

Pop Culture Universe

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by [Gary Hoppenstand](#), [Gerd Bayer](#)

Popular Culture in Europe: Games, Toys and Pastimes

MAJA MIKULA

Games, hobbies, and toys encompass a diverse range of practices and objects of material culture that often have very little in common, other than their association with recreation, leisure, and play. Play is a vital aspect of human culture, and games, hobbies, and toys make it happen. It is no wonder then that this area of human activity can reveal a great deal about the social and cultural context in which it occurs. It always involves rituals that can be read at a “deep” level to throw light on the values and myths prevalent in the society in which it unfolds.

Games can be categorized in many different ways. French anthropologist Roger Caillois divided them into four main categories: competition, chance, simulation, and disorientation. Competitive games involve training, skill, and discipline; games of chance largely depend on probability; simulation games require that the players escape from reality and become fantasy characters; and, finally, games of disorientation are based on a physical feeling of dizziness. If there is money or material gain involved, we are talking about gambling, which can contain traces of all four of these categories. [1] Hobbies, like games, are voluntary, uncertain, isolated in space and time, and bound by rules. Unlike games, however, hobbies such as handicrafts and collecting can be—and usually are—materially productive.

In *Centuries of Childhood*, French sociologist and historian Philippe Ariès argued that childhood, as we know it today, did not exist before the Victorian era. Children—especially those of the poorer classes—were not given toys or encouraged to play. Preserved texts and artifacts suggest, however, that toys and games have a long tradition in European societies, although they may not have always been considered the children’s domain. Many European playthings were originally associated with fairs and festivals and were used by children and adults alike. The longer average life span and the generally higher standard of living associated with modernity have meant that people now assume adult responsibilities at an older age and devote more time and energy to recreational activities. Games and hobbies are widely practiced, in different ways, by both children and adults regardless of gender, class, affluence, or cultural belonging. Also, an object can be used as a toy in some societies or in certain historical periods while performing a more practical function in others. An example of this is the eighteenth-century fashion doll, which originally had the function of advertising women’s clothing.

TOYS IN THE MEDIEVAL ERA

Our knowledge about play in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance is based on portraits and manuscript illustrations, the texts of laws, statutes, wills, and letters, and the actual playthings surviving from that period. Many medieval toys served both as playthings and as talismans protecting their owners from evil spirits. Rattles were made of horn, shell, dried gourds, and precious metals. War toys, such as swords, shields, hobbyhorses, and miniature soldiers, prepared young boys from aristocratic families for the exigencies of a military career. Dolls performed a similar function for medieval girls, training them for the role of wife and mother. Rag dolls (Latin *simulacra de pannis*) are mentioned in medieval manuscripts. Wooden dolls were manufactured in Germany and Holland (Middle German *Tocke* a “little block of wood”). There are records of professional dollmakers (Middle German *Tockenmacher*) in the Nuremberg area in Germany dating from the fifteenth century. In a category of their own, edible gingerbread dolls, sometimes with an inside compartment containing a small gift, were sold at German fairs. Other materials used to make toys were clay, wax, and *papier mâché* or composition, which is a mixture of wood pulp, paste, gum, and sand, or sawdust. Balls were popular in many European societies and were usually made either of animal skins or of the inflated bladders of sheep and goats. Spinning tops, drums, whistles, marbles, kites, and windmills are also mentioned or depicted in medieval manuscripts.

Ancient vases, reliefs, and coins show that the Greeks and the Romans had many different kinds of toys, such as dolls, miniature soldiers, balls, hoops, carts, and rattles. Dolls were usually made of wood, cloth, or painted clay, and were sometimes jointed, with the limbs separately attached to the torso by cord. Miniature replicas of soldiers, weapons, and war vessels were made of metal or clay. Although miniature furniture and other household items dating from the Roman period have been preserved, it is not certain whether these objects were used for play purposes.

Mechanical toys were powered by water and steam. Greek balls were made of wool, stuffed into a cover made of

animal skin. Clay rattles often took animal forms and were used both in play and in the religious rituals related to the cult of Dionysus. Games of chance, such as dice and knucklebones, were widespread among adults, especially the upper classes. In Greek mythology the future of the human race was sometimes decided in a game of dice. Loaded dice used by professional gamblers in ancient Rome are preserved in a number of European museums.

Distinctive customs and artifacts developed in conjunction with religious and semireligious festivals. Life-sized nativity scenes, which were on display at Christmastime in churches and city squares, gradually found their way into people's homes. Today the toy industry receives a regular yearly boost during the Christmas season, and Christmas paraphernalia is an industry of its own.

In the sixteenth century, specialized centers manufacturing wooden animals and dolls emerged in the German towns of Seiffen, Berchtesgaden, and Sonneberg, as well as in Oberammergau. Nuremberg was known for tin soldiers and the "Nuremberg kitchen," a forerunner of the dollhouse. The first elaborately furnished Dutch and German dollhouses, or "cabinets," also date from the sixteenth century.

The pastimes of sixteenth-century Flemish youngsters are richly documented in paintings by Martin Van Cleef (1507–37) and, most notably, Pieter Brueghel the Elder (1525–69), which show children playing with hoops, tops, stilts, kites, dolls, and musical instruments, and engaging in games such as leapfrog, tag, and blindman's buff.

Around the same time, an organized toy trade began to flourish in principal European cities. At first, peddlers carried mostly German and Dutch toys as part of larger shipments of other goods and sold them either at fairs or door to door. Later Nuremberg merchants gained control over the budding toy trade and encouraged artisans to standardize their products and to specialize in particular designs. "Flanders babies"—simple wooden dolls manufactured in the Low Countries, which were very popular in England at the time—are an example of toy mobility in that period. Noah's Arks can be traced back to the village of Oberammergau in the Bavarian Alps, known for producing intricate religious scenes in carved wood. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the peep-box theater (*Guckkastenbild* in German), presented by traveling entertainers, was popular in France, Holland, Germany, and Italy. Italian philosopher, poet, painter, and architect Leon Battista Alberti (1404–72) is credited with the creation of the first peep-box theater for his study of perspective.

Puppet theaters thrived along Europe's trade routes, taking the legends and folklore of cultures across the continent. Performed by itinerant puppeteers, these shows crossed borders and affected, and were affected by, the local traditions they encountered on their way, enriching them with elements of puppet design, performing techniques, stories, and principal characters.

Subsequent to the industrialization of parts of Europe in the late eighteenth century and the emergence of a wealthy middle class, handcrafted playthings slowly began to give way to mass-produced toys. At the same time, wood was increasingly replaced by metal and paper as the principal materials in toy production, and mechanical and optical toys became more common. The French *pantin*, a cardboard Dancing Jack puppet with articulated arms and legs manipulated by strings, became a fashionable toy among adults, used to make fun of nobility. Other cultures have had paper cut-out art traditions, including the well-known Polish *wycinanki* and the German and Swiss *Scherenschnitte*. Other toys—dollhouses, furniture, ships—were also often made of paper. Dolls with porcelain or bisque (unglazed porcelain) heads became more common at the end of the nineteenth century. Inexpensive mass-produced tin soldiers made by Andreas Hilpert of Nuremberg were particularly popular in Germany.

The advent of industrialization went hand in hand with a widespread fascination with mechanical toys. Life-size dolls, animals, and landscape and seafaring scenes that could produce a range of sounds or perform complex and precise movements were taken on tours and exhibited at fairs or given as precious presents to foreign dignitaries. The walking doll, precursor of today's toy robots, was popular in France in the 1830s.

In other parts of Europe, not yet affected by industrialization, handcrafted folk toys made of materials that were most commonly at hand—such as wood, cloth, or animal bones and skins—continued to proliferate. Folk toys preserved in museums throughout the former Eastern Europe testify to the rich toy-making traditions in certain areas.

A negative turning point in the history of the European toy industry, which also had an enormous impact on the international market of toys and games, was World War I. The toy industry in war-torn Europe came to a halt, and the United States and Japan emerged as the new leaders on the global toy scene. The United States in particular set a new trend by introducing licensed figures of Disney cartoon characters that were not merely miniature copies of the adult universe, but truly belonged to a new international world of children's popular culture. Europe kept its traditional attitudes toward childhood and play and was slow to adopt the American-style integration of playthings with children's media industries. It was also resistant to television advertising to children, with some countries banning it altogether in defiance of the impending Americanization of children's culture. Even today countries of the European Union have different measures that ensure that children are not excessively exposed to advertising. Sweden, for example, prohibits advertising aimed at children below the age of twelve; Germany and Denmark proscribe advertising for specific types of toys, and Greece restricts children's advertising between 7:00 AM and

10:00 PM In the period between the two World Wars, the American toy industry began to dominate the world market, and the strongest European toy-making countries, such as Germany and Great Britain, were unable to reestablish their former primacy.

In the second half of the twentieth century, two main strands of toy making continued the European tradition with considerable success. On the one hand, toys representing the adult world, such as Hornby electric trains and Matchbox cars by Lesney, enjoyed popularity in the 1950s and 1960s. On the other hand, products such as LEGO construction toys from Denmark, Playmobil sets from Germany, and wooden blocks by the Swedish company Brio developed a reputation as quality playthings that encourage children's creativity. LEGO stands out among European manufacturers of toys and games as one of the first companies to develop a global marketing scheme that included theme parks, displays in shopping malls, and, more recently, toy "systems" based on characters and storylines from children's popular and media culture.

By the 1980s, the manufacture of toys and games in Europe had yielded to the pressure of a global play industry. Most toys on the European market are currently designed and marketed through American and Japanese companies and manufactured in China, Hong Kong, and other parts of Asia. China currently produces from 70 to 80 percent of the world's toys. Most of China's toys are produced in the southern province of Guangdong, which has more than 4,500 toy factories. [2]

The latest shift away from traditional toys and games toward electronic or video games began in the 1980s and is now taking hold even in the poorest European societies. Video gaming is popular not only among teenagers, but also among adults of all ages. In less affluent countries, where dedicated desktop and handheld consoles are still considered a luxury, personal computers are more commonly used as a gaming platform. Online gaming is also popular among gamers with high-speed Internet access.

Currently, the strongest national toys and games markets in Europe are the United Kingdom, Germany, and France. Each country specializes in a certain product line: the United Kingdom in metal and plastic miniatures, as well as table and board games; Germany in model trains and plastic and paper toys; and France in die-cast, mechanical, and stuffed toys, as well as board games.

NORDIC COUNTRIES: NORWAY, SWEDEN, FINLAND, ICELAND, AND DENMARK

All countries in the Nordic group are characterized by relatively small households and higher-than-average employment rates for both women and men. All of these countries also boast high spending power, a relatively strong state support for families, and generally high living standards. It is therefore not surprising that their share of expenditure on recreational pursuits is higher than in most other European countries.

In the forest-covered areas of northern Europe, wood-carved toys and games have a long tradition. One such area is the Dalarna province in central Sweden, which is known for high-quality handcrafted toys. The best known is the *dalahäst* (the dala horse). This toy, carved from a single piece of wood and painted with traditional floral designs, has become Sweden's national symbol.

Do-it-yourself activities are among the most popular hobbies, with many Nordic people enjoying hands-on activities related to the construction and maintenance of their homes or summerhouses. Genealogy, collecting memorabilia, and traditional folk arts such as rug weaving, knitting, ceramics, and jewelry making are also widespread.

Popular outdoor games are versions of tag and hopscotch. Hopscotch markers made of heavy glass and engraved with designs from Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tales are part of Denmark's cultural heritage. Among adult indoor games, bridge and chess are particularly popular in Denmark and Iceland. Iceland has more chess grand masters in proportion to the size of its population than any other country in the world, and many Icelanders have won youth division world championships in recent years. Board games such as Trivial Pursuit, Monopoly, Pictionary, and Jeopardy provide Nordic adults with an opportunity for socializing during long and cold winters. All Nordic countries are big on gambling, and Norway, Denmark, and Sweden are among the five countries with the highest per capita spending on gambling in the world.

People in the Nordic countries place a strong emphasis on the educational value of toys and their capacity to boost children's creativity. Throughout the region, there is a preference for locally produced toys, such as Danish LEGOs and the Swedish Brio. Globally produced toys thought to promote intolerance or gender bias—such as war-related toys or sexualized dolls—have met considerable resistance from parents in this area of the world. Activity and construction sets, dolls, and plush toys associated with television and film brands such as Sesame Street or Lord of the Rings are among the most popular children's toys in the region. The trendy Bratz dolls appeal to Nordic children more than the Barbie brand. Barbie dolls have been at the center of a heated public debate in Sweden for over three decades; many consider Barbie a negative role model for girls.

Levels of mobile or cell phone and Internet usage are high, and e-shopping is widespread. Broadband connections have boosted the popularity of personal computer and console video games. Growing numbers of children in the

younger age groups—especially the “tweenagers,” aged between ten and thirteen—are abandoning their traditional toys in favor of online and console gaming. The most popular games played online are Counter Strike, War Craft, and Battlefield 1942.

The local flavor of the toys and games industry in Sweden has been facilitated historically by the fact that no advertising of toys is allowed, according to Swedish law. However, this situation has been somewhat undermined in the last two decades with the penetration of e-commerce and global media, which are saturated with toy advertisements. The Swedish company Brio is among the strongest toy brands in the world. In addition to its famous wooden construction toys and model railways, the company also manufactures a range of indoor games under the brand Alga.

Denmark’s leading toy manufacturer, LEGO, generally maintains a high profile in the global toys and games industry. The name comes from *leg godt* (Danish for “play well”). The company, founded in the 1930s, today employs more than 7,000 people and has operations in over thirty countries worldwide. LEGO’s core products are construction kits consisting of little plastic bricks that can be snapped together to construct complex predesigned or invented models of mainly buildings, vehicles, and landscapes. Some LEGO sets include electronic motors, and some are computer controlled. One of LEGO’s most popular product lines in recent years has been the Bionicles, a series of snap-together robots figuring in adventure stories set in the imaginary Mata Nui world. The company is known for its creative marketing efforts, which include four Legoland theme parks worldwide: Billund (Denmark), Günzburg (Germany), Windsor (the United Kingdom) and Carlsbad, California (the United States), and a series of promotional events, such as building competitions. However, like many other traditional toy manufacturers, LEGO has recently suffered from the increased popularity of interactive video games.

FRANCE AND THE BENELUX

The importance of toys and games in this group of European countries is evident from the fact that some of the most influential modern theories addressing the subject from different disciplinary perspectives come from the Netherlands and France. Johan Huizinga, a Dutch historian, was fascinated by the continuing popularity of game playing during the medieval period. His explanation of this phenomenon, which he developed in the study entitled *Homo Ludens*, was that play endured because it was the very basis of more “serious” cultural pursuits, such as law, education, and warfare. Huizinga’s analysis was the starting point for the theory of play developed by French sociologist Roger Caillois. In his essay collection *Mythologies*, literary critic and semiologist Roland Barthes included toys among the “contemporary myths” underpinning bourgeois ideology. The French adult, says Barthes, sees the child as a smaller self. Therefore, construction sets that encourage the child’s imagination are not as popular as those that purely represent a microcosm of the entirely socialized adult world, such as miniature soldiers, medical instruments, hairdressing equipment, transport vehicles, and the like.

Because France and the countries of the Benelux generally enjoy a high standard of living, spending powers are considerable throughout the region. Parents have a strong influence on the spending habits of their children, much longer than in some other European countries. This influence is due to a lower percentage of teenagers earning money from casual work, although the situation has been changing since the mid-1990s. The family unit is highly valued in the whole region, and many games are enjoyed together by parents and children in the family home. The annual peak time for giving and receiving toys in Holland and Belgium is not Christmas, but Saint Nicholas’s (Dutch *Sinterklaas*) Day, in early December. Celebrations are shared by adults and children alike, and there are gifts for everyone.

Traditional crafts such as pottery, glasswork, and silverwork are practiced in some parts of the region. The province of Burgundy in France is known for woodcraft, the town of Delft in the Netherlands is known for its fine pottery, and Brussels, the capital of Belgium, is known for lace making. Belgium also has a wide variety of traditional folk games that still enjoy considerable popularity. These games include different bowl games and throwing games, as well as archery, crossbow shooting, and fencing. Traditionally the province of male players, some of these games increasingly attract female participants.

Domestic activities, such as cooking, gardening, and home improvement, are popular leisure-time pursuits in the entire region. Other popular hobbies include stamp collecting and model trains. The people of Luxembourg enjoy playing chess socially in their country’s many restaurants, pastry shops, and cafés.

France and the countries of the Benelux are all characterized by rich traditions in toy making. As early as the Middle Ages, French locksmiths, jewelers, and basket makers produced trinkets for sale. By 1600, Paris was established as the center of fashion trade. Because printed catalogues did not exist then, costume dolls called “Pandoras” were sent from Paris to other European cities to advertise the latest lines of clothes and accessories. The most celebrated nineteenth-century doll manufacturer was the Parisian firm Jumeau.

In the nineteenth century, France was also known as a producer of sophisticated musical, optical, and mechanical toys. In particular, several optical inventions that originated in France are often considered predecessors of the

cinema. In the praxinoscope, invented by the artist Émile Reynaud, strips of pictures with figures in various stages of movement were seen as animated when they were revolved in a drum, reflected from the facets of a looking-glass core. Another optical toy with a similar mechanism, the phenakistiscope, was developed by the Belgian inventor Joseph Plateau. The magic lantern, invented by the French tinsmith Auguste Lapiere, consisted of a tin box, a candleholder, a concave mirror, a lens, and a channel for slides. Images were projected onto a plain white wall or a special linen screen. Lapiere's lanterns were sold in Parisian toyshops, complete with sets of slides representing captivating stories from history, geography, and fiction.

As a result of the country's high birth rates and strong economy, France currently has the fastest-growing toys and games market in Europe. Despite the growing popularity of video games, traditional playthings still dominate the French market. Traditional board games, such as Trivial Pursuit, Monopoly, and Scrabble, are particularly well liked, because the whole family can play them together.

Belgium follows the trend, evident in most of Europe, of a rapid expansion of the video-games hardware and software market. PlayStation 2 is the most popular video game console. Among software titles, race, sports, and adventure games are the most widespread. Belgian teenagers and pre-teenagers are especially attracted to toys related to dance and music. Bands for children and television programs, such as Idol, in which contestants compete to become pop stars, are linked with highly popular toy ranges. Dance-related games from Konami, accompanied by dance mats and headgear, are also becoming fashionable because they appeal to Belgium's penchant for performance dance.

Educational games, often with a language-learning aspect, are a popular parents' choice for young children. This choice is not surprising in a country with three official languages: Dutch, French, and German. Brand consciousness and loyalty also play an important role in the rather traditional Belgian society; LEGO, Playmobil, Fisher-Price, and Barbie are the most popular brands.

Board games, quizzes, fashion dolls, and construction and activity toys enjoy a continuing popularity in Holland. A recent trend is the extreme popularity of toys and games based on television and film characters, such as SpongeBob SquarePants and Yu-Gi-Oh. Video games are now outperforming traditional toys and games in sales. Console games such as Nintendo's GameCube are extremely popular, and online gaming has become a recent trend among teenagers.

The only major toy manufacturer in the Netherlands is Jumbo. The company was founded in 1853 and now sells its board games and puzzles to other countries around Europe. Jumbo products are praised for their educational and developmental value. The rest of the Dutch industry either imports toys, mainly from China and Thailand, or has production facilities there.

THE UNITED KINGDOM AND IRELAND

For a long time, the living standards in the United Kingdom were on average much higher than those in Ireland, its closest neighboring country. Since the late 1990s, however, this disparity has been less pronounced. Although the Irish people are still relatively young by EU standards, the United Kingdom has a much higher proportion of people in the older age brackets. In both countries, spending on toys, games, and recreation in general has been considerable. The legalization of divorce in Ireland in 1997 is believed to have boosted toy sales in the country as guilt-ridden parents tend to lavish their children with toys. The growing numbers of women in the workforce throughout the region are said to have had the same effect: that is, working mothers compensate for their absence from home by providing their children with toys, especially with those toys that have educational value. Many high school and tertiary students in the United Kingdom are in the labor market, which means that they have more spending power at a younger age and that their consumption patterns are less influenced by their parents.

Traditional crafts, such as weaving, knitting, pottery, glassblowing, and woodcarving, have been making a comeback in recent years. Gardening is popular throughout the region, particularly in England. There even people living in apartment buildings sometimes rent a plot of land so they can indulge their passion for green, growing things. Pub culture contributes to the continuing popularity of traditional indoor games, such as darts, pool, billiards, chess, bingo, and bridge. Betting and gambling also retain their popularity. Traditionally associated with elderly women, bingo has attracted younger players in recent years, particularly in northern England.

THE BRITISH TOY INDUSTRY

One of the most prominent nineteenth-century toy manufacturers was William Britain in Hornsey Rise, north London. Initially a manufacturer of mechanical toys, Britain later specialized in making hollow-cast lead toy soldiers. Cheaper to make and to transport, Britain's glossy toy soldiers were treasured as collectable items throughout most of the twentieth century. Concerned with children's safety, the company switched from toxic lead to harmless pewter as its main raw material. Britain shifted its production work to China in the 1990s, and the industry was bought by a U.S. toy manufacturer in 1998. Other high-quality British toys in the nineteenth century

included wax dolls, toy boats, and steam engines. One of the world's best-loved construction toy systems, Meccano, was invented in 1901 by Liverpoolian Frank Hornby. Hornby's versatile construction kits soon became so popular that Hornby had to open an office in Berlin to handle the export of Meccano toys to Russia, Germany, Austria–Hungary, and eastern Europe. Another Hornby classic, the model train, was introduced in the 1920s. Harbutt's Plasticine—the predecessor of Play-Doh—was patented in 1899, and commercial production began at a factory in Bathampton in 1901. Thriving in the first half of the twentieth century, the British toy industry suffered a sharp decline in the 1970s. This decline has been attributed to the overall inertia of British toy makers, who were used to dominating the colonial markets of the British Empire and became increasingly unable to compete with their counterparts in the United States, Japan, and Hong Kong after these favorable circumstances ceased to exist.

The historical record of toys and games in the United Kingdom dates back to the Middle Ages. A spinning top made of maple wood, dating back to the eleventh century, has been excavated at Winchester in southern England. In medieval times, toys and games were often made by children themselves. The earliest marble games, for example, were played with cherry stones and cobnuts. Cloth dolls are mentioned in a fifteenth-century religious manuscript. Until the early nineteenth century, most commercial toys in Britain were imported from Switzerland, France, or Germany. Although a luxury toy market for dolls and mechanical toys had existed for several centuries, most children from the poorer social strata and from rural areas had no access to commercially produced toys before the mid-1800s. Before that time, toy making still depended largely on small artisan workshops, such as the one described in Charles Dickens's novel *The Cricket on the Hearth* (1845). Larger-scale industrial production of toys did not begin until the mid-1800s, when Birmingham became known for its glassmakers who specialized in glass eyes for dolls and stuffed animals.

Until recently, the seven-floor Hamleys toys and games store on Regent Street in London was the largest toy shop in the world. With its world-famous imaginative displays and interactive demonstrations, a visit to Hamleys easily outshines purchasing toys online by providing the ultimate shopping experience for children.

The high exposure of children to a wide range of media influences has contributed to the popularity of brand-name dolls and figures. Mattel's Barbie dolls are still well liked in the whole region, but the trendier Bratz dolls, made by Bandai, and Mattel's Flavas are steadily carving their own niche in the fashion doll market by appealing to the values and interests prevalent in teen culture. Craft sets, such as Bandai's Badge-it, a badge-making kit, or Scoubidou, which features colorful hollow plastic tubes used for weaving key chains and friendship bands, are also very popular.

The United Kingdom is the largest market for video games in Europe and the third largest in the world, after the United States and Japan. The country's software houses, such as Eidos, Codemasters, and SCI, are famous worldwide for their creativity and excellence. An example of British innovation in this area is MUD (Multi User Dungeon), which was developed in 1979 by Roy Trubshaw and Richard Bartle at the University of Essex, England. MUD, which originally combined interactive fiction, role-playing, programming, and dial-up modem access to a shared computer, has since inspired hundreds of popular online games, which have been hosted on Internet servers since the mid-1990s. The most popular gaming console is Sony's PlayStation 2.

GERMANY, AUSTRIA, AND SWITZERLAND

This group of countries, like many others in the developed world, has been affected by declining birthrates. Here, too, children are abandoning traditional toys and games in favor of video games at an earlier age, but traditional toys and games are still holding strong as a parental choice. The economy of the region is not evenly balanced. Germany is still recovering from worldwide recession, exacerbated by the expenses of reunification in 1990, whereas Switzerland enjoys one of the highest per capita incomes in the world. This imbalance is to some extent reflected in consumers' buying patterns of toys and games because toy discounters seem to be more popular in Germany than elsewhere in the region.

TOYS IN GERMANY

Germany was the undisputed toy-making capital of the world until the beginning of World War I in 1914 when much of Germany's industry was converted to wartime purposes and German imports were banned in many countries. Germany has the longest and richest toy-making tradition of all European countries. The oldest preserved toys are dolls made of baked clay, which date from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. By the late seventeenth century, the city of Nuremberg had firmly established itself as a center of the emerging European toy trade. Located at the intersection of the ancient German salt-trading route and another route coming north over the Alps from Venice, Nuremberg traded in a wide variety of goods, including toys, which were then known as *Nürnbergger Tand* (Nuremberg trinkets).

Nuremberg's annual *Internationale Spielwarenmesse* (International Toy Fair), which takes place in February, is the world's largest and most significant toy fair, bringing together thousands of exhibitors from around the world. Permanent showrooms are reserved for international industry leaders, such as Mattel, Play-mobil, and LEGO.

Germany also abounds with toy museums. The *Spielzeugmuseum* (Toy Museum) in Nuremberg, founded in 1971, is based on the collection of Lydia and Paul Bayer. Sonneberg has one of Germany's oldest toy museums, which was founded in 1901 and today houses close to 100,000 objects.

Traditional crafts, which enjoy considerable popularity throughout the region, include woodcarving, ceramics, jewelry making, and embroidery. The Swiss still enjoy traditional games, such as *Hornussen*, also called "farmer's tennis," *Steinstossen*, or stone-putting, and *Schwingen*, or Swiss wrestling. Throughout the region, outdoor games and do-it-yourself hobbies are increasingly popular.

The Erzgebirge, or Ore Mountains, on both sides of the German–Czech border, supplied Nuremberg merchants with wooden toys such as Noah's Arks and toy farms. A thriving cottage industry still exists there, producing wooden toys, ornaments, and Christmas wares such as nutcrackers, wooden angels, and nativity scenes.

Another toy-making center was the Thuringian town of Sonneberg. The Sonneberg toy makers worked mainly in wood and *papier mâché* or "composition." This latter material, made by mixing paper or wood pulp with gum and sometimes sand or sawdust, had the advantage of being cheap, easy to mold, and resilient. The relatively cheap mass-produced *papier mâché* dolls were highly popular throughout Europe in the first half of the nineteenth century. In the Gröden valley in south Tyrol, the town of Oberammergau specialized in wooden tabletop lottery games, such as Tivoli or Bagatelle, which are similar to today's ubiquitous pinball machines.

In the sixteenth century, Nuremberg itself specialized in the manufacture of miniature tin animals. The same material was later used for the manufacture of toy armies, inspired by the military success of Frederick the Great. The leading manufacturers were the Hilpert family. Their armies were cast from pairs of slate molds, on which the front and the back of the figure had been engraved in low relief. The Hilperts also used this technique to manufacture rococo gardens, coaches, animals, and market scenes. Following the opening of the first German railway line between Nuremberg and Fürth in 1835, toy trains emerged as another specialty of local toy makers. By 1900, Nuremberg and the neighboring town of Fürth had as many as 300 toy factories, mostly engaged in work with metal.

Märklin, the most prominent German manufacturer of model railways today, was founded in 1859 by wife and husband Caroline and Theodor Märklin. Through skilful marketing and continuing innovation and expansion, this family-owned company based in the town of Göppingen soon became a major supplier of transport-themed toys to the world market.

Steiff, a German manufacturer of soft toys from Giengen, dates back to the late nineteenth century, when the founder of the company, Margarete Steiff, began to sew felt animals to give them away as Christmas presents. The original Steiff teddy bear was born in 1902 and was based on sketches of real-life animals from Stuttgart Zoo.

The famous Berlin doll maker Käthe Kruse made her dolls from impregnated fabric, molded realistically into the features of babies and toddlers. These lifelike dolls enjoyed considerable popularity internationally between the two wars. Interestingly, the model for Mattel's classic Barbie doll was a German doll named Lilli, launched in 1955 as a spin-off to a popular comic strip published in *Die Bild-Zeitung*. Today, Germany's largest doll manufacturer is Zapf, based in the Bavarian town of Rödental.

Ravensburger is a publisher and manufacturer of jigsaw puzzles, board games, and arts and crafts kits. The original bookshop was established in 1845 by bookseller, journalist, and publisher Carl Maier. The first Ravensburger jigsaw puzzles, originally made out of thin wood and later out of cardboard, were launched in 1964. The company's products are exported today to more than 50 countries around the world. Another German toy brand with a strong reputation worldwide is Playmobil, which makes sturdy plastic figurine sets based on pirate, police, and farm-life themes.

The German market for toys and games is Europe's largest after the United Kingdom. As it is elsewhere in Europe, toys and games associated with children's films, cartoons, television programs, and music bands are among the most popular products in the entire region. Younger children in Germany are encouraged to spend their out-of-school time outdoors so they are not as exposed to the video-game culture as children in some other European countries. Wooden toys, which have a long tradition in the region's many forested areas, are considered the safest choice for toddlers as synthetic materials may contain noxious chemicals. Most video games that top the charts were developed in the United States and manufactured by their German subsidiaries. Sony PlayStation 2 and Nintendo Game Boy Advance are the most popular consoles.

POLAND, CZECH REPUBLIC, SLOVAKIA, SLOVENIA, AND HUNGARY

In addition to their geographical proximity, the countries in this group have at least two other key characteristics in common: all five are still affected by their recent transition to liberal democracy and a free-market economy, and—along with five other countries—they all joined the European Union in the most recent stage of enlargement, which occurred on May 1, 2004. For the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Slovenia, this transition also involved a

newly gained political independence following the breakup of Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia, the multinational states they were once part of. For all of them, the transition meant an opportunity to revitalize their historical links with their western neighbors and reestablish themselves as part of the European mainstream. This sweeping political and social change has been accompanied by a similarly far-reaching cultural transformation, in terms of lifestyles, consuming habits, and attitudes about leisure. Held back during Communist rule, consumerism—including the consumption of toys and games—is now boosted by the improvement of the economy and living standards in most of these countries.

Folk crafts in the region include pottery, woodcarving, wickerwork, lacework, knitting, and embroidery. Many of the folk crafts were neglected during the post-World War II period but gained a renewed popularity in the 1990s as part of an overall effort to recover the elements of the national cultural heritages that had been suppressed under Communist rule.

Paintings on glass are characteristic of the town of Zakopane at the foot of the Tatra Mountains in Poland. The traditional toy-making centers in Poland are the towns of Żywiec, Mysłenice, Kielce, Rzeszów, and Cracow. This last city, an important historic center on the Vistula River, is primarily known for its dolls in regional folk costumes and animal-shaped whistles made of glazed clay. Other traditional Polish playthings include wooden toy horses, birds and butterflies with movable wings, cradles, and rag dolls.

Bohemia in the Czech Republic is known worldwide for its crystal glass. Wooden toys and Christmas crafts are a tradition of the Ore Mountains (Czech Krušné hory and German Erzgebirge) on both sides of the political border between Germany and the Czech Republic. The Slovak town of Modra, near Bratislava, specializes in handmade pottery painted with decorative flower ornamentation. Dolls made of corn husks are among the most characteristic traditional toys in Slovakia. The towns of Ribnica and Kočevje in Slovenia specialize in the manufacture of wooden objects, mainly kitchen utensils such as spoons, spatulas, and sieves. Ribnica is also known for its pottery, including clay toys and animal-shaped whistles.

Traditionally people in this region have enjoyed much of their leisure time outdoors. Many city dwellers spend their weekends in the countryside, where they enjoy walking, picking berries or mushrooms, and simply relaxing. Do-it-yourself home-improvement projects and gardening are also popular pastimes. Collecting is not as popular now as it was during most of the twentieth century, when commemorative badges, coins, and stamps were the most popular collectable items.

Card games and chess are popular throughout the region, especially in Hungary, where chess masters such as Judit Polgár are national celebrities. The so-called Hungarian deck of cards, first manufactured in 1835, features the characters from the story about the Swiss national hero Wilhelm Tell, immortalized by German poet Friedrich von Schiller. Board games such as Monopoly and Risk are also well liked.

The toys and games market in this group of countries is dominated by the international giants, such as Hasbro, Mattel, LEGO, and Brio. Overall, these countries' accession to the European Union in 2004 has improved the quality of toys and games on the market, as all products now have to comply with European standards. Hungary's strongest local players are Gulliver and Régió. In terms of innovative products, logic puzzles are Hungary's trademark. The most famous worldwide is Rubik's Cube, invented in the 1970s by Erno Rubik, lecturer at the Academy of Applied Arts and Crafts in Budapest. Other ingenious sliding and rotary puzzles, made most commonly of plastic or wood, have been developed in Hungary, but none of them has ever achieved international success comparable to that of Rubik's Cube.

A major Polish producer of toys and games is Cobi SA, which is best known for its military-themed building blocks similar to LEGO, called *Mala Armia* (Little Army). The company has also launched multimedia and video-game products to accompany its traditional toy range. Poland also has a number of innovative small manufacturers, such as the multi-award winning BAJO. Founded in 1993 by sculptor and architect Wojciech Bajor, the company specializes in high-quality wooden toys.

All countries in this group are experiencing a shift away from traditional playthings toward video games, albeit at a slower pace than those European countries with traditionally stronger economies. Because the expensive original software is out of reach for a majority of gamers, piracy has been widespread in this part of the world. Since 2004, the stricter controls that are in place within the EU market have put illegal producers under considerable pressure. Sony PlayStation dominates the console market, and Nintendo's Game Boy is the most popular handheld console. As more people gain access to the Internet, online gaming is also becoming increasingly popular.

ESTONIA, LITHUANIA, AND LATVIA

The three Baltic countries of Estonia, Lithuania, and Latvia gained independence from the Soviet Union in 1991 and joined the European Union in May 2004. Although they now boast relatively high living standards compared to other parts of the former Soviet Union, many effects of the recent transition to a market economy are still present.

During the decades of Soviet occupation, the range of play products available for purchase was limited, and the quality was often substandard. Toys and games were often made or improvised by children themselves, depending on their imagination and the materials at hand. Although the poorer segments of the population still have hardly any funds for expenditure on recreation and leisure, the number of people with sufficient means to afford expensive toys and games by leading international manufacturers is steadily growing.

Before the accession of the Baltic countries to the European Union, piracy was widespread in almost any kind of consumer goods, including toys and games. The quality of counterfeit products was generally low, and there was little regard for safety. In recent years, the obligation to comply with strict EU regulations has contributed to a growing awareness of the importance of toy safety, and significant efforts have been made to curb piracy in the toy sector.

All Baltic countries have a rich tradition of folk crafts, including weaving, knitting, embroidery, silver jewelry making, leatherwork, ceramics, and woodcarving. Handmade wool sweaters, cardigans, mittens, and socks are preferred to factory-made ones and can be bought from specialized shops or market stalls. Toys and kitchen utensils made of aromatic juniper wood from the Estonian islands are among the most popular Baltic handicrafts, appealing to tourists and residents alike.

Many people in the Baltic countries enjoy gardening. Collecting is also widespread, with stamps, coins and postcards being the most popular collectables. Traveling abroad is another form of recreation that was completely out of reach for the average person during the decades of Soviet domination, but it is now becoming increasingly popular.

Estonia's largest toy retailer is the Tallinn-based Jukat Eesti Ltd. Lithuania's leading toy retail chain is Zaislu Planeta (Toy Planet). Its parent company, Voira, is an authorized dealer of over thirty different toy manufacturers, including top international brands such as LEGO, Hasbro, and Zapf Creation. The company operates successfully in all three Baltic countries. In Latvia, the award-winning wooden toys produced by Varis Toys and Stradu Indranes are considered to be among the most innovative local toy products. Recent trends in toys include playthings that promote children's development, and the opening of educational toy retailer BeBe offers evidence of this trend.

RUSSIA, BELARUS, MOLDOVA, AND UKRAINE

The countries in this region are currently facing many of the same social problems that were present during the Soviet era, as well as a new series of difficulties brought about by the momentous social change in the post-Soviet period. The supply of toys and games during the Soviet era was extremely limited. When the borders opened in the early 1990s, shops and open-air markets became inundated with cheap imports. Uneven wealth distribution has had a negative impact on local toys and games manufacturers, whose products are more expensive than those imported from Asia. At the same time, local products are often not as appealing to wealthier consumers as some well-known international brands. This situation is slowly changing as the economy in the region improves and the strongest local producers regain ground.

Traditional crafts include weaving, embroidery, knitting, tapestry, ceramics, and woodcarving. Knitting and embroidery are still popular among women of all ages. Painting and lacquerwork are used to decorate kitchen utensils, jewelry, and toys.

The region's toy-making tradition can be traced back to the medieval period. Clay rattles, dolls, and animal-shaped rattles dating back to the tenth century have been found in the excavations in the old Russian towns of Kiev, Novgorod, Moscow, Tver, Radonezh, and Dmitrov. Wooden rattles, balls, boats, and animal figures dating back to the twelfth century have been unearthed in the towns of Staraya Ladoga and Novgorod and in the excavations along the Oyat River. Wooden toys have a long tradition in the Volga region, especially in the villages of Lyskovo, Gorodets, and Fedoseevo. Russia's most sought-after artifact, the matryoshka nested doll, is a relatively recent addition to the region's folk craft. A symbolic decorative object rather than a plaything, the matryoshka represents the continuity of the Russian people. The concept of nested objects, however, is not originally Russian, but came to Russia from China and Japan, where it has a millennial tradition. The first Russian matryoshka was shaped by wood turner Vassily Zvezdochkin and painted by book illustrator and folk-art expert Sergei Maliutin in the second half of the nineteenth century.

Although some Western toys, such as Barbie dolls and action figures, are often criticized as models that encourage socially unacceptable behavior and instill objectionable values, their popularity among children is unwavering. Russia's response to Barbie's extraordinary success is a doll called Veronika, manufactured by the Moscow toy factory Krugozor. Taller than Barbie and significantly cheaper, Veronika has been Krugozor's most popular toy in the last decade.

Soft toys and baby dolls with real-life capabilities, such as singing, speaking, or crying, are popular among preschool girls. Locally produced dolls are not in favor, partly because they only come with a limited range of accessories. Boys

like playing with action figures, cars, and weapons. Construction kits, embroidery sets, weapons, and musical instruments have been among the most widely used toys since the Soviet period. Danish LEGO, Canadian Mega Bloks, and Poland's Cobi are currently among the most popular construction brands. Since the opening of the market in the early 1990s, the range of popular products has expanded, with educational and scientific toys and role-playing paraphernalia enjoying particular success. Board games produced by local manufacturers enjoy considerable popularity. Chess playing has been popular since the Soviet era when it was encouraged by the government, both as a social activity for adults and an extracurricular activity among schoolchildren. The range of outdoor games on the market is limited in comparison with the countries of the European West, and most children are happy with balls, skipping ropes, chalk, and improvised swings and slides. Sledges and ice skates are popular in winter.

TOYS IN RUSSIA: TRINITY TOYS AND MATRYOSHKA DOLLS

Russia's most prominent toy-making center is Sergiyev Posad (called Zagorsk during the Soviet period), a picturesque historical town northeast of Moscow. The townspeople and the monks of the town's Trinity Monastery specialized in icon painting, wood turning, and carving. Their artifacts, including wooden toys, were sold to pilgrims in the open-air market in front of the monastery. Wooden horses and wooden dolls dressed in folk costumes are the most typical "Trinity toys." In the late nineteenth century, the artists of Sergiyev Posad developed a characteristic style of painting matryoshka dolls; it was realistic and based on the Byzantine tradition of icon painting. Two other distinct styles of matryoshka painting—both more symbolic and ornamental than the Sergiyev Posad style—were developed in the towns of Semyonov and Polkhovsky Maidan. During the Soviet era, folk crafts associated with religious painting had all but fallen into neglect, but the 1990s have seen a growing interest in their revival. Today's matryoshkas reflect the contemporary life and popular culture of the Russian people and can represent anything from contemporary Russian and foreign politicians to heroes and heroines of the Russian folk legend and the international, mostly American, pop cultural lore.

Computer gaming is becoming increasingly popular in the region. Since licensed products are too expensive for most users, piracy in video-game software and hardware has been widespread. Moreover, affordable "jewel" versions of licensed software—without costly covers, packaging, and booklets—are popular among gamers. Russia's most successful video-game publishers are 1C and Buka, which also have in-house development teams. Furthermore, it is not uncommon for Western publishers to outsource part of a game's development, most commonly art-related work, to studios in Russia and Ukraine.

PlayStation 2 is the most popular of the latest consoles, mainly due to the fact that it can also function as a DVD player. However, since PlayStation 2, Microsoft Xbox, and Nintendo GameCube are often out of reach for the average consumer, inexpensive alternatives by Russian and Chinese companies (for example, Star Trek and Dendy) enjoy a considerable popularity. Computers are generally seen as a less expensive option than consoles because their functionality is far greater. Online video games are also widespread.

BULGARIA, ROMANIA, AND ALBANIA

Geographically close but ethnically and culturally diverse, the countries in this group are in the process of building democracy and developing free-market economies after decades of Communism. Living standards are among the lowest in Europe, and spending on toys and games is considerably lower than in the rest of the continent. Although the economic situation in Bulgaria and Romania is improving with their impending accession to the European Union, Albania has held the unenviable record of being Europe's poorest country for centuries. The common negative effects of transition to a market economy, such as unemployment and uneven wealth distribution, are evident throughout the region, but are nowhere as pronounced as in Albania. Many adult Albanian males are leaving the country to look for work abroad, while their families remain in Albania, struggling to make ends meet.

Knitting, weaving, embroidery, pottery, and copper engraving are some of the traditional handicrafts in the region. Children enjoy outdoor games, such as tag and hide-and-seek. Playing cards, chess, and other board games offers an opportunity to socialize with family and friends. In Albania, elderly men gather in bars to play dominoes and chess, whereas younger generations prefer pool and billiards.

The local toy production that existed in the region under Communism largely collapsed in the early 1990s, unable to survive the competition of cheap imports. Since then, new establishments have emerged, mainly producing eco-friendly toys made of wood, cardboard, and fabrics. Although these products do not seem to be popular among domestic consumers, they are in high demand on the European market. Romania is the strongest toy exporter in the region with exports mainly going to the EU market. Bulgaria's strongest toy retailer is Hippoland with stores in several major cities.

The use of video games is becoming increasingly widespread among teenagers and young adults. The international video-game publisher Ubisoft has had a development branch in Romania's capital, Bucharest, since 1992. There are also some local development teams in the region, working mainly on international collaborative projects.

CROATIA, BOSNIA–HERZEGOVINA, THE FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLICS OF MACEDONIA, AND SERBIA AND MONTENEGRO

To varying degrees, the countries in this part of Europe are still feeling the effects of the violent disintegration of the former socialist Yugoslavia, the country they were all part of in the second half of the twentieth century. Serbia and Montenegro and Macedonia were also affected by the Kosovo crisis of the late 1990s. Moreover, the process of transition to a market economy in this region has been plagued by problems such as uneven wealth distribution and high unemployment. The dismantlement of an all-Yugoslav market has deeply affected all branches of industry, including the production of toys and games.

The traditional handicrafts in the region include tapestry, weaving, embroidery, pottery, and woodcarving. In Croatia wickerwork and painted wooden toys, mostly carts, vehicles, wheeled animals, and miniature furniture, were made in the village of Vidovec in Hrvatsko Zagorje near Zagreb and in Zelovo in the Dalmatian hinterland. These items were usually manufactured in small workshops and sold at country fairs or religious festivals. The villages of Stubički and Bistrički Laz in Hrvatsko Zagorje are known for their decorative painted butterflies with flapping wings, animal-shaped whistles, and other musical instruments.

Although a modest toy industry emerged in the region in the late nineteenth century, commercially produced toys were often out of reach for the poorer segments of the population. A majority of children made their own toys, such as marbles made of hardened mud and rag dolls and balls made out of old socks. Popular games were hide-and-seek, leapfrog, and hopscotch.

A large-scale production of toys and games did not begin until after World War II, with manufacturers mostly concentrated in the Republic of Croatia. The openness of borders in the former Yugoslavia also meant that parents could buy toys for their children from abroad, mostly from Italy, Austria, and Germany. The conspicuous consumption of playthings in the post-World War II period was celebrated in a song well liked in the entire former Yugoslavia. The song was called “Moja Mala Djevojčica” (“My Little Girl,” 1958) and was sung by the Croatian singer Zdenka Vučković.

There is currently no major manufacturer of toys and games in the region. The market is flooded by imported products, coming mostly from other European countries and Asia. In Croatia, the retail chain Turbo Limać stocks a wide range of toys for all ages, including Mattel’s Barbie dolls, infant toys by Chicco, construction kits by LEGO, and toy cars by Burago and Majorette.

Both children and adults are increasingly interested in video games. Personal computers remain the most popular platform with online gaming increasing in popularity in recent years. The most successful game development company is Croteam, founded in 1993 in the Croatian capital, Zagreb. The company’s best-known game is the first-person shooter *Serious Sam*, in which the hero Sam Stone fights against alien forces to save humankind.

ITALY, SPAIN, AND PORTUGAL

These three countries are characterized by the centrality of family ties in the lives of the vast majority of their inhabitants. This explains the popularity of toys that prepare children for their future household responsibilities, such as toy washing machines, vacuum cleaners, cooking equipment, and tool sets. Not surprisingly, these toys generally perpetuate the traditional gender divisions within the family unit. Another dominant social and cultural trait in this region is the strong influence of the Catholic church. Although Christmas is the peak time for toy sales in most of Europe, in Italy, Spain, and Portugal, Christmas accounts for up to 75 percent of the annual sales of play-related products. In Spain, children are also traditionally given toys on the sixth day of January, Día de los Reyes Magos (Epiphany).

The traditional crafts in Italy are lacework, pottery, marble carving, and gold and silver filigree work. Murano, an archipelago of islands in the Venetian lagoon, is famous worldwide for its glassmaking. In Spain, leatherwork is primarily a specialty of Cordoba, lace and carpets of Granada, pearls of the Balearic Islands, and jewelry, swords, and knives of Toledo. Spain is also known for its handmade guitars and other musical instruments. In Portugal, rug making is associated with Arraiolos, fine embroidery with Guimares, black pottery with Vila Real, and basket weaving with the Algarve. Folk art is increasingly recognized as a valuable part of a country’s cultural heritage, boosting the tourist appeal of the three countries.

Gardening, do-it-yourself home-improvement projects, and collecting of rare artifacts, books, old music records, and comic strips are among the region’s most popular hobbies.

The early Venetian and Genoese travelers are credited with introducing playing cards to medieval Europe. There are records of the existence of tarot cards, used for divination, in late medieval Italy and France. A subset of the tarot deck, called the Minor Arcana and divided into four suits, provides the basis for today’s standard playing-card decks. Today the most popular Italian card games include Scopa and Scopone, Briscola, Tressette, and Terziglio. A

form of lotto was widespread in sixteenth-century Genoa, derived from an earlier gambling tradition and related to the annual draw of senators-elect.

Another brand that contributed to Italy's reputation of excellence in toy making in the early 1900s is the famous car manufacturer Bugatti. Bugatti's exclusive range of electricity-powered cars for children, which were built in the 1920s alongside the company's real-life racing cars, are considered by experts the finest toy cars of all time.

Giochi Preziosi is currently the strongest toy and game manufacturer, retailer, and distributor on the Italian market. Other popular brands are Trudi for soft toys, Clementoni and Editrice Giochi for indoor and educational games, Grand Soleil for outdoor games, and Artsana for infant and preschool products.

Spain's toy industry is concentrated in the towns of Ibi and Onil in Alicante province. The country's leading toy manufacturer is Famosa SA, specializing in dolls and action figures. The company also has a strong presence in the Portuguese market.

As they do elsewhere in Europe, children in this region increasingly abandon traditional toys and games in favor of video games at an early age, usually in their preteens. Video games are also a popular pastime among young adults. Soccer-related video games, such as Pro Evolution Soccer, are well liked throughout the region, in which soccer fans are particularly passionate and widespread. PlayStation 2 and Game Boy Advance are the most popular consoles, but new-generation consoles such as Xbox and GameCube have been gaining popularity in recent years. Nokia's N-Gage—a video-games console that is also a mobile phone, an MP3 player, and a radio—is still considered too expensive by the majority of gamers in the region. Online gaming is also becoming increasingly popular, boosted by the relatively recent consolidation of broadband services. Local companies have not been able to compete with international leaders in video-game publishing, and some pioneering efforts in this field have not yielded significant results.

GEPPETTO AND GORNINI: PIONEERS OF ITALIAN TOY MAKING

Italy is also home to the world's most popular wooden marionette, the mischievous hero of Carlo Collodi's nineteenth-century novel for children, *The Adventures of Pinocchio* (Italian *Le Avventure di Pinocchio*). The story of Pinocchio, his loving father Geppetto, and the Blue Fairy, who breathes life into the wooden body of the puppet and eventually turns him into a real boy, is known and loved by children across cultures and continents.

In the Renaissance and early modern periods, Italy's toy making was the domain of artisans such as Collodi's Geppetto. One of the pioneers of industrial toy making was the Mantuan aristocrat Luigi Furga Gornini. In 1872, he began to manufacture *papier mâché* carnival masks in his summer villa in Canneto sull'Oglio near Mantua. Later he expanded his product range to include dolls, the product which was soon to gain him international fame. An undisputed leader in the Italian toy industry for more than a century, Furga was taken over by Grand Soleil in the early 1990s.

GREECE, TURKEY, AND CYPRUS

The traditionally strained relations between Greece and Turkey improved considerably after several earthquakes hit both countries in 1999, giving ordinary people of both nationalities an occasion to show compassion toward each other. Greece and Cyprus have been among the main advocates of Turkey's bid to join the European Union. However, this attitude of support is extremely volatile, and recent incidents involving Turkey's violations of Greek airspace have already upset the equilibrium.

Despite political animosities, the two cultures have elements in common, developed mostly during the Ottoman period (Greece was under Ottoman rule from the fifteenth to the early nineteenth century). Traditional crafts in the region include weaving, knitting, embroidery, carving, metalwork, and pottery. Some villages have developed a cottage industry manufacturing traditional toys. The best known is the village of Soganli in the Cappadocia region in central Turkey, known for its handmade dolls dressed in traditional costumes.

Coffee shops are popular gathering places where village men congregate to talk, drink coffee or tea, and often play backgammon, dominoes, checkers, or cards.

Greece's major chain retailers of toys and games are Jumbo, Moustakas, and Zaharias. Jumbo has recently expanded beyond the borders of Greece, mainly targeting other countries in the region, such as Cyprus, Bulgaria, and Romania. Cheap imitations of brand-name products, imported mainly from China and Hong Kong, are sold at bazaars and flea markets. In Greece, the most popular toys in recent years have been those related to the latest film productions, such as *Finding Nemo*, *Harry Potter*, *Matrix Revolution*, and *The Lord of the Rings*. Fashion dolls, such as Mattel's Barbie and My Scene, Hasbro's Cindy, and the Bratz line of hip-hop-inspired dolls by MGA Entertainment have been popular among pre-teenage girls. An additional attraction of these dolls for fashion-conscious pre-teenagers is that they come with a whole range of accessories, such as make-up, nail polish, and

jewelry. New lines of construction toys targeted specifically at girls, such as LEGO's Belville range, which encourage creativity and role-playing, are gaining popularity on the Greek market. Monopoly, Trivial Pursuit, and the stacking game Jenga are the most popular indoor games, usually played at parties and family get-togethers.

In Turkey, where people rarely go shopping specifically for toys, most play products are sold in supermarkets and hypermarkets. The market leader in infants' toys and games is the Italian brand Chicco. Most soft toys are nonbranded imports from Asia. Licensed action figures, such as Spiderman and Action Man, and construction toys, such as LEGO's Robotics range, are well liked among Turkish boys. Model cars and other vehicles are increasingly seen as collector's items rather than children's toys. The leading brands are Maisto and Burago. Board games are increasingly popular among young adults, who play them at different social occasions. Outdoor games have always been a widespread form of entertainment in Turkey, where children often play outside after school.

Video gaming is increasingly taking hold in this region with the passion spreading primarily among teenagers and young adults. This latter group is mostly interested in football, racing, and war games. Sony's PlayStation 2, with its ability to read CDs and DVDs and allow for interactive gaming through the Internet, is the most popular console. Video-game piracy is a problem in Turkey where prices of the original software are higher than in most European countries.

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Igrushki i igrý (International Toys and Games Exhibition), Moscow, Russia. <http://toys.mvdr.ru/exhibition/243/ex.htm>.

Salone Internazionale del Giocattolo de Milano (International Toy Salon), Milan, Italy. <http://www.salonedelgiocattolo.it>.

Spielwarenmesse International Toy Fair, Nuremberg, Germany. <http://www.spielwarenmesse.de>.

Swiat Dziecka (Child's World Trade Fair of Goods for Children), Poznań, Poland. <http://www.swiatdziecka.mtp.pl>.

The Toy Fair, London, United Kingdom. <http://www.britishtoyfair.co.uk/files>.

Univers d'enfants (Kids' Universe), Paris, France. <http://www.univers-enfants.com/main.cfm>.

MUSEUMS AND THEME PARKS

Badener Puppen- und Spielzeugmuseum (Baden Doll and Toy Museum), Villa Attems, Erzherzog Rainer-Ring 23, Baden, Austria. <http://www.museum.com/jb/museum?id=808>. A collection of nineteenth- and twentieth-century dolls and toys.

The Bear Museum, 38 Dragon St., Petersfield, UK. <http://www.bearmuseum.co.uk>. Founded in 1984 by antiquarian Judy Sparrow, the museum houses a large collection of antique and contemporary teddy bears.

Benaki Museum, 1 Koumbari St., Athens, Greece. <http://www.benaki.gr/index-en.htm>. The museum features a collection of 15,000 toys, games, and objects related to childhood, including Greek toys from the fifth century BC, as well as toys from the ancient Roman and Byzantine periods. More recent European, Asian, African, and American toys are also on display.

Bethnal Green Museum of Childhood, Cambridge Heath Rd., London, UK. <http://www.vam.ac.uk/moc/index.html>. The Museum of Childhood, a branch of the Victoria and Albert Museum, houses the United Kingdom's national collection of childhood-related objects dating back to the sixteenth century.

Brighton Toy and Model Museum, 52–55 Trafalgar St., Brighton, UK. <http://www.brightontoymuseum.co.uk>. A collection of over 10,000 exhibits, including rare model trains, arcade games, construction toys, puppets, and toy theaters.

Coburger Puppenmuseum (Coburg Doll Museum), Ruckerstrasse 2–3, Coburg, Germany. <http://www.coburger-puppenmuseum.de>. Situated in Coburg, the center of German doll production, the museum houses more than 900 mostly German and French dolls as well as miniature furniture.

Deutsches Spielzeugmuseum (German Toy Museum), Beethovenstrasse 10, Sonneberg, Germany. <http://www.spielzeugmuseum-sonneberg.de>. One of Germany's oldest toy museums, founded in 1901, with a collection of close to 100,000 toys, including teddy bears, dolls, and tin soldiers.

Edinburgh Museum of Childhood, 42 High St., Edinburgh, UK. http://www.cac.org.uk/venues/museum_childhood.htm. The museum has five galleries across three floors of a restored eighteenth-century building. The exhibits include puppets, train sets, dolls, and dollhouses, spinning tops, arcade games, and children's costumes.

Erzgebirgisches Spielzeugmuseum (The Toy Museum of the Ore Mountains), Hauptstrasse 73, Seiffen, Germany. <http://www.spielzeugmuseum-seiffen.de>. A collection of more than 3,000 wooden folk art objects, including toys, Christmas ornaments, nutcrackers, chandeliers, and miniatures.

The House on the Hill Toy Museum, Stansted Mountfitchet, Essex, UK. <http://www.stanstedtoymuseum.com>. A collection of over 80,000 playthings, ranging from the late Victorian era to the 1990s. The collection includes dolls and dollhouses, puppets, tin and lead toys, model trains, toy soldiers, teddy bears, arcade games, die-cast toys, and rock-and-roll memorabilia.

Khudozhestvenno-pyedagogicheskiy muzei igrushki (Toy Museum of Art and Education), Pr Krasnoj Armii 123, Sergiyev Posad, Russian Federation. <http://www.zagorsk.ru/history/mtoys>. The museum displays toys found in archeological excavations, traditional Russian toys made of wood, clay, and *papier mâché*, toys from the Soviet period, and nesting dolls.

Istanbul Oyuncak Müzesi (Istanbul Toy Museum), Ömerpasha Caddesi Dr. Zeki Zeren Sok. 17, Göztepe, Istanbul,

Turkey. <http://www.istanbuloyuncakmuzesi.com/genel.asp>. This museum, which opened in 2005, houses approximately two thousand toys from the collection of Turkish poet Sunay Akin.

Legoland, Nordmarksvej 9, Billund, Denmark; Legoland Allee, Günzburg, Germany; Winkfield Road, Windsor, Berkshire, UK. <http://www.lego.com/legoland/portal>. Theme parks in Denmark, Germany, and England, dedicated to LEGO toys. A fourth *Legoland* can be found in Carlsbad, California.

The Lilliput Antique Doll & Toy Museum, High St., Brading, Isle of Wight, UK. <http://www.lilliputshop.com/museum.html>. Originally based on a private doll collection started by the Munday family in 1960, the museum houses over 2,000 exhibits, including dolls, dollhouses, rocking horses, tin plate toys, trains, bears, and soft toys.

Mänguasjameuseum (Toy Museum), Lutsu 8, Tartu, Estonia. <http://www.mm.ee>. The museum's collection consists of more than 6000 dolls and toys, including traditional Estonian handcrafted rag dolls, wooden horses, spinning tops, and reed ducks.

Miejskie Muzeum Zabawek ze Zbiorów Henryka Tomaszewskiego (The Municipal Museum of Toys from Henryk Tomaszewski's Collection), Ul. Karkonoska 5, Karpacz, Poland. <http://www.muzeumzabawek.pti.pl>. Among the museum's two thousand exhibits are tin, wind-up, wooden, porcelain, paper, wax, cloth, and terra-cotta dolls.

Muumimaaailma (Moominworld), Naantali, Finland. <http://www.muumimaaailma.fi/englanti/index.html>. A theme park based on a very popular series of books for children by Finnish writer Tove Jansson.

Musée de la Poupée (Doll Museum), Impasse Berthaud, Paris, France. <http://www.museede-lapoupeeparis.com>. The collection of about 500 nineteenth- and twentieth-century dolls originates from the private collection of Guido and Samy Odin.

Musée du Jouet (Toy Museum), 5, Rue du Murgin, Moirans-en-Montagne, France. <http://www.museedu-jouet.fr>. Situated in Moirans-en-Montagne, the toy capital of France, the museum focuses on the history of European toy making since the early nineteenth century.

Museo del Giocattolo e del Bambino (The Toy and Child Museum), Via Pitteri 56, Milan, Italy. <http://www.museodelgiocattolo.it>. This museum houses a large collection of toys dating from 1700 to 1960. The collection includes tin toys, model trains, toy soldiers, and puppet theaters.

Museu del joguet de Catalunya (Toy Museum of Catalonia), Hotel Paris/c. Sant Pere, 1, 17600 Figueres, Catalonia, Spain. <http://www.mjc.cat>. Founded in 1982, the museum houses over 8000 toys, including puppet theaters, model trains, dolls and dollhouses, Meccano, and toys for the blind.

Museu do Brinquedo (Toy Museum), Rua Visconde de Monserrate, Sintra, Portugal. <http://www.museu-do-brinquedo.pt>. A collection of more than 20,000 toys from the private collection of João Arbués Moreira.

Museu Valencià Del Joguet (Valencian Toy Museum), C/ Aurora Pérez Caballero, 4, Ibi, Spain. http://www.museojuguete.com/noframes_e.html. The museum houses over 4,000 toys from around the world.

Museum hraček (Toy Museum), Jiřská 6, Prague, Czech Republic. <http://www.muzeumhracek.cz>. Part of the Steiger family collection of classic European and American toys.

Múzeum bábkarských kultúr a hračiek (Museum of Puppet Culture and Toys), Zámockáčíslo 1, Modrý Kameň, Slovakia. <http://www.snm.sk>. This museum, situated in a Baroque manor, is dedicated to the history of puppet theater and toys.

Österreichisches Spielemuseum Leopoldsdorf (Austrian Museum of Games), Raasdorferstrasse 28, Leopoldsdorf, Austria. <http://www.spielemuseum.at>. The museum houses a documentation center and a collection of contemporary games.

Pomskizillious Museum of Toys, 10 Gnien Xibla St., Xaghra Gozo, Malta. <http://www.gozo.gov.mt>. A private collection of mostly European toys from the nineteenth and twentieth century, the museum is housed within two rooms of an eighteenth-century converted farmhouse.

Speelgoedmuseum (Toy Museum), Nekkerspoel 21, Mechelen, Belgium. <http://www.speelgoedmuseum.be>. A permanent collection of toys from around the world. Highlights include an interactive Pieter Brueghel-style painting and a model of the Battle of Waterloo made with 8007 toy soldiers.

Spielzeugmuseum Nürnberg (Nuremberg Toy Museum), Karlstrasse 13–15, Nürnberg, Germany. <http://www.spielzeugmuseum-nuernberg.de>. The collection, originating from a donation by Lydia and Paul Bayer, includes dolls, dollhouses, wooden figurines, and tin toys. A major attraction is a 30-square-meter working model train set.

Spielzeugmuseum (Toy Museum), Bürgerspitalgasse 2, Salzburg, Austria. <http://www.smca.at/spielzeugmuseum.html>. A collection of toys from the fifteenth century onward.

Szórakáténusz Toy Museum, Gáspár András utca 11, Kecskemét, Hungary. <http://www.szorakatenusz.hu>. A collection of more than 15,000 toys, including folk toys and musical instruments from the Carpathian Mountains.

NOTES

1. In this book, sporting games and gambling on sports are separate topics, covered in the chapter "Sports and Recreation."
2. Cross and Smits 2005 (in Resource Guide), p. 885.

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Progressive game play, with an easy side illustrated by coloured circles for toddlers and a more difficult side with a lovely illustration to complete for older children. This game develops concentration and the sense of observation. 6 large cards, 60 cardboard counters and one cotton bag. From 2 to 6 players.