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# PUBLICATIONS

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## Reviews

**Dorota Żołądz-Strzelczyk, Izabela Gomułka, Katarzyna Kabacińska-Łuczak, Monika Nawrot-Borowska, *Dzieje zabawek dziecięcych na ziemiach polskich do początku XX wieku [The history of children's toys on Polish lands until the end of the 20th century]*, Wrocław 2016, 471 pages. 471.**

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The publication is the result of studies conducted under the supervision of Prof. Dorota Żołądz-Strzelczyk as part of the National Science Centre research project titled “Children’s toys in Polish territories before the end of the 19th century.” For many years, the authors have conducted research related to the issues of the child, childhood, as well as children’s games and toys in three scientific centres: Poznań (Adam Mickiewicz University, Prof. Dorota Żołądz-Strzelczyk, Dr Katarzyna Kabacińska-Łuczak), Bydgoszcz (Kazimierz Wielki University, Dr Monika Nawrot-Borowska) and Wrocław (University of Wrocław, Dr Izabela Gomułka). It was Dorota Żołądz-Strzelczyk’s book, *Dziecko w dawnej Polsce [The child in historical Poland]*, published in 2002 in Poznań, that initiated this direction of research for education historians. This was due to the fact that it contains a fragment devoted to old children’s games and toys. Several years later, K. Kabacińska published a work titled *Zabawy i zabawki dziecięce w osiemnastowiecznej Polsce [Children’s games and toys in 18<sup>th</sup>-century Poland]* (Poznań 2007).

These issues were also touched upon by the authors’ subsequent publications, including *Dawne i współczesne zabawki dziecięce [Historical and contemporary children’s toys]* (ed., Poznań 2010), *Codziennosc dziecięca opisana słowem i obrazem. Życie dziecka na ziemiach polskich od XVI do XVIII wieku [A child’s everyday life described in words and images. The life of a child on Polish lands from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> century]* (Warszawa 2011), *Zabawka – przedmiot ludyczny i obiekt kolekcjonerski [The toy – a ludic object and collector’s item]* (ed., Poznań 2016). Both D. Żołądz-Strzelczyk and K. Kabacińska-Łuczak regularly addressed these issues in their texts, published in journals and collective works.

The authors invited to collaborated in the preparation of the reviewed publication also included M. Nawrot-Borowska. whose scientific interests, encompassing education in the

family and home schooling,<sup>1</sup> also included the issues of the child, childhood and toys (especially since 2010) and archaeologist I. Gomułka, who dealt with the issues of medieval games and toys.<sup>2</sup>

The authors used an extremely wide and diverse set of source materials. These include material (mainly children's playthings from archaeological digs, museums, or private collections, preserved to this day), iconographic (drawings by Daniel Chodowiecki, wall paintings, portraits, as well as photographs and illustrations from magazines, especially those addressed to women and children or whole families, as well as pedagogical periodicals), as well as written sources (diaries, memoirs, fiction, pedagogical literature and guidebooks, particularly educational ones addressed to parents and teachers).

Also impressive is the range of queries conducted in libraries (Jagiellonian, Kórnicka, AUM University) and museums, including national ones (Krakow, Poznań, Szczecin, Warsaw), as well as toy museums (Kielce, Karpacz, Krynica-Zdrój, Kudowa-Zdrój), and those of archaeological (Gdańsk, Poznań, Wrocław), archaeological and historical (Elbląg), historical (Sanok), municipal (Zabrze, Żywiec) and ethnographic nature (Krakow).

The reviewed work consists of four parts and an Appendix. The first part, titled "The toy: introductory issues" is informative, presents definitions, functions and classification of toys, showing the current state of domestic research on the issue, as well as presents the source foundations of the publications and the resources of museums and private collections of children's toys.

In part 2, titled "The toy: theoretical considerations from the 16<sup>th</sup> century to the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century", readers will get to know the authors who write about toys over a broad time perspective of more than 400 years. The section includes such aspects as toy definitions and classifications, their functions, attempts to find the perfect toy, as well as the responsibilities of adults towards their children's playthings. The authors have taken into account the three functions most frequently assigned to toys, i.e. entertainment (ludic), developmental (educational) and pedagogical (socialising, preparatory). The authors cite various opinions about these functions, some of them surprising, such as that of Dr nna Fischer Dückleemann from *The Family Encyclopaedia*, who, at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, postulated taking away girls' dolls and encouraging them to play with boys, and even to fight, because there would be plenty of time for maternal duties (p. 76-77). Searching for the recipe for the perfect toy in the material analysed, the authors noted that above all, it should be adapted to the child's age and gender, made by the

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<sup>1</sup> NAWROT-BOROWSKA, M., *Nauczanie domowe na ziemiach polskich w II połowie XIX i początkach XX wieku – zapatrywania teoretyczne i praktyka*, Bydgoszcz 2011; *Źródła do dziejów nauczania domowego dzieci polskich w XIX i XX wieku z bibliografią adnotowaną pamiątek i wyborem literatury pedagogicznej*, ed. K. JAKUBIAK, G. KARŁOWSKA, M. NAWROT, A. WINIARZ, Bydgoszcz 2005.

<sup>2</sup> GOMUŁKA, I., *Drewniane średniowieczne lalki z badań archeologicznych*, [in:] *Dawne i współczesne zabawki dziecięce*, ed. D. ŻOŁĄDŹ-STRZELCZYK, K. KABACIŃSKA, Poznań 2010; GOMUŁKA, I., *Zabawa odbiciem rzeczywistości – lódki zabawki z Gdańska i Opola jako odzwierciedlenie lokalnego sztuki średniowiecznego*, [in:] *Życie codzienne przez pryzmat rzeczy*, ed. P. KUCYPERA, S. WADYL, Toruń 2010; GOMUŁKA, I., *Children's toys in mediaeval Silesia*, w: *Child and Childhood in the Light of the Archeology*, ed. P. ROMANOWICZ, Wrocław 2012; GOMUŁKA, I., "Produkcja figurek glinianych koników na terenie Śląska", *Śląskie sprawozdania archeologiczne*, 2014, vol. 56, ed. T. PŁONKA, A. WIŚNIEWSKI.

child themselves and as simple/modest as possible. Citing the opinions of pedagogues, doctors and authors of handbooks from previous eras, the authors proved that many of the observations and warnings addressed to parents contained in the materials have remained relevant to this day. The authors also touched on the problem of an excess of toys in a child's life and objects used as playthings but posing a danger to health (including the problem of using the proper, safe paints for painting toys, which is still relevant today). It is also worth taking a look at the remarks concerning sound toys, which have become a true affliction for the household members and neighbours of the children who receive them.

Part three, "The toy: manufacturing and distribution" directly addresses the problems of production, including by children, private persons, toy workshops and schools, as well as factories, and the issue of toy sales. The words of Julian Tuwim, regarding a home-made mechanical toy, "the disk spins and the stick hits the board. Why? We still do not know" (p. 110), are fascinating to a researcher of games. We still do not know, but Tuwim, as an adult, still remembers the circumstances accompanying the creation of the device. This part of the publication, showing the significance of home-made toys in the life of a child and their developmental role across the ages, is extremely rich in content. It is a knowledge mine for parents and guardians searching for ideas for non-standard suggestions for playing with their children, such as making a doll out of corn, or the numerous ways of using paper to play. The authors have also touched upon the issue of so-called natural toys, such as sand or sticks.

Equally important and interesting is the part of the paper devoted to the presentation of toy workshops, schools and factories. Only partial information has survived to this day about some of them; therefore, the initiative to systematise their presentation appears all the more valuable. Of the examples of specific initiatives, evolutions, directions and forms of production presented, as well as the extremely important issue of gaining professional experience during internships abroad in Czech and German factories and workshops, an interesting, multicoloured picture of the domestic toy manufacturers' market emerges. Here, the authors have taken care of the smallest details, noting even the metal product factories that produced toy soldiers, or a company that quite unusually combined the production of toys with the manufacture of eyeglasses and binoculars, which had intended to patent a "device for automatic closing and opening of dolls' eyes" in the early 1930s (p. 150). Here, the reader will learn how important a breakthrough in the production of dolls was the introduction of toys of this type made of canvas and leather, and therefore not breakable.

The authors also presented the evolution of the possibility of purchasing toys by children and adults – from those offered by traveling salesmen, through fairs, markets and feast days, to stores – from small locations to large department stores built since the second half of the 19th century. In this part, we can find toy exhibition offers, special advertisements about Christmas sales, as well as announcements of very popular doll hospitals and clothiers. For the owner of a broken doll, it must have been soothing to read the advertisement of the Lviv doll hospital, clothier and storage: "After all, if a doll breaks, that is the greatest worry [...] The doll hospital at No. 3 Fredry Street will examine your sick

doll” (p. 172). Of course, there is also the captivating description of the window display of Stanisław Wokulski’s Warsaw shop, which we know from Bolesław Prus’ *The Doll*.

Part four of the publication is a Lexicon of Toys. The authors have presented entries on such toys as spinning tops, weapons, dollhouses, animal figures, rattles, blocks, horses “for riding” – hobby, rocking and wheeled, doll kitchens and rooms, dolls, boats and ships, dioramas, sewing machines, kits and irons, steam machines, kitchen and room furniture and equipment, mechanical toys, miniature dishes and other kitchen appliances, tools and toys for playing in the sand, optical toys, puppets, paper toys, plus toys, vehicles – horse-drawn, automobiles, trains, religious toys, outfits and other parts of a doll’s wardrobe, puppet theatres, pinwheels, doll carriages, toy wagons, toy instruments, toy soldiers.

The publication concludes with the appendix titled “(“Maybe) They were toys, too? Accessories for dexterity and fitness games.” It describes such accessories as the timeless jumping rope, ball, bowling pins, balls and croquet, but also those slightly forgotten, such as a shuttlecock ball, diabolo, playing hoops, as well as cup-and-ball.

The idea of creating the abovementioned Lexicon (which can also include the material contained in the Appendix) is an extremely important initiative that systematises and expands the existing knowledge about the history of particular toys – from the moment of their creation through individual stages of changes in their form, material from which they were made, or the ludic, developmental or pedagogical function. Most of the presented entries, due to their size and detail, could be separate articles on individual toys. Collected together in one place, they are an excellent compendium on this subject. There are also surprising elements, such as a set of toy liturgical utensils (p. 363) or the first celluloid film projectors (p. 336).

The book is complemented by a carefully compiled rich biography, an index of names and a summary in English. The bibliography includes, among others, toy catalogues and price lists, periodicals, (including *Ateneum*, *Biesiada Literacka*, *Biblioteka Warszawska*, *Bluszcz*, *Dobra Gospodyni*, *Dziecko*, *Głos Wielkopolanek*, *Kronika Rodzinna*, *Mały Świątek*, *Moje pisemko*, *Tygodnik Mód i Powieści*), fiction, diaries, philosophical and pedagogical literature, as well as guidebooks, museum and collectors’ catalogues, and a rich list of studies and netographic sources.

The content of the publication is well-illustrated and complemented by numerous photographs, drawings and illustrations presenting various children’s toys. They present interesting excerpts from the exhibitions of individual toy museums, but also thematic exhibitions devoted to the subject organised in other museums (including in Leżajsk, Ciechanowiec, Legnica, Krosno, Koło, Katowice, Będzin, Białystok, Jastrzębie Zdrój, Gnieźno, Głogów and Ustroniu), posters advertising such events, as well as special occasion posters. The authors have also included reprints of toy advertisements printed in periodicals, as well as instructions on how to make them at home (using paper, yarn, potatoes, or even Christmas trees) or suggestions for games, illustrations, photos, price lists and inventories of individual toy manufactures (sometimes even production matrices), as well as closely related catalogues and advertisements. The views of toy shop interiors and window displays, also included in the work, are very impressive.

The lexicon portion is also richly illustrated. In this case, the authors made sure that each entry is illustrated with several photos of different forms of a given toy, as well as various shots of children using them to play.

The book *Dzieje zabawek dziecięcych na ziemiach polskich do początku XX wieku* [*The history of children's toys on Polish lands until the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century*] is the perfect culmination of research conducted by the authors for several years. The research was interdisciplinary in nature, combining many perspectives: historical and archaeological, pedagogical and psychological, literary, journalistic and even hygienic. The various sources gathered over this time have been perfectly used to create a synthesis of history of domestic toys. It presents the process of their creation in a very visual way, as well as the discussions of parents and pedagogues regarding their proper application in a child's upbringing. It seems worthwhile to consider a future notion of publishing an anthology of texts on games and toys – the authors have gathered a rich and diverse collection of texts of the subject, extensively quoted in the work. Published separately and expanded, it could be another valuable source for toy researchers and enthusiasts.

The work reviewed is a work worth recommending to all those interested in the issues of games and toys, not only researchers of the problem of children and childhood. Thanks to it, every reader can journey to the land of their own childhood and the toys that surrounded them at the time. It seems that an intergenerational reading of the book would be particularly valuable, when grandparents, parents and children could explore the history of individual toys and the enclosed illustrations, and then talk together about the subject of entertainment and games, which is so important in the life of every person. Even the beautiful cover, showing various toys, encourages this discussion, while the photos of the authors on the inner jacket – present-day ones and those from childhood, in the company of favourite toys – remind the readers about the need to take care of the child in each of us.

*Agnieszka Wałęga*