A Brief History of Toys and Popular Vintage Toys by Treeves

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The significance of toys in todayâ€™s world is no less than an exclusive plaything for fun and enjoyable means of the young life in human society. As I watched a show on making simple paper toys on kidâ€™s channel of my Dish TV, it took me back to the days when we enjoyed playtime with wooden or more traditional toys. In ancient days, the word toy meant fine handcrafted pieces of artifacts made by best craftsmen. Evidence found in archaeological digs or excavation sites of ancient civilization ruins show ancient toys made of wood, ivory, gold, bronze and clay. Since the start of the civilization, children in olden days amused themselves with a variety of handmade lovely toys like painted wood balls, glazed papyrus, clay, wooden or stone spinning tops, pull toys, dolls, terracotta and wooden animals with movable parts like the jaws of crocodiles and tigers, wooden blocks, hoops, rattles, kites, marbles, chariots and tops.

Ancient Egyptian children played with many toys made of wood, bone, ivory, ceramics and stone as seen in the excavations from a child's tomb. Toy boats carved out of wood, animals made out of baked clay attached with a pull string and with moving parts, dolls made out of wood and clay beads, spinning tops and hollow painted balls filled with seeds were popular. The Chinese and Japanese are credited to have invented carved whipped tops, which later became popular and variations of this toy spread throughout Asia and the Middle East. Chinese also invented kites; a particular version was used to send signals. Wood horses were a favorite of children in Greek and Roman times, as horses were used for hunting and in battle. Ancient Greek and Roman children had a lot of other playthings like marbles, drums, hoops, terracotta animals and dolls with moving arms and legs, baby toys including animal shaped rattles. Illustrations of men and women engaged in games playing whip tops and hoops are depicted from the paintings of Greek pottery as suggested by the archaeological evidence.

Toys found in the excavations have reflected the cultures of civilization that produced them. The way the toys were crafted in those days depicted the culture of the society, the manner of clothing, the panache, activities, occupations, social standards and conditions. For instance, the only modes of transportation seen in the ancient civilizations were boats, wheeled vehicles and animals. Hence the style of mechanical toys making of that period revolved around these. Ancient dolls were popular toys made out of sticks, terracotta, and wax had movable limbs and was decorated with wig, threads and clay beads and paintings, often reflect period styles and clothing. Greek dolls made of clay and jointed with the limbs nailed by string or cord have a strong resemblance to the modern day jointed doll. Eventually, doll makers started to use materials like wax, paper, porcelain, bisque and as civilizations developed rubber and plastics were used. Toys were gender biased and usually girls played with dolls and boys with soldiers and mechanical toys. The other vintage toys seen in olden days were skittles that was played in England from Tudor times but traces its roots to ancient Egypt. The player would throw a wooden ball to strike out the skittles placed at the end of the lane. There were several regional versions of the same game in many shapes and sizes and imparted educational value to help children develop hand and eye coordination. The traditional Yo-Yo in its simplest form is the second vintage toy in history, usually made out of wood, metal or painted terracotta discs.

With an improvement in technology and new techniques has led to the creation of more complex toys in modern world unlike the simple wooden toys of the ancient world that still retain their charm and are safe to play.

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