Kostas Kotsanas, Collection of musical instruments from Ancient Greece <http://kotsanas.com/fr/exh.php?exhibit=2103001>
- 24 on the left: Pandure with three strings, Museum of Technologies of the Ancient Greeks Kostas Kotsanas, Collection of musical instruments from Ancient Greece <http://kotsanas.com/fr/exh.php?exhibit=2102009>
- 25 left: Attic chous (cat. 122), boy pushing his trolley on wheels, Athens region, second half of the 5th century BC, Milan, Soprintendenza per i Beni Archeologici della Lombardia, inv. Sambon n. 27, St 1336 – see Dasen, V. (2019). *Ludique ! Jouer dans l'Antiquité*, Gent, fig. 1, p. 3
- 26 on the right: chous, Athens, National Museum 1267, Drawing V. Dasen after Green 1971, pl. 33b – see Dasen, V., (2005), *Les Lieux de l'enfance*, fig. 4a, p. 74.
- 27 left: white ground lekythos (440-435 BCE). London, The British Museum, 1920.1221.3. © The Trustees of the British Museum – see Dasen, V. (2018). *Hoops and Coming of Age in Greek and Roman Antiquity.*, fig. 10a, p. 15.
- 29 on the left: group of knucklebone players ("circle game"), Boeotia, Greece (cat. 80), 500-475 BC, Paris, Louvre museum, inv. CA 1734 - see Dasen, V. (2019). *Ludique ! Jouer dans l'Antiquité*, Gent, fig. 1, p. 92.
- 30 top left: wooden spinning top, Roman era. In Durand, A. (1992). *Jeux et jouets de l'enfance en Grèce et à Rome*. fig. 2, p. 15.
- 31 on the left: women playing a spinning top, Greece, Attic Lécythe, 440–430 BC, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art 1875, 75.2.9. Gift of Samuel G. Ward, 1875. Museum photo – see Dasen, V. (2016). *Jeux de l'amour et du hasard en Grèce ancienne*. In Kernos, 29, fig. 9, p. 96
- 32 left: marble track, Rome, forum, temple of Venus and Roma – see Dasen, V. (2019). *Ludique ! Jouer dans l'Antiquité*, Gent, fig. 1, p. 67.
- 33 left: two naked boys playing with a ball. Attic chous with red figures, 450-400 BC, 14 cm. Athens, National Archaeological Museum, inv. 1555. © H. Ammar – see Dasen, V. (2018). *Dossier Jeux et Jouets dans l'Antiquité. A la redécouverte de la culture ludique antique*. In *Archeologia*, 571, p. 35.
- 34 above: ball game with curved sticks, Attic bas-relief, Greece, 510-500 BC, H 27 cm, National Museum in Athens – see André, J.-M. (1992). *Jeux et divertissements dans le monde gréco-romain*, p 39.
- 35 on the left: Campanian hydria with red figures (cat. 123), Eros pushing a young girl on a swing, 360-330 BC, Milan, Soprintendenza per i Beni Archeologici della Lombardia, inv. Sambon n. 31, St 1340 – see Dasen, V. (2019). *Ludique ! Jouer dans l'Antiquité*, Gent, fig. 2, p. 61.
- 36 on the left: Apulian bell crater, two Erotes playing on a swing (cat. 117). Early 4th century BC, Métaponte, Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Metaponto, inv. 324335 – see Dasen, V. (2019). *Ludique ! Jouer dans l'Antiquité*, Gent, fig. 1, p. 60.



- 37 on the left: figurine of acrobat standing on hands (cat. 110), late 4th century BC, Taranto, Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Taranto, inv. 4059 – see Dasen, V. (2019). *Ludique ! Jouer dans l'Antiquité*, Gent, fig. 2, p. 71.
- 39 above: terracotta group representing two players and a dwarf. 1st century AD, © Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports \_ / \_ Archaeological Receipts Fund\_ / TAP Service – see Dasen, V. (2018). Dossier Jeux et Jouets dans l'Antiquité. A la redécouverte de la culture ludique antique. In *Archeologia*, 571, p. 38.
- 40 left: marble statue (H. 68 cm), Roman copy of a Hellenistic original. Rome, Vatican Museums. Drawing V. Dasen – see Bonnard, J-B., Dasen, V. & Wilgaux, J. (2017), *Famille et société dans le monde grec et en Italie du Ve au IIe siècle av. J.-C.*, fig. 14a.

References of the slide images on North African and Saharan games and toys

Boubaker Daoumani: slide 28 on the right, 29 on the right, 30 at the top in the middle, 39 at the bottom left and right, 44.

Fatima Id Talb: slide 27 on the right.

Khalija Jariaa: slide 5 on the right, 10 on the top right, 11 on the bottom right, 22 right, 26 left, 31 right, 33 bottom right, 37 right, 38 above right and 38 below right, 49.

D. Ponsard, Musée de l'Homme, Paris: slide 18 at the top left and bottom left

Roos Van Wassenhove: slide 38 at the top left.

The other images were taken by Jean-Pierre Rossie.

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<https://ucp.academia.edu/JeanPierreRossie>



Tiznit, at the foot of the Anti-Atlas, 2017