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PHOTOGRAPHS FROM *DIGITAL ARCHIVES*  
*OF THE POLISH ETHNOGRAPHIC ATLAS* AS A SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE  
ABOUT RURAL CHILDREN'S TOYS AND GAMES  
IN THE YEARS 1954–1971

The article describes the results of preliminary examination of the photograph collection of the *Polski Atlas Etnograficzny (Polish Ethnographic Atlas)* [hereafter: PAE], whose partially-digitalised resources were made available online in 2017. The research has shown that some photographs from the years 1954–1971 depict toys and games of rural children, despite the fact that the documentation thereof was not a direct purpose of the creators of the Atlas. The goal of the article is, firstly, to characterise the digitalised photographic resources of the PAE, secondly, to reflect upon the browsing strategies for the electronic database aimed at distinguishing data on various aspects of past ludic culture and, thirdly, to describe the photographs depicting rural children's toys and games found in the digital resources of the PAE and determine their usefulness for studies on the expressions of past ludic culture.

PAE is a database with special documentary value, as it contains material collected by ethnographers, ethnologists and folklorists over the course of several decades, starting from the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It is archived and managed by the Faculty of Arts and Educational Science at the University of Silesia<sup>1</sup>. The achievements of the ethnological centre in Cieszyn in the area of research on ludic culture (see, e.g.: Bukowska-Floreńska 2011, pp. 11–61; Odoj, Szalbot 2012, pp. 45–53), understood as all free and culturally-determined patterns of play-related behaviour and its material and non-material context in the form of objects and elements of folklore, call for the careful examination of the depictions of ludic culture of the youngest Polish countrymen in the 1950s–1970s<sup>2</sup> available in the archive.

The beginnings of interest in ethno-cartography in Poland fell on the interwar period. Kazimierz Moszyński was the initiator of the work on the Atlas. Józef Gajek, the first editor of the Atlas, devoted himself to remodelling its concept after World

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<sup>1</sup> The *Digital Archives of the Polish Ethnographic Atlas* are available on a special digital platform at <http://www.archiwumpae.us.edu.pl>. All the photos in the article and their descriptions were taken from this website.

<sup>2</sup> The analysis of the PAE material documenting the ludic culture of the adult Polish countrymen in years 1954–1971 will be the subject of discussion in another article. Selected fragments of this article will be published in Polish as part of the *Zabawy i Zabawki. Studia Antropologiczne* yearbook.

War II (Bohdanowicz 1993, p. 33). It was assumed that the Atlas would include all fields of what was then called folk culture. Orienting the research work at a detailed identification of only specific issues, such as construction, agriculture, transport, etc., resulted from the assumption that these chosen thematic areas of folk culture would “shed light on unique qualities of Polish ethnographic groups”, understood as “groups identified by ethnographers on the basis of separate, objective cultural qualities” (Jasiewicz 1987, p. 147) and would “contribute to explaining connections between Poland and different types of cultural areas” (Bohdanowicz 1993, p. 34).

A new stage in the history of the PAE commenced in the late 1990s. After temporary personnel and financial difficulties as well as saving the collection from the flood that affected Wrocław in 1997, the Atlas collection was deposited in 1998 at the Faculty of Ethnology and Education at the University of Silesia in Cieszyn<sup>3</sup>. After 2000, ethnology students in Cieszyn, supervised by Zygmunt Kłodnicki, continued the fieldwork initiated several decades before. Its purpose was to assess the degree of cultural changes in the previous four decades. According to the premises, the research was to present the contemporary cultural landscape of the places studied and capture the dynamics of cultural transformations. The volumes of the *Commentaries to the Polish Ethnographic Atlas* have been reissued since 2002. Throughout the years, the archival Atlas collection deposited in Cieszyn was available to the public (Kłodnicki 2001, pp. 239–241). In 2014 a long-term work on the academic study of the collection, as well as its digitalization for online access, was initiated thanks to the financial support of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education and the University of Silesia. Previously, the Atlas resources had been the subject of academic studies, providing source material for theses of Cieszyn ethnology students and dissertations of the faculty of the Cieszyn unit of the University of Silesia. However, making the resources available online will surely contribute to their wider use and exploration. Currently, the digital archive is being promoted as “a unique, intuitive tool facilitating scientific and research work and popularising the source material of the Polish Ethnographic Atlas, collected for decades by Polish ethnographers and ethnologists”<sup>4</sup>. The part of PAE archive available online comprises three collections: published maps, questionnaires with herbaria and photographs from field research<sup>5</sup>. This article is dedicated mainly to the latter.

The Cieszyn collection of the PAE includes 12 181 photographs and forms a file in an ordinal system<sup>6</sup>. Agnieszka Pieńczak, the current supervisor of the work on the scientific study and digitalisation of the PAE material, emphasises “the unique cognitive value of the photos” taken in years 1954–1971. She reminds that: “a lot

<sup>3</sup> In 1998, the Faculty was a branch of the University of Silesia in Katowice.

<sup>4</sup> Information leaflet promoting the Digital Archives of the PAE, drawn up by A. Pieńczak.

<sup>5</sup> The description of every collection is contained in the publication: Kłodnicki Z. et al. 2017, pp. 122–124, 126–141.

<sup>6</sup> The second file is now in the Library of the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnology of the Polish Academy of Sciences, so the digitalised photos are only part of the general photographic archives of the PAE. Ibidem, p. 123.

of them were taken only to document (...) elements of material culture (...). Their original purpose was to complement the Atlas documentation used to draw up maps” (Kłoskowicz 2018). The review of the 1940s-1950s literature discussing the principles and the course of work on the Atlas makes it obvious that the photographs were taken somewhat thoughtlessly, by the score (see, e.g.: Gajek 1946; idem 1957). In the *Commentaries to the Polish Ethnographic Atlas* Janusz Bohdanowicz explains that photos were supposed to confirm the occurrence of cultural facts observed in the field. Some photos that are currently part of the collection were received from museum employees, other ethnographic institutions, and private individuals with professional ties to ethnography (Bohdanowicz 1993, p. 37)<sup>7</sup>.

In the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, photography met the requirements of objectivism, realism, accuracy, representativeness and “transparency”. When photographing the examined reality, ethnographers were unknowingly participating in the development of some patterns of portraying objects and phenomena. Hence such frequent similarities in depicting people or objects found in the collections of the PAE. Anthropologists are aware that the analysis of archival photographs presents numerous difficulties. The interpretation of photographic material and discovering the ways of utilising it in further analyses are especially challenging. The juxtaposition of the perception of the role of photography in ethnographic research, lasting since the 19<sup>th</sup> century and visible in the attitudes of the managers of the Atlas research towards the principles of the more modern visual ethnography (see, e.g.: Collier, Collier 1999; Olechnicki 2003; Pełczyński, Vorbrich 2004; Pink 2009; Banks 2009), raises the question of which interpretative guidelines should be adopted for the collection of photos that are the subject of this discussion<sup>8</sup>.

Anthropologists know that the analysis of archival photographs carries some difficulties. In the past, photography and photographs were perceived differently than they are now. The creators of the Polish Ethnographic Atlas abided by “the 19<sup>th</sup> century myth of photography as a non-creative, realistic activity that faithfully documents reality”, while photographs were something “to be taken from reality” (Kozień, Miskowiec 2015, p. 35). They took hundreds of photographs and treated these “depictions of reality” as a source which proved “that the object in the photograph was real” (Kozień, Miskowiec 2015, p. 19). Contemporary people still often have the impression that photographs depict reality as it is. However, they do understand that a photograph is an item between the past and the present and the essence of photography is Barth’s “that-has-been”. The aporia of photography is also usually considered (Sikora 2004, p. 108), while remembering that it is located “between documentarism and the matter of how important a given photograph can be to a person”

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<sup>7</sup> The photos from the museum collection can be selected on the digital platform of the PAE by entering “museum” into the search engine. The query brings 127 search results. Most of them are photos depicting exhibits from different museums.

<sup>8</sup> The text indirectly contributes to the discussion about the changes that gradually have been taking place in ethnography in the field of analysing historical visual documents and conducting more detailed research on ludic culture. See, e.g.: Banks 1998; Collier 1995; Sztompka 2005.

(Kozień, Miskowiec 2015, p. 11–17). The researchers who have been co-creating the growing critical reflection on the positivist perception of photography (see, e.g.: Banks 2009; Collier, Collier 1999; Olechnicki 2003; Pink 2009; Pełczyński, Vorbrich 2004) realise that each photograph is potentially a work open to interpretation. Therefore, a secondary analysis of the archival photographs of the Polish Ethnographic Atlas requires that these photographs are perceived taking into account the approach taken during their creation and creates an opportunity to interpret them by discovering aspects unforeseen by their creators.

All the photos available in the Digital Archives of the PAE have a historical and archival value. Even if some of them are improperly framed, out of focus, overexposed or permanently damaged (despite photo conservation), “they are an integral part of the Atlas documentation and (...) are presented online”. The strategy of mass digitalisation, with no option to select photos on the basis of their technical quality, appears appropriate and suitable for each subsequent analysis of the source material (Kłodnicki et al. 2017, pp. 116, 124–125).

Individual photos have been assigned to one of three sections – material, social or spiritual culture. This division, proposed by Kazimierz Moszyński in his seminal work *Kultura Ludowa Słowian (Folk Culture of the Slavs)* (Moszyński 1929) and used by the creators of the Atlas as the basic classificatory scheme, does not facilitate research on folk toys and play, since there are no subcategories such as childhood or ludic phenomena. Using a digital platform makes it easier to learn the rules of labelling digitalised objects adopted by the editors of the digital catalogue with the aim of “faithfully describing the content of the presented material”. Agnieszka Pieńczak and Edyta Diakowska-Kohut used two ethnological thesauruses (Kłodnicki et al., pp. 127–128): the thesaurus of material culture drawn up by Bronisława Kopczyńska-Jaworska and Maria Niewiadomska (the typescript is available in the Archives of the Institute of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology of the Jagiellonian University), *Układ słów kluczowych dla bazy danych o źródłach etnograficznych (Kultura ludowa Karpat Polskich)* edited by Czesław Robotycki (1995) and *Układ gniazdowy terminów i słów kluczowych wybranych kategorii kultury. Etos, obrzędy, demonologia, magia* also edited by Robotycki (2002). The conceptual framework, which is reflected in the thematic description of photos and other materials, forms original interpretive guidelines of the digitalised PAE collection.

TOYS AND GAMES IN THE ARCHIVAL PHOTOGRAPHIC MATERIAL  
OF THE POLISH ETHNOGRAPHIC ATLAS, OR “OMITTED DEPICTIONS OF THE PAST”

*The Polish Ethnographic Atlas* is a familiar source for researchers studying the culture of the Polish countryside. In newer source literature one can encounter opinions on the benefits of combining traditional and modern ways of analysing sources acquired years ago. These views are shared by authors experienced in compiling cartograms and interpreting field data in accordance with the methodology adopted by

the creators of the Atlas. Such approach creates possibilities of wider interpretation of the contents of the collection. It is illustrated by, for example, Anna Drożdż's article in which the author calls for re-examining the material through the prism of modern assumptions and theories (Drożdż 2016, p. 215–237). Moreover, she believes it is necessary to “redefine” and carry out a “multidimensional examination” of the PAE material. Her article describes the results of the preliminary research conducted in relation to the photograph collection of the PAE which has shown that photos often accidentally depict the games and toys of rural children in 1954–1971, though taking photographs of such artefacts and phenomena was not a direct premise of the creators of the Atlas. Drożdż also notices that the authors of the Atlas constructed a narrative about the past, concentrating on examining “precisely defined” events and artefacts:

The material collected for several dozens of years [...] has brought [...] a three-dimensional mosaic of the past. The mosaic consists of somewhat “tailor-made” pictures [...], although only some of its elements have been highlighted while the remaining ones have been pushed into the background. Between the pictures that form parts of the mosaic there are cracks through which the omitted depictions of the past, up until now considered as devoid of cognitive value, peep out into the daylight (Drożdż 2016, p. 221).

The review of photos within the PAE collection is one of many possible attempts at taking “the omitted depictions of the past”, in this case rural children's toys and games, out of the above-mentioned “cracks” (Drożdż 2016, p. 221).

THE PHOTOS FROM THE DIGITAL ARCHIVES OF THE POLISH ETHNOGRAPHIC ATLAS  
DOCUMENTING RURAL CHILDREN'S TOYS AND GAMES

Taking the above comments into consideration, the preliminary research has provided few, although interesting, results. As already mentioned, getting to know material and immaterial aspects of children's play in the Polish countryside was not the main purpose of the Atlas research. In the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, toys, play and games were not investigated as thoroughly as other elements of the dynamically changing folk culture (see e.g.: Piasecki 1922, p. 17; Lipoński 2004, pp. 5–20). A comprehensive study of the manifestations of ludic culture seemed relatively irrelevant to the ethnographers at that time. The topic was not considered “serious” enough or “socially useful” as opposed to issues related to agriculture, animal husbandry or beliefs, ceremonies and rites. Ludic accessories and ludic behaviours were mainly documented as solely an element of annual holidays and other social events, though one of the PAE booklets was to describe issues concerning music, performances and social customs<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> At this point it is worth recalling that in *Atlas der deutschen Volkskunde* [*The Atlas of German Folklore*] (ADV) edited by H. Harmjan and E. Rohr and published in years 1936–1939, research on dance and games was conducted. One of the questions from the Atlas survey was to determine whether the respondents know a game connected with Easter customs, where eggs are rolled along a sloping surface. Quoted in: Kłodnicki Z., Pieńczak A., Koźmińska J. 2017, pp. 13, 20–22, 343.



Photograph No. 1: Photograph PAE/  
F/32.31.X/1215.69.33/01 – Jastkowice (near  
Tarnobrzeg) – children’s clothes, source:  
<http://www.pae.us.edu.pl/items/show/12159>,  
access: 10.07.2020.

Working with archival iconographic material always involves methodological and interpretational difficulties. In the case of the digitalised PAE collection, available descriptions are often insufficient<sup>10</sup>. Doubts arise whether the way of interpreting the photos is correct and exhaustive<sup>11</sup>. Since the Digital Archives of the PAE enable quick access to over twelve thousand photos, the first step of every preliminary research is to choose the terms to be entered into the search engine on the archive website. Terminology connected with ludic issues was found useful when searching for photos depicting rural children’s toys and games in the PAE material, but, as numerous attempts have proved, it is not the only keyword that brings results worth discussing.

The preliminary research began by entering the term “toy” into the search engine. The entry resulted in five records.

The first one was a photograph of a boy aged about 5 or 6. The description indicates that the photo was taken in order to document children’s clothes from the late 1960s. However, the photograph also shows a wooden toy that the child drags along, while holding its shaft with his right hand (photograph No. 1).

Since the term “toy” appears in the photo description, the search engine automatically shows this record. In this way it “suggests” the specific thematic area of the *digital archives*, where other examples of toys and games also photographed

<sup>10</sup> Since the descriptions that refer to the PAE photos were written only when the photos were being glued onto sheets of paper, it could have happened sometime after the photos were taken. The authors of the descriptions were ethnology students who usually did not consult the authors of individual photos about their comments. The photos described directly by their authors are not numerous, but even in this case a margin of error should be taken into account (information acquired from Zygmunt Kłodnicki, PhD, DSc, Professor of the University of Silesia through e-mail correspondence).

<sup>11</sup> Agnieszka Pienczak, describing the PAE photograph collection, illustrates this lack of certainty with an example of a photo taken in Wrzosey (near Wołów): “...a focused elderly man, resettled after World War II from Polesie, is making (perhaps yet another) wicker basket with a bow-shaped handle. Analysing the photo (...), we are not sure whether he brought this skill with him as part of old cultural heritage, or if he learnt it in a new, completely different place. But we know that he is the only one in our photographs to show this type of skill, which is equally valuable for us.” Quoted in: M. Kłoskiewicz 2018, *Cyfrowe Archiwum Polskiego Atlasu Etnograficznego*. <https://www.us.edu.pl/cyfrowe-archiwum-polskiego-atlasu-etnograficznego>; access: 10.07.2020.



Photograph No. 2: Photograph PAE/F/24.38.X/703.63.15/01 – Dzianisz (near Nowy Targ)  
 – a children's handcart, source: <http://www.pae.us.edu.pl/items/show/8139>, access: 10.07.2020.

by accident can be found. However, the quality of the photo does not allow us to examine the toy thoroughly. It is probably a four-wheel handcart or some other miniaturised wooden vehicle.

Two other photos found by the search engine also depict the toy vehicle. The photographs present the same type of the wooden “four-wheel children’s handcart”, captured from above. Placed in the middle of the frame, devoid of any ornaments, the handcart stands on a bumpy ground. The photograph does not tell us anything about its contents, the exact size, the ways of playing with it, or the user. The image bears some resemblance to photographs taken for museum documentation. It can be assumed that it is an example of a toy handcart made for sale or home-made by adults. In the PAE material it has been assigned to the category of tools used in “overland transportation” (photograph No. 2).

The above photo of the toy is worth comparing with a photograph taken in 1961 in Jasień (near Lubsko) that also depicts “a children’s handcart” (photograph No. 3). The photographs, despite having the same description, depict objects that differ in their fundamental purpose.

Even though the object is not a toy, but rather a means of transport meant to carry smaller children, the photograph itself documents one of its alternative uses – transport of goods. However, in this case the cart in the photo was surrounded by a group of children, one of whom is steering the vehicle. The photograph suggests that the object has gained a multi-functional character and that it might have application in older children’s games as well.

While searching through the digital base using the term “toy” yet another type of source is displayed as a result – choropleth map no. 22 (Kłodnicki, Pieńczak 2010, pp. 306), which shows that the search engine combs through resources within all three currently available PAE databases. The map depicts the scope of the custom of



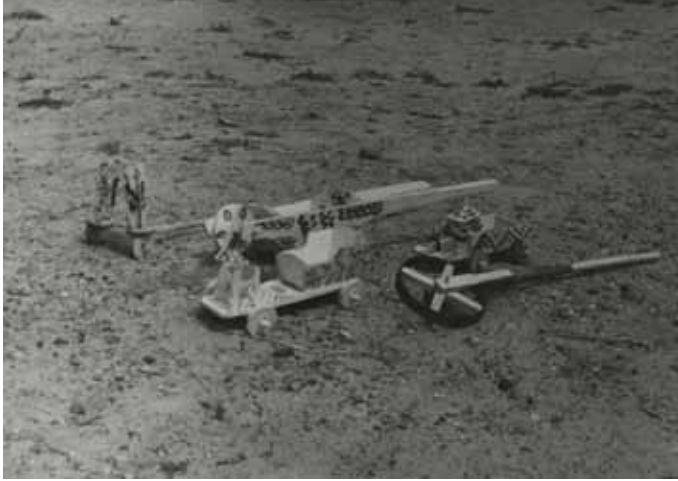
Photograph No. 3: Photograph PAE/F/7.24.VIII/1192.61.16/01 – Jasień (near Lubsko)  
 – a children’s cart, source: <http://www.pae.us.edu.pl/items/show/619>, access: 10.07.2020.

presenting children with gifts on the day of their baptism. Field atlas studies named the following gifts as examples: crops, candies, a duvet/pillow, jewellery, watches, candles or medallions. A toy is also enumerated at the end of this list. Here, the PAE platform “suggests” studying the maps No. 20 and 21 which are thematically related to this record. In addition, commentary on this custom may be found within the 19th volume of *Commentaries to the Polish Ethnographic Atlas* devoted to *Customs, rituals and beliefs related to children’s birth and their upbringing* (Kłodnicki, Pieńczak 2010, pp. 300–307). Even though all these materials do not provide us with any additional information on the type of toys gifted in the past to boys and girls by their godparents, they do confirm the fact that at the turn of the 1960s and 1970s, mainly in the regions of north-eastern Poland, aside from gifts of symbolic and/or material nature, a child would often receive a toy from their grandparents.

The term “toy” entered in the browser in its plural form resulted in the appearance of one record. It was a photograph taken in 1969 in the village of Komorów (near Kolbuszowa), (photograph No. 4).

The above photograph shows wooden toys related to transport, slightly covering one another and neatly arranged on the floor, which was most likely done by the researcher prior to taking the picture. The black and white photograph presents mobile toys, decorated, thus probably made to be sold, namely: a hoop for rolling on a stick, a toy car, a toy carriage with two horses, a wheelbarrow and several figures on circular platforms attached to the wheels of the toy, which triggers a rotation of the figures around their own axes when being pushed with a wooden pole. Toys of this type were bought for children on various fairs from wandering traders (cheapjacks) (Bujak 1988, p. 137, 139; Pieronkiewicz-Pieczko, Paul 2013, p. 36–37). The presence and production of this type of toys in the Polish countryside is also





Photograph No. 4: Photograph PAE/F/31.33.I/1217.69.7/01 – Jasień (near Lubsko)  
 – a children's cart, source: <http://www.pae.us.edu.pl/items/show/11513>, access: 10.07.2020.

confirmed by museum collections dating back to that period (see, e.g.: Oleszkiewicz, Pyla 2007; Seweryn 1960).

Browsing through the digital resources of PAE by means of other terms, also those directly related to folk issues, such as: “play”, “game” or “leisure” provided no results. Introducing dialect terms for toys (e.g. *graczki* – a Silesian term for toys and games, or *żegotki* – rattles) or referring to their specific types also yielded no replies from the system (Oleszkiewicz, Pyla 2007, p. 19; Sołtysek 2009). The descriptions of records referring to individual photographs in PAE resources were also checked by entering the names of selected toys into the search engine (in a singular and/or plural form), listed in the work edited by Dorota Żołędź-Strzelczyk (2016, p. 41). Those were: doll, pony, blocks, mechanical toys, animal figurines, teddy, ship, ball, rolling hoop, *serso* hoop, skipping rope, *diabolo*, shuttlecock, cup-and-ball, raffle, puzzle, game, balloon, trumpet, harmonica, drum, toy whip, toy spade, rake, watering can, wheelbarrow, stamps, clay pots, chimes, glass balls, doll bed, hoops for flicking-up with a stick, paper cut-outs. The collection of over 150 names or types of toys described in the publication by Tadeusz Seweryn titled *Polskie zabawki ludowe (Polish Folk Toys)* (1960, pp. 9–112) suited this study even better, therefore the following were also entered in the search engine: pinwheel, spinning top, wooden bird with clapping wings, puppet, ship, pop gun, whistle gun, blower, merry-go-round, *Lajkonik*, baubles, clatters, puppet clown and many others. The list of all toys created for the preliminary research is not included in the article due to its length.

Browsing by means of a possessive noun “children’s” and its various forms as well as the noun “child” yielded a greater number of photographs worth analysing. That was due to these words appearing as additional tags describing other objects depicted in the photos and, therefore, ‘caught’ by the search engine.



Photograph No. 5: Photograph PAE/F/27.16.VIII/423.61.10/01 – Przeździek Wielki (near Szczytno) – a sled, source: <http://www.pae.us.edu.pl/items/show/9353>, access: 10.07.2020.

Amongst 21 photographs of sleds<sup>12</sup> with varying structures, documented in numerous towns and villages in the country, there was only one, in two different shots, taken in the winter scenery. One picture, taken in the village of Przeździek Wielki (near Szczytno), stands out from this group of photographs. It depicts a 4–5 year old boy dressed in summer clothes, walking along a fence and dragging a small wooden sled with a string tossed across his shoulder (photograph No. 5).

The author of this photograph decided to show not only the sled, which was to be documented according to the accepted research directives of PAE, but also the child pulling it. The kid demonstrated the application of the object and, indirectly, a way to use it during playtime. This photograph, taken in 1961, confirms the results of research conducted by Kaminierz Moszyński concerning sleds, published in 1929. The author of *Kultura ludowa Słowian* wrote:

Sleights [...], as we have somewhat seen within the Slavs' territory, are by no means just a winter vehicle meant solely for commuting in the snow. On the contrary, in many Eurasian countries they remain in use throughout the year. [...] Aside from larger sleights, [...] the Slavs also use smaller sleds [...]. They are commonly used by the village children for playtime, but even more frequently, both in the south and north, stronger versions of such sleds find application on farms, i.e. for carrying the plough. Such sleds tend to be connected to a dragging machine and used for transporting building materials etc. by our mountaineers (Moszyński 1929, p. 632).

The PAE archive contains photographs showing rocking horses and ground cradles. The toy displayed on the photograph below makes it possible for small children (who are not able to walk, but can sit on their own) to rock and, once they get older – play the role of a rider during playtime. The photograph, taken in Radzice Duże

<sup>12</sup> In Polish, the term for sleds, sledges and sleights is the same (*sanie*) – it refers to both the vehicle pulled by horses and a children's toy.



Photograph No. 6: Photograph PAE/F/26.27.II/1212.69.15/01 – Radzice Duże (near Opoczno)  
– a rocking horse, source: <http://www.pae.us.edu.pl/items/show/9070>, access: 10.07.2020.

(near Opoczno), depicts a child using the toy, either captured by accident or purposefully “directed” by the researcher (photograph No. 6).

From among the eight photographs documenting children’s ground cradles from different regions of Poland at least two deserve attention, partially due to the presence of a child in them. They are presented below (photographs No. 7 and 8).

A cradle is not a toy as opposed to a rocking horse, which is a toy, even though the browser saw no correlation between it and the search term “toy”. A cradle is rather an object used in the early childhood period. Within the electronic PAE resources



Photograph No. 7: Photograph PAE/F/13.30.I/1018.66.16/01 – Książnica Śląska (near Dzierżoniów)  
– a ground cradle, source: <http://www.pae.us.edu.pl/items/show/2492>, access: 10.07.2020.



Photograph No. 8: Photograph PAE/F/33.25.VIII/832.65.25/01 – Paszki Małe (near Radzyń Podlaski) – a ground cradle, source: <http://www.pae.us.edu.pl/items/show/12772>, access: 10.07.2020.

the cradle fits into the thematic area of material culture, related to household accessories. A child in the photograph taken in 1966 in Książnica Śląska (near Dzierżoniów) not only demonstrates “its own” cradle, but indirectly shows its play-related use. Putting the closest objects into motion is one of the first games a child can play alone.

The keyword “children’s outfit” yielded 142 records containing several other interesting examples of games and toys of countryside children from the 1960s. Many photographs of rural children’s clothing depict one to several children of different ages standing in a row. At times their faces are not visible in the frame, which is not due to a requirement of ensuring their anonymity. The preliminary research provided, among the great majority of “arranged” photographs of clothing, also ones that appear nearly useless from the perspective of their original purpose. They do, however, provide information regarding the former ludic culture of rural children. Those are the photographs in which the children were allowed to hold various objects which often divert the viewer’s attention from the clothing. Several such photographs will be exemplified below.

The first one is a photograph of a young boy in a baseball cap sitting by the foundation of a building (photograph No. 9). The child’s position and the top-down perspective of the shot make it hard to describe the boy’s clothing, except for the cap. The grimace of surprise or discontent on the sun-blinded face of the boy suggests that the researcher might have taken that photograph by surprise during the boy’s play with random objects lying around. The child was not playing with any store-bought toys, nor toys made by his siblings or other older members of the family. The ethnographer, most likely unintentionally, managed to document him playing spontaneously in the yard. This playtime probably involved different raw materials available in the farmyard, such as sand, stones, sticks etc. as well as other items adults consider useless.



Photograph No. 9: Photograph PAE/F/22.20.XIII/1099.68.18/01 – Wola Nakonowska (near Włocławek)  
– a children's outfit, source: <http://www.pae.us.edu.pl/items/show/6584>, access: 10.07.2020.

The picture of two children, taken in 1962 in Lubojna (near Częstochowa), is equally interesting. The photograph, which was also supposed to document the outfit of a young girl and a slightly older boy, was taken from a relatively large distance against the background of a building which dominated the frame. Due to the way the picture was taken, a person looking at it, instead of focusing on the clothes from that period of time, would instead try to establish what the children are holding in their hands. The answer is farm animals, which is obvious if the photograph is magnified (photograph No. 10).



Photograph No. 10: Photograph PAE/F/21.30.IV/473.62.34/01 – Lubojna (near Częstochowa)  
– a children's outfit, source: <http://www.pae.us.edu.pl/items/show/6310>, access: 10.07.2020.



Photograph No. 11: Photograph PAE/F/29.33.  
 III/1213.69.28/01 – Łysaków (near Mielec)  
 – children’s clothing, source:  
<http://www.pae.us.edu.pl/items/show/10438>,  
 access: 10.07.2020.

The description of a photograph confirms that the children were holding chickens. It is an interesting “genre scene” which confirms that young animals played the role of “mascots” for rural children and they accompanied them during daily playtime. Looking after small chickens, ducks, cats, rabbits etc. made farm children feel proud and, perhaps, that was the reason for taking such photographs (see, e.g.: Szalbot 2017, pp. 115–116).

In another photograph, this one from 1969, taken in the village of Łysaków (near Mielec), there are three children, though the outfits of two of them are obscured by a ribbon-adorned kite (photograph No. 11). The ethnographer interrupted the children flying a kite on a meadow. Photographing children in an environment which is natural for these types of activities is of special documentary value.

A review of the photos selected by the search engine of the Digital Archives of PAE after entering the term “children” made it possible to identify several other

photos depicting children at play, though play was not the ethnographers’ intentional subject. Photos meant to show rural buildings, but accidentally also capturing children are particularly interesting. In most cases, the only information provided in their descriptions by the authors is that a “group of children” or a specific number of children was present in front of a given building<sup>13</sup>.

The below photograph, taken in Objazda (near Słupsk) in 1956, is an exception to this rule. Its description merely claims that “the photograph depicts (...) children playing” (photograph No. 12). It is not possible to discern the game that the children were playing from the photo or its annotations. Therefore, it is likely an example of a frequently encountered convention of automatically associating the presence of children with the activity of playing. Knowledge of the reality of rural children, for whom the farmyard and its surroundings were the usual playground, to some extent justifies the commentary attached to the photograph.

<sup>13</sup> The descriptions of the photos in the inventory cards may, in some cases, differ from the descriptions in the electronic database. Such changes were authorised by the digital editor each time. The objective was to provide each photograph with a description most suitable to its subject matter. The descriptions can be compared by reviewing both the digital and the printed records.



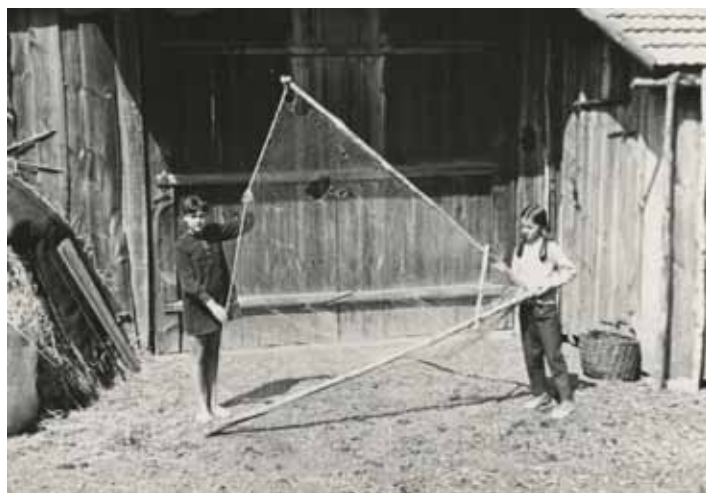
Photograph No. 12: Photograph PAE/F/15.9.IV/12.56.9/01 – Objazda (near Słupsk)  
– a rural road, source: <http://www.pae.us.edu.pl/items/show/3233>, access: 10.07.2020.

Another set of photographs worth mentioning includes those in which children act as “models”. They are presenting an object, probably at the researcher’s bidding, to either demonstrate how it is used or make it more visible in the photograph.

The photographs show that the children were clearly having fun posing and demonstrating their clothes as well as demonstrating how on-person transport with carrying shoulder poles worked (photograph No. 13), presenting fishing nets (photograph No. 14), or “demonstrating an open carriage” (photograph No. 15, 16). The below photographs were taken in the early 1960s.



Photograph No. 13: Photograph PAE/F/20.21.III/400.61.24/01 – Orle (near Radziejów)  
– on-person transport, source: <http://www.pae.us.edu.pl/items/show/5311>, access: 10.07.2020.



Photograph No. 14: Photograph PAE/F/31.26.XV/1292.71.5/01 – Kazimierz (near Puławy)  
– fishing nets, source: <http://www.pae.us.edu.pl/items/show/11449>, access: 10.07.2020.



Photograph No. 15: Photograph PAE/F/7.23.VIII/457.61.11/01 – Kopce / Koperno (near Gubin)  
– a four-wheel open cart, source: <http://www.pae.us.edu.pl/items/show/553>, access: 10.07.2020.

The PAE photos from the “Transportation and communication” section provide information not only about the playtime use of the aforementioned sleds and carts, or a children’s game, particularly enjoyed by older children, of pretending to be a coachman. The photos also document skates (14 photographs), wooden skis (3 photographs), and stilts (4 photographs). Children used the latter for fun. The PAE archives contain no photos of children using skates or skis. However, one photograph that





Photograph No. 16: Photograph PAE/F/13.20.IX/491.62.19/01 – Wilczyna (near Szamotuly)  
– a four-wheel open cart, source: <http://www.pae.us.edu.pl/items/show/2326>, access: 10.07.2020.

successfully shows the ludic nature of stilts was discovered. The photo was taken in 1961 in the town of Grom (near Szczytno). It is barely noticeable that a 10–12 year old boy is smiling while demonstrating the use of stilts (*chodzydła*) which shows that this rural tool was used as a source of entertainment for children. This becomes quite apparent when the photo of the boy is compared with the photo in which an older man demonstrates the stilts (photographs No. 17 and 18).



Photograph No. 17: Photograph PAE/F/28.14.XIII/344.61.9/01 – Grom (near Szczytno)  
– stilts, source: <http://www.pae.us.edu.pl/items/show/9608>, access: 10.07.2020.



Photograph No. 18: Photograph PAE/F/21.30.IV/473.62.7/01

– Lubojna (near Częstochowa) – stilts,

source: <https://www.pae.us.edu.pl/items/show/6287>, access: 10.07.2020.

#### SUMMARY

The main purpose of the research was to evaluate the photographic documentation of toys and games of country children from the years 1950–1971 available in PAE Digital Archive. The research undertaken is preliminary in nature – up until now the archival resources of PAE did not constitute the subject of studies with such a scope. It is definitely necessary to refine various methodological aspects of the research procedure. Further thematic explorations of the photographic resources of PAE would also make it possible to problematise the method of resource indexation or classification. The indicated challenges faced when extracting the documents depicting various expressions of ludic culture from PAE merit a comparison with the functioning of other photographic databases. The preliminary research report should therefore be treated as an initial overview of the information deposited in PAE Digital Archive.

Toys and games of country children statistically rarely appear in the descriptions of photographs and in the photographs themselves. When choosing a strategy of browsing the PAE digital archives it is helpful to know both the culture of Polish villages in the mid-20th century and the principles of describing the material as well as the functioning of the search engine of the Atlas website. It is important to analyze the relationship between the object captured in the frame and the description written by the photographer. Due to the vastness of the PAE photo archives, uncovering all relevant records, even by employing various methods of browsing, is unlikely. However, the methods certainly did show results which confirm and supplement the knowledge of games and toys of village children in the second half of the

20th century. All of these photographs are of great value to researchers of past ludic culture. The ones presenting children playing with their toys or children being interrupted by an ethnographer in their play in a natural manner, showing the play in its regular course are quite valuable. The fact that these “accidental” photos of children’s toys and their play were not forced by the top-down objective of the research is what makes them so unique, especially since there are few of them within the PAE collection of photographs. For years, these photographs have been overlooked, unnoticed or “unidentified” in academic research.

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PHOTOGRAPHS FROM DIGITAL ARCHIVES OF THE POLISH ETHNOGRAPHIC ATLAS  
AS A SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE ABOUT RURAL CHILDREN'S TOYS  
AND GAMES IN THE YEARS 1954–1971**Keywords:** *Digital Archives of The Polish Ethnographic Atlas*, toy, play, Poland

Studying ludic culture requires using different sources. The Polish Ethnographic Atlas, partially digitalized collection of which was made available online in 2017, contains numerous and valuable archival materials. The preliminary thematic research, which can be treated as an introduction to further, in-depth studies and analyses, showed that some of them depict toys and games of children living in the Polish countryside in the years 1954–1971, though documenting artefacts and phenomena of this category did not result directly from the principles embraced by the authors of the Atlas. The aim of the article is: 1) to describe the digitalized photographic collection of the PAE, 2) to reflect upon certain strategies of browsing through the electronic database in order to single out material illustrating different aspects of past ludic culture, and 3) to describe and determine the usefulness of photographs depicting rural children's toys and games, found in the digital collection of the PAE, in the studies dedicated to the manifestations of past ludic culture. The text contributes to the discussion about the changes that gradually have been taking place in ethnography in the field of analyzing historical visual documents and deepening research on ludic culture. The article emphasizes the importance and indicates further possibilities of using the archival resources of PAE in ethnography from the perspective of contemporary theories and current methodological approaches.

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