

## Girls' Plays with Dolls and Doll-Houses in Various Cultures

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### Abstract

The article presents an analysis of the historical and contemporary context of girls' plays with dolls and doll-houses. The anthropological materials about children's plays with dolls and doll-houses help to recreate the doll context as a cultural represent of evolutional development. The archaic functions of the doll used in rituals and traditional ceremonies objectivize the historically inherent cultural status of the doll. In traditional cultures, through dolls plays children who play with their peers and older children, receive relevant information about their natural and social environment, social relationships, symbols, values and ideals of adults' world. Dolls plays enhance mastering ethical and the moral values handed down from generation to generation. Another aspect of the analysis is connected with the traditional "school" of play replacement of an object. It is illustrated by the material about manufacturing and use of a 'simple' doll in many traditional world cultures. Dolls plays reflect socially significant images and senses of idealized adult life. The development of the sign world of dolls is closely connected with the interpretation of the doll image as a sign of humans taken in their social and cultural context.

### Introduction

The article presents an analysis of historical context of girls' plays with dolls and doll-houses. The anthropological material about children's plays with dolls and doll-houses helps to recreate the doll context as a cultural representation of cultural-historical development. The defining role in the suggested analysis belongs to the cultural historic theory. It postulates the preeminence of the analysis of psychological functions as the products of development. According to Vygotsky and Luriya, only two aspects of psychological development have been sufficiently studied so far. They are: phylogenetic development, which views the personal behavior as the result of long biological evolution, and ontogenetic development, which studies the regularities in the child development and its role in the adult cultural development. However, there is a third aspect which understands the process of a person's cultural development as the result of historical evolution. But this approach has not become the commonly accepted knowledge among psychologists. Bygone historic epochs have left evidence about their existence. Based on it we can reconstruct psychological behavioral mechanisms. Our reference to historic evidence concerning girls' plays with dolls in some primitive and traditional cultures gives an opportunity to observe historic tendencies in the doll-play development both as a cultural phenomenon and as a means for the cultural development of the child.

Understanding play as a psychological phenomenon is a significant postulate of the cultural historic theory. Play has the status of the main vector of the child's cultural development, including his sign activity. Play as psychological tools influences the process of the transformation of the natural psychological processes in culturally determined higher psychological functions. L. Vygotsky gives the famous example of a child who wants to ride a horse but cannot. Using object substitution the child uses a stick in the role of a horse. Another example of object substitution described by Vygotsky, has a direct connection with the present research. Vygotsky (1993) writes that each of us can see a child nursing a wooden log with an earnest air. No actor can play this role with the same conviction. The child genuinely looks at this piece of wood and images it as a doll, to most primitive objects he attributes such qualities which are motivated by his personal experience and imagination. Through play the child develops abstract meaning separate from the objects in the world, which is a critical feature in the development of higher mental functions.

In developmental psychology the scientific interest in girls' plays with dolls is determined by the specific socially and personally important functions of dolls, which only enrich ontogenetic development. They can be socializing, entertaining, recreational, relaxing, psychotherapeutic, training, and so on. The doll representation as a cultural artifact, as an object of childhood material culture, as one of the main symbol of childhood form ideal conditions for conducting research of girls' plays with dolls within the context of cultural-historical theory.

According to this approach the play content is necessary to be viewed not only as a means of child development but also as a product of historical development. The possibility to connect two meaningful lines of the analysis of girls' plays with dolls – cultural historical and proper psychological – is the key point of the article. The content of the suggested analysis is concentrated on the peculiarities of girls' plays with “simple” dolls in different cultures as a more representative historical phenomenon.

The main aim of the present research is to compare different historical and cultural contexts of girls' plays with dolls and doll- houses, which are meaningful for the deeper understanding of their development psychological potential. We apply this approach to two lines of cultural development. One of them is connected with the genesis of play substitution, which has historic roots in the ambivalent use of the doll both as an object of adults' ritual practices and as an attribute of children's games. The cultural counterpart of object substitution lies in the use of a neutral object, adding symbolic meanings to it and thus representing a specific sign of a person. Another line of cultural development is connected with historically conditioned context of the doll as an object of material culture. It has direct correlation to ethnic life within a definite natural and social environment, which can dictate socially important cultural phenomena of human behavior.

Addressing historic realities of girls' playing with dolls and doll-houses in different cultures demands a specific choice of empirical material for the present research. The database includes archeological, ethnographic and anthropological materials about children's play with dolls and doll-houses in primitive and traditional cultures (the larger part of it is about traditional dolls' plays in Russian culture). For the comparative psychological analysis we also use the database about the dolls' plays in European, American and African cultures. In the research we analyze some old and contemporary girls' plays with dolls and doll-houses. The objective of this research is to observe general regularities in the historical development of girls' plays with dolls. We do not claim that our research is comprehensive in its historical and ethnographic analysis of the empirical material, because it has some constraints.

The main method of the research is theoretical reconstruction of cultural conditions of development which are historically fixed in games. In addition we also use the method of comparative psychological analysis for studying girls' plays with dolls in different cultures.

### **The Doll in the History of Culture**

The doll, an anthropomorphic figure, is defined in the dictionary by Dahl (2001) as made of cloth, leather, paper, wood, etc. The image is either of a person or sometimes of an animal. It is one of the oldest artifacts of game culture. Since old times they have been produced and used only in playing (not utilitarian) purposes – rituals, rites, celebrations, children's games. Archeological findings bring in their contribution to the support of the idea of the doll's ancient origin. Among them are: an anthropomorphic figure of ivory, found on the territory of the Czech Republic (dating back 30-35 thousand years ago); dolls of ceramics, wood, alabaster, found in Ancient Egypt and in the Ancient Orient cultures, Sumer and Akkadia, dating back to the Bronze Age; terracotta, wooden, metal dolls found during archeological excavations at the settlements of Cretan Mycenaean Era, Aegean, Etruscan cultures; clay, bone and stone figures which functioned as amulets or averters against evil forces and illnesses, patrons of families at the time of Jomon culture, Japan (10,000– 300 BC); alabaster dolls with moving legs and arms found in the base of a Persian Temple from 1,100 BC; a terracotta doll and toy utensils found by the German archeologist Schliemann during his excavations of Troy; dolls found in women's and children's burial places, sarcophagus, (a Rome doll in the Creperia Tryphaena sarcophagus, the Capitol

Museum); ancient gravestone epitaphs (A Girl with a Doll. A Gravestone Stella. Attica. Marble. About 340 BC).

According to the analysis of archeologists and anthropologists, many of the found dolls are considered to be attributes of children's games. Moreover, the analyzed artifacts leave open the question of authenticity and functionality of the doll. One of the reasons of multiple interpretations or whom they belonged to, children or adults, lies in the apparent likeness of them with similar in appearance but different in functioning anthropomorphic objects, such as: oblatory or sacrificial objects, anthropomorphic amulets used by a kin person in rituals, devil's dolls used as a magic tool by a shaman, a magician or a witch; miniature statuettes used to accompany the dead in their afterlife; women's figures as former attributes of agricultural magic.

Now, we will try to compare the anthropomorphic wooden figures, the exhibits in the British Museum and the wooden figures on display in the State Russian Museum. The former were found in the burial places of Ancient (23<sup>rd</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> centuries BC) and Middle (18<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> centuries BC) reigns. They belonged to the world of adults and served the purpose to accompany the dead slave-owner in the after world: a brewer, a plough-man with oxen, slaves carrying sags with crops into the barn, carpenters and weavers at their usual work, shepherds with cows, rowers on the wooden barks with raised sails, warrior units with bows and arrows, cooks roasting geese and baking round bread. The latter group dates back to the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. They represent children's toys. They were made by the *Bogorodsky* masters and show everyday scenes from the adult life – 'butter churning', 'cabbage chopping', 'washing with a roller', 'having dinner'. The survey of the doll studies in anthropology, history and ethnography also proves the dual nature of archaic dolls, which were used both by adults in their cult traditions or religious rituals and by children in their plays.

Numerous studies have been conducted on duality of the toys artifacts. It has been argued that researchers should demonstrate some caution when analyzing the objects (material) world of children, exhibits of their world. After some thorough research many of the dolls from old times turn out to be the original objects of worshipping, or the agricultural goddesses but not toys. According to Kharuzina (1912), the fact of naïve mixing in everyday life objects meant for fun and objects meant for serious things, the frequent use of human images for different purposes raises a question: whether it is correct to consider a doll as the first and original toy of a child, or whether a doll is a later interpretation of a human image created for more serious purposes. Aries (1999) argues that specialists in history and collectors of dolls and miniature statuettes find it difficult to differentiate a doll as a child's toy from other miniature objects found on archeological sites. There are various scientific points of view on the dual nature of the doll. According to the theory of survivals (Tylor, Eliade), when the objects of adult life 'descend' into the world of children's usage, it means that they have lost their utilitarian and sacred functions. There is a curious observation, that the development of civilization puts an end to the use of some ancient objects, but they can have a second life as a children's toy.

According to the labor theory (Plekhanov, Elkonin) the invention of tools preceded the invention of toys. There was a stage when those tools were miniature copies of the objects world of adults, they formed the relationship 'a toy – a tool', and they had direct correlation to the future adult activities of children. Now that relationship does not exist, and the process of manipulating with such objects is stimulated by a response to novelty.

Another point of view is connected with the idea that the doll can be used simultaneously as a children's toy, as an object of worshipping, as a sacrificial object, as an attribute of homeopathic magic, and of the shamanistic ritual. Basing on the anthropological data of toys in primitive cultures, Ethnographical studies argued that we traditionally consider the doll as a natural toy for girls, which is true as we can see it in many cultures of the world. On the other hand, in primitive cultures people believe that a doll possesses some human qualities. Thus, pre-historic men could not separate the image and the soul. Such understanding is often found in faiths and legends of numerous cultures. The natives of the Torres Strait Islands have wooden statuettes called *madub*. They are believed to come alive at night and walk around the plantations with a howler. The sound produced with it helps vegetation grow. The Ob Ostyaks and the Yamal Samoeds make for their children special dolls, *okans*, which are small, about 2-3 inches. They resemble women's figures but do not have heads or bodies

or limbs. It is done in order to avoid any resemblance with sacred images, which are carved out of wood in commemoration of dead relatives.

It should be noted that modern anthropological data show that various people living today still believe in the magic power of such dolls, which they use as toys, amulets and averters, symbols of protection. Achayvayamsky reindeer-breeders (an ethnic group counting about 400 people who live in Koryak Region in the Far East of Russia) still believe that anthropomorphic figures can have protective power, so they use such figures as personal and family amulets. *Okkamacklies*, small anthropomorphic figures made from a willow twig which only vaguely resemble a human, are usually placed into a cod thus protecting a child from evil spirits. The wooden doll *gychgy* originally used to make fire, now also protects the house. A doll made of reindeer skin and stuffed with deer hair (a doll looking for a herd of horses) is used by hunters for protection and luck in hunting. The Evenkis of the Nenets group believe that anthropomorphic figures *khomokhons* which are carved out of the larch-tree log possess protective power. Similar dolls are used by girls between 3-5 years of age in their games. As a further example we will speak about how the so called commemorative doll can be used. In the north-west of Siberia in Khanty-Mansi region when a person dies Khanty make a burial doll without a face. They remember the deceased by feeding the doll with fresh food for as long as 40 days for women and 50 days for men. In spring when a special time for remembrance of the dead comes, the burial doll is placed into a symbolic reindeer skin tent, chum, together with the effigy of the bird teal. Then they set fire to the chum. If it burns well, it means that the spirit of the dead have passed away to the North, because all birds fly to the north at that time. In autumn when the remembrance time comes, a burial doll is placed into a symbolic chum near the river together with the effigy of the fish syrok. Again the fire is started and people wait until the spirit passes away to the North, because all the fish move north to the Arctic Ocean. Eight-year old girls use in their play the same burial doll, made by their Mansi granny. All the above mentioned facts question the cultural scheme of transition, descending into the sphere of children's usage. On the contrary, they prove the ambivalent attitude to objects, dominant in many traditional cultures<sup>1</sup>.

As an argument for it we can use the ideas of the "law of participation" by Levy-Bruhl. Vygotsky and Luria (1993) note the law of participation formulated by him describes another type of logic, unlike ours. This type of naïve logical connections explains the fact why one and the same thing can co-participate in absolutely different forms of being. Archaic societies lived under the dominance of coherent semiotic model of the world. There was no distinction between utilitarian and symbolic functions of objects. As a result, a thing could serve two purposes simultaneously, utilitarian and semiotic. Functional vibration, which gave the kin person an opportunity to perceive and use any object both as a very practical utilitarian thing and aesthetically valuable, to which some supernatural power could be attributed.

It can be suggested that the given arguments illustrate some anthropogenetic regularity in the process of the man mastering the objects world. It is also connected with the parallel process of mastering utilitarian functions of objects, their natural objective meanings and attributed symbolic meanings and senses. The above mentioned anthropological data are of great importance to understand the doll phenomenon as a cultural artifact. It illustrates anthropological achievements and acquisitions made in the process of evolutionary development in the sphere of mastering objects world and attributing symbolic functions to it. The unity of utilitarian and symbolic functions of objects in the consciousness of first pre-historic men is vividly observed in primitive cultures of miniature anthropomorphic figures. The doll was used both as a sacred ritual object – a talisman-guardian, an amulet and as a child's toy.

### **The Doll as a Childhood Artifact in Traditional Culture**

Another line of the cultural-historical analysis is closely connected with the interpretation of the doll as a childhood artifact oriented towards the study of its multifunctionality in a traditional culture. The cultural prototype of the self-made doll is an anthropomorphic image, which demonstrates some common features with a man. This image goes back to the far past of humankind. The psychological roots of anthropomorphism and personification of objects lie in the phenomenological peculiarity of human consciousness, the ambivalent

<sup>1</sup> Field data by prof. Mukhina, expedition in Irkutsk region, 2011

attitude of men to a thing. The anthropological data prove that dolls are used in the ritual practice of adults and in the rituals of childhood period. Adults used ritual dolls in the rites of the 'transitional' type, agricultural holidays marking the beginning or the end of sowing, harvesting and cattle pasturing. Such dolls symbolized the land fertility, good harvest and general wellbeing. According to the anthropological data different types of dolls are used in agricultural rituals: a crude doll made of sheaf of corn in East and West European cultures, or a doll dressed in a *sarafan* and a cap *cocoshnik* in Russia. They symbolized the Mother Crop, Harvest Maid. Figures made of twigs, straw or corn ears used in the Russian burial ritual, sinking or tearing the doll embodied the greatness of the earth power. A straw effigy of Shrove-tide *'maslennitsa'*, a ritual doll *'kukushka'* (coocoo) symbolized the memory of the late relatives. *'Rain'* dolls or *'sun'* dolls were used in the cultures of Dagestan and the North-Eastern Caucasus in the rituals to call rain or the sun and embodied the myth about the dying and resurrecting god.

Family ritual dolls, such as birth dolls, baptizing dolls, wedding or funeral dolls, burial dolls always accompanied family rituals which involved several generations of a family simultaneously. Birth and baptizing dolls, which were specifically made by the birth date of children, served the function of a family averter. It was dearly kept in the family as a family relic or simply as a doll with which a baby played. In the North of Russia a small birth doll was placed in the cod next to an infant girl singing traditional folk songs:

*Sleep and insomnia*

*Don't play with my dear child*

*But play with that doll.<sup>2</sup>*

The Vepss birth doll specifically made for the birth of a child was placed into the cod to warm it. After the child birth, the doll was hung above the cod to protect the baby from evil spirits and evil eyes. When the infant grew up a bit, the doll which was the size of a palm was given to him as his first toy. Evenkis, Chukchi, Eskimos and Koryaks adjusted the dolls made from fur, wood, leather or bone to the children's cods. *Wedding dolls* transmitted very important information connected with 'feminine magic' - successful marriage, birth-giving, preserving and continuation of family. Such dolls were handed down on the mother's side from older generations to younger ones. Dolls-helpers described in Russian folk fairy-tales were given to the bride by her mother. Burial dolls were a symbolic image of dead people and also served as an object to help communicate with them.

Let us now turn to some ethnographic material which also illustrates the local traditions of doll-making. According to ethnographers, the arch-typical feature of a hand-made doll is its construction. The simplest one, the most primitive in the Russian culture is the construction with the highest degree of relativity. It is a splinter, clay and cloth post doll. In Central Russia splinter dolls are popular. They are flat dolls, cut from a wooden block. In the North of Russia solid carved dolls *'pankis'* are made out of a rounded block of wood, carved from a log with the axe or the knife. In northern parts of Russia the basis in the doll construction is a post. So-called post-dolls (*'zakrutki'*, *'skrutki'*, *'skatki'*, *'skalki'*) were made from a piece of cloth or a shawl twisted in a tight rope. In Ukraine a similar type of a traditional doll is common; it is a *'motanka'* or an *'uzelkovaya'* doll. The folk name for such a doll was a *'lyal'ka'*. The process of making that doll was called to *'twist a doll'*. The doll was made from a self-made fabric colored with natural juice. The post which was filled with pieces of threads, grass, cereal was tied up in such a way as to make a round or oval head at the top. As a rule, the *'motanka'* did not have arms, legs or an upper part of the body. It was faceless or with a face, which was tied crosswise with a crude thread. This type of the crossed face is found everywhere in Ukraine (the ethnographic material at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century), as well as in Central, North and North Caucasian regions of Russia and in the mountainous parts of Kirghizia, Tadzhikistan, Uzbekistan, Georgia. The post doll which resembled a swaddled infant (*'lyal'ka'*) was placed in the cod to the new-born as an averter. Later it was given to girls for play. There is

2 The materials of the folklore expedition by Moscow University (1971)

one more type of doll construction which shows symbolism but at the same time possesses easily recognizable anthropomorphic features – a head with a face, an upper part of the body, arms and legs. In central and southern parts of Russia that type of dolls is represented by cloth dolls. They were made from a canvas bag which was filled with pieces of fabric, wool, sawdust and sand. In some areas the doll was filled with coal cinder which gave the name an 'zola' or 'zol'naya' doll, or it was filled with grains or cereal, 'zernovushka', 'zernovka', 'krupenichka'. A head was sewn to the doll separately. The Volga and Central Asia peoples constructed dolls in the form of a cross, dolls- *krestushki*'. The basis is twigs or chips tied up in the form of a cross. It is then put on in a dress, a head shawl and so on (The Volga region 1950-1960s; Kirghizia, 1995). The peoples of the Far North, Nenets and Khanty, use the beak of a water fowl with feathers to construct a doll. They sew on it colourful pieces of fabric and then put on fur clothes like those of an adult. The peoples of Central Asia use a *babka* (knucklebones) as the foundation of a doll. The *babka* served as a head, and a body was sewn on to it. The doll was dressed in clothes traditional for the local culture. Though the diversity in the doll construction which is determined by the differences in traditional cultures is still kept, we can single out some common features. The doll wears a dress, a head shawl, a *sarafan* (dress) and so on. It has a plait. Quite often such dolls form a family; there is a doll-mother, a doll-infant, a doll-kid. To construct such dolls textile was used, so the dolls were soft. A special role in the interpretation of dolls of children's images belongs to the attributes of the dolls life. Dolls houses, dolls sets in the traditional culture of the Russian North a mother doll and an infant doll live in a tub-form house with an infant cot and cradle. Evenkis dolls 'live' in a birth-bark '*babakan*' with a covering of thin fur, with fur sleeping bags and a fur blankets. The girls in the Far North of Russia still play with a traditional Chukcha doll resembling a baby or a child. The doll is made from pieces of reindeer skin, is dressed in overalls, *karkar* or *kuhlyanka*, a fur coat identical to real children's clothes. For example, the overalls have the similar flap on the back, *macks*, like those in real overalls for children. It stimulates the girl to act out real processes of child caring manipulations. When playing with such dolls the girls can change moss from under the flap the same way as an actual mother does while taking care of an infant. Komi girl's had as many dolls in the doll family as there were in her real one. The gender of the doll was shown by the cut and symbolism of clothes.

The anthropological and ethnographic data from different cultures and from different historical periods show the high level of preserving the tradition of doll-making used in ancient cultural practices. At the same time the tradition of making dolls for adults, though no longer used, is continued in cultural traditions of making dolls for children. A traditional hand-made doll, made by adults for a child's play can show some typical ritual features. They are primitiveness, schematic forms of some body parts (a face, an upper part of the body, arms, legs and a head), and the name tabooing. Such specific hand-made dolls condition do not intend to have absolute likeness and detailed similarity with a human, which is typical for 'usual' dolls, so calls dolls - exact copies which began to appear in the period of workmanship and later commercial toys manufacturing. A child, who plays with a primitive doll, has an opportunity to 'complete' the schematic image of the doll in accordance with the play plot. Hand-made dolls are more suitable for playing because they require the work of imagination. The material used for doll-making should motivate, stimulate and encourage playing. The psychological value of a hand-made doll is in different degrees of the symbolism of a doll image, starting from a simple object (a blade of grass, a splinter, a stick, an animal bone), which only vaguely indicate the doll, to the traditional hand-made doll, which has more expressive anthropomorphic feature.

### **Cultural and Psychological Context of the Girls' Plays with Self-Made 'Plain Dolls'**

The second point is the 'makeshift' dolls of children's own devising. Brookshaw (2009) notes, that such items – also referred to under the names of folk toys, emergent toys, homemade toys, street toys, slum dolls, playthings, or simply as kids' toys – are generally made by children who do not have access to commercially manufactured toys, either through their social status or due to the traditions of a culture the child lives in. The main advantage of the self-made doll over the commercially produced doll is that the first offers a wide scope for children's imagination and creates ideal conditions for the development. The functional duality of percep-

tion and usage of an object both as utilitarian and for playing takes place in contemporary early ontogenesis as an important fact of historical development. It is illustrated by situations of object substitute and activities when a child uses one object for another. The child attributes to a neutral object a certain meaning specific for the sense field of the play.

Let us now use some examples referring to different historic epochs and cultures. They illustrate a wide variety of objects substitutes that can be used in doll plays. They are 'makeshift' dolls of children's. The analysis includes the data-base referring for the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century, beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and contemporary period. At first we used Pokrovsky (1895); Hall & Ellis (1897); Kharuzina (1912) materials. Secondly we used contemporary period anthropological database about Russian ethnic groups (1970-1980) and North African region by Rossie (2005). The database by Pokrovsky described Cheremis, Votyakis, Ostyakis, and Samoyedy (all Russian groups), where girls used for dolls making two groups of objects and materials. The first is made of natural materials: sticks, pebbles, wood, clay, chalk. The second also uses utility objects: head scarves rolled into a rolling pin, rags. The database by Kharuzina characterized North America and Europe regions and described natural materials: corn cobs, flowers, leaves, grass, feathers, beaks, wings. The database by Hall and Ellis from New York, New Jersey; Edinburgh, Scotland (we used non-traditional child's plays for comparative analysis) illustrated free groups of objects and materials. The first is a natural materials: sticks decorated with flowers, leaves, grass; crop ears, hazel nuts, acorns, potatoes, clay pipes, shells, flowers, mud and clay, apples, herbs, wooden blocks, feathers. The second are utility objects: pillows tied over with a belt, bottles filled with water of different colors and given names, small clothes pegs, parts of dresses, newspapers, armchairs and chairs, cloth elephants, handkerchiefs, buttons, matches, tooth brushes, aprons, ropes, a tool for taking off boots, dough balls, towels, brooms, nails, bed legs, candy sticks, buttons with hooks, keys, umbrellas. The third are toys and game objects: game dice, skittles, and rubber balls. Here are some examples from recent anthropological data-base about Russian ethnic groups: Nenets, Yakuts, Khakas, Kirghizes, and Uzbeks. Today they are used for 'makeshift' dolls of children's: wooden logs, splinters, beaks of wild birds and poultry: goose, ducks; knee joint bones of cattle: horse, cow, sheep and utility objects: rags rolled tightly, handkerchiefs. The Nenets girls made plain dolls from the beak of a bird, goose, duck (a doll's head) and a prolonged piece of cloth with colorful strips sewn on it (a doll's body). Russian girls are played with sheep or goat knucklebones dolls. Yakut dolls are made from horse or cow knuckle-bones. Archaic Khakas dolls are made from sheep's or horses knuckle-bones. Kirghiz and Tadzhik dolls are made from a handkerchief and two crossing sticks. A dolls in a Moroccan village as Rossie (2005) describes it, could be a sign of a bride-groom, a shepherd, a well-known person, a warrior, a horseman, a mule-driver, etc.

In the analysis of anthropological materials we can look at universal objects and materials used to make dolls. They are divided into the following groups: 1. – natural vegetation and animal materials, 2. – utilitarian or household objects, 3. – toys and plays objects. They are objects and materials typical for the analyzed cultural and historical contexts. It should be mentioned that materials used for making dolls are connected with local traditions. It should be also noted that in traditional cultures natural materials are mostly used for making 'makeshift' dolls of children's, whereas urban cultures prefer to use utility objects with the tendency to reduce the status of self-made dolls and less often use objects substitutes in the game arsenal of modern children. Apart from that, the given database can be used by professionals working with children and supporting the development of sign activities.

Play substitution gives an opportunity to use a neutral object as the main play characters, as dolls. Hall and Ellis (1897) pointed out that when using objects as dolls children attributed to them some of human psychic features and treated them as a living and feeling creature. This ontogenetic peculiarity is reflected in girls' attitude to their dolls. Psychological research of early ontogenesis by Vygotsky show a special importance of object substitution in the process of child development. The choice of an object substitute for a doll has much importance for the process of play substitution. This object must show likeness to a person or give the player an opportunity to perform some actions in accordance with the play plot: "to feed", "to rock it to sleep" or "to put it to bed", etc. The latter condition in particular – not physical likeness but the possibility to perform

some symbolic play actions with the object in the play area - is of great importance. The objects substitute is the foundation aspect in a doll play. According to Vygotsky (1935) “ a bunch of rags or a piece of wood become a small baby in a play, because they can allow performing the same gestures as when carrying a baby in the hands or feeding it”. In *Tool and symbol in child development* Vygotsky argued, that in play the child is far from consciously the relativity of the sign operation or of the arbitrarily established connection of sign and meaning. In order to become an object’s sign, the stimulus finds support in the properties of the designated object itself. Not ‘everything can represent everything’ for the child in this game. The objects’ real properties and their sign meanings come into complex structural interaction during play. Performing symbolic or conditional meaningful actions the child does object actions but without using the real object. The latter becomes a supporting means to reproduce some abstract ideal relations. The opportunity to substitute some objects by others, some actions by other actions or functional substitute of objects by symbolic means proves that the functions of the object substituted are transferred to symbolic means. Thus, through object substitution during dolls games the child develops the abilities of sign activities.

The facts mentioned in the article enable us to single out the psychological potential of doll plays in traditional cultures. First of all, there are two very important facts which stimulate and motivate the play; they are the material used for doll-making and the steps of constructing the doll. They do not limit imagination or make it stereotyped, they serve as a starting point, from which the psychological potential of a child’s play develops, as well as its symbolism. A self-made or a plain doll which is made by adults for children themselves is widely presented in the game arsenal of the girls from 3 to 15 belonging to different cultures. Secondly, the traditional doll is very important in the social-cultural development of a child. Girls playing with dolls, made by parents or oldest family persons, could perform simple actions with them, to feed, to swaddle, to dress, or to put to bed. In case of families, a family role-playing was acted out. A doll could be a bride, a wife, a mother, a small child, who lives on the “doll’s environment” with doll-houses with beds, utensils, clothes, etc. It is determined by its orientation towards the family values, maternity, the reflection of real family relationships typical for traditional cultures. The development of the sign world of dolls is connected with the interpretation of the doll image as a sign of the man, taken in his certain social and cultural context. In traditional cultures through dolls plays children who play with peers and older or younger children receive relevant information about natural and social environment, social relations, symbols, values and ideals of adults’ world. In traditional cultures through playing with dolls younger children learned social roles, ethical and moral values, which are handed down from one generation to the next.

### **Social and Cultural Context of the Girls’ Plays with Dolls and Doll-Houses**

Playing with dolls and doll-houses reflects socially important images and senses of idealized adult life. The peculiarities of social and cultural context of plays are analyzed according to specific topics and plots of girls’ doll playing referring to different cultures. For that purpose the data-base collected by different researchers were analyzed: Doll plays of Saharan and North African girls by Rossie (2005); doll plays of British, Scottish, American girls by St. Hall (1895-1900), doll plays of European children at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century<sup>3</sup>; the Bratz-doll plays of Russia by the author (2005). The analyzed topics and plots are played out with different and similar dolls: primitive and plain, self-made girl-dolls, boy-dolls and infant-dolls typical for Saharan and North African girls; wax, paper, china, cloth, rubber, carton, plaster, wooden, knitted dolls which were the objects of admiration for British, Scottish, American girls at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century; the Bratz dolls – modern doll rivals of Barbie.

A doll play of European children at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is characterized by modern images. For example, kindergarten plays of French girls of 1924. “Their doll is a big one. It is dressed like the children of their social standing – it is not just a toy, it is a child’s child. In the evening the doll is brushed, undressed and put to bed, in the morning it is dressed, washed, brushed, its bed is made according to the traditional ritual – the straw mattress is turned over, the linen is aired, its dressing table is put away, the jar is filled with water, the doll’s furniture is dusted, once a week the doll’s house is cleaned”. Images of a modern doll reflect the



context of today. These contexts, as a rule, are set by the doll manufacturers fulfilling the functions of creation of a modern social context. Adults put the ideas of adults' life into the child's dolls area. They give dolls names, professions, ethnoses; they create the corresponding attributes of dolls' life – dolls houses, furniture, cars etc. They make dolls' friends, and even dolls' children. The child, dealing with ready-made standard image of a doll is strictly limited in possibilities of its interpretation. Dolls plays reflect socially significant images and senses of idealized adult life. Creating the toy world for children adults alters childhood by enlarging the toy assortment quantitatively, contextually, functionally and conceptually. A child's toy becomes a mirror of an ideal of an adult, a result of adult interpretation of children's dreams and wishes.

In the analyzed plots we can single out three blocks:

1. *Playing the doll's life: bathing, dressing, putting to bed.* The psychological status of Playing the Doll's Life – it doesn't require a partner, it can be played as the type of game when children play closely to each other but not together, when each child plays with his or her own doll. Such playing is typical for the children of early and junior pre-school age. The doll's life playing is a school of a plot-role game, in which children often act out separate plots which in prospect of the development can be connected in one plot. At senior pre-school age the doll's life playing can be transformed into directed games, when one child directs the actions of the toys performing the functions of people and objects. It should be noted that the typology of the content of playing the doll's life in different cultures is conditioned by the typology of everyday situations. The cultural specific aspects can be further understood from an object context which is additional to the plot.

2. *The plays which reflect the family relationships context.* The most typical game plots are formed around such cultural prototypes of a family life as weddings, birth giving, funerals, and so on. The psychological status of such games is that they vividly demonstrate ethnic, cultural specific picture of a family life, the traditions in the relationships between genders, bringing up children, and also rituals connected with birth and death.

3. *Playing adult life, which reflects the peculiarities of social normative relationships between adults, a wide social context of adult life.* In the analyzed materials such plays are transported into plots which reflect the peculiarities of a professional life, public holidays, entertainments of adults. Acting out the adult life, children reflect the peculiarities of social normative relationships between adults and a wide social context of adult life. In the analyzed material such plays are transported into plots which reflect the peculiarities of a professional life, public holidays, and entertainments of adults. I would like to stress the ideological, ethical and moral aspects of such plots, complex social contexts of adult life which children learn.

## Conclusion

I addressed the cultural historic analysis of girls' plays with dolls and doll-houses which is based on the theoretical reconstruction of psychological conditions for personal development. They are observed through universal historical experience of using the doll as a human representation. Girls' plays with dolls are viewed as a unity of specific historical and ethnographic representations of conditions for personal development.

The empirical anthropological material shows the pre-historic ways of sign acquisition as a cultural means. The ability to simultaneously perceive and use objects both in utilitarian and symbolic functions is related to the ontogenetic ability for object substitution which is formed in early ontogenesis. The social representation of the doll as one of the oldest iconic signs of people occupies an important place in cultural acquisition of behavioral norms in early ontogenesis. The given database characterized historical, ethno-cultural aspects of development psychological potential in girls' plays with dolls and can be further used in the system of psychological care and support of child development through games.

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