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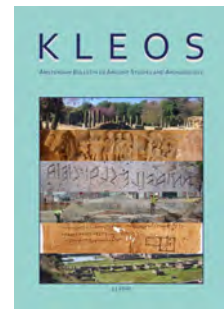
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Rattles, Toys and Miniature Artefacts: Archaeological Insights into Childhood and Children's Identities at Vlooienburg, Amsterdam ca. 1600-1800

Marijn Stolk

ABSTRACT

Archaeological excavations of more than 100 cesspits¹ in the Vlooienburg neighbourhood in Amsterdam in 1980-81 produced several find assemblages, containing significant amounts of objects which can be related to childhood. Miniature artefacts, gaming pieces, toys, rattles and other finds were recovered from the site and help us to shed light on the position of children and the processes of their socialization within the Vlooienburg community between circa 1600 and 1800. The first goal of this paper is to disclose the child-related archaeological data from Vlooienburg in order to contribute to the archaeological and historical study of children's identities in the past. Through a first analysis of these finds the second goal is to enrich our understanding of the care for children in the 17th and 18th century. In order to do so, this paper will first discuss the artefacts related to babies and toddlers, followed by the investigation of toys and play time for children of an older age. A specific element within the analysis of the toys will be the study of the many miniature artefacts that were uncovered during the Vlooienburg excavations. They make up a significant part of this study due to their role in children's games, in which daily adult life and routine was mimicked by children, encouraging their socio-cultural development.

INTRODUCTION

For the last 30 or 40 years the archaeology of childhood has gradually developed from a more or less descriptive subfield, focused on stereotypical interpretations, towards a more integrated field of research in which the presence of children has a central role in understanding past societies.² With the integration

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► [Profile page](#)

¹ Cesspits were used as latrines and also functioned as waste pits for one or sometimes multiple households.

² Baxter 2006.



Figure 1

The present day city of Amsterdam, overlain with a map of the city from ca. 1774, by Gerrit de Broen. The red circle indicates the location of the former Vlooienburg neighbourhood. The inserted detail shows the Vlooienburg neighbourhood from a city map of ca. 1625, by Balthasar Florisz. van Berckenrode (created by the author, base map courtesy of maps.amsterdam.nl/archeologie, and [Rijksmuseum Amsterdam](http://www.rijksmuseum.nl), online collection, public domain <http://hdl.handle.net/10934/RM0001.COLLECT.335825>).

of the field, the absence of children in archeological studies became an issue, especially because anthropological studies had shown the importance of studying children.³ Led by the assumption that culture is learned through socialisation, rather than inherited, children are considered of crucial importance for the study of cultural developments.⁴ As part of the subsequent development of archaeology, the study of children and childhood has evolved from being almost non-existing in archaeological studies (indirect interpretations), into being of significant importance for the interpretation of (household) archaeological data.⁵ Moreover, as Baxter describes in her introduction to *The Archaeology of Childhood in Context*:

“[...]the archaeology of childhood should not be considered an endeavour that is isolated or compartmentalized as a separate sphere of analysis but rather is a way to enrich and enhance our understanding of communities and cultures as a whole.”⁶

In other words, the sphere of childhood should be contextualized as part of the every-day world of adults, households and the wider society. In the Dutch archeological field, the study of Willemsen brought much needed attention to the material culture of children. She shed light on the daily life of children in Medieval times by

3 Soafer Derevenski 1994; Willemsen 1998; Kamp 2001; Lillehammer 1989, 90; Baxter 2008, 160.

4 Baxter 2008, 159-161.

5 Baxter 2006; Kamp 2009; Lillehammer 2010; Dozier 2016; Crawford, Hadley/Shepherd 2018.

6 Baxter 2006, 1-6.

investigating both archeological and art-historical sources.⁷

The Vlooienburg neighbourhood offers an intriguing case for the study of children and childhood identities as it was inhabited by people of different ethnic, religious and social backgrounds. The neighbourhood, which is currently referred to as Waterlooplein, was artificially created in a bend of the river Amstel at the end of the 16th century due to a shortage of living space in Amsterdam (figure 1). Among the first inhabitants were both local Dutch people and immigrants from other areas in Europe, such as Jews or *Conversos*⁸ from the Iberian Peninsula and labour migrants from Scandinavia.⁹ Over the course of the 17th century there was also an influx of Ashkenazi Jewish refugees from Eastern Europe into the neighbourhood, 'joining' the settled local Jewish community. Concurrently with this influx of migrants, and in part stimulated by the arrival of foreign merchants, Amsterdam developed into a centre of maritime trade.¹⁰ In the light of these developments and due to the multi-ethnic character of the neighbourhood, the life of children at Vlooienburg must, in a certain way, have been influenced by European and maybe even global elements of life at that time.

RATTLES, TEATS AND BREAST GLASSES: BABIES AND TODDLERS IN THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECORD AT VLOOIENBURG

It is usually difficult to prove the presence of babies and toddlers within archaeological find assemblages, since often there is little material culture left, which can be specifically related to this group.¹¹ Therefore, the small number of archaeological finds from Vlooienburg that can be directly linked to babies and toddlers are of significant importance. The discovery of fragments from three rattles¹², two teat rings¹³ and two so-called breast glasses¹⁴ (figure 4) in different cesspits, spread throughout the neighbourhood, are clear evidence for this category of young children.

Rattles are relatively uncommon archaeological finds but are likely to have been present in many households. A possible

7 Willemsen 1998.

8 Jewish people, who had been converted to Christianity, often under the pressure of the Spanish Inquisition.

9 Stoutenbeek/Vigevano 2008, 15-16, 76; Kuijpers 2005.

10 Levie 1987, 7; Stoutenbeek/Vigevano 2008, 15-16, 76; Gawronski et al. 2016, 38; Kuijpers 2005; Bodian 1997, 1; Municipal Archives of Amsterdam, GAA Index Burgher Books 1531-1652.

11 In this paper, this group will be defined as children aged between zero and 36 months old.

12 Bureau of Monuments and Archaeology, Amsterdam, find number WLO-322-10, WLO-155-215 and WLO-267-9.

13 Bureau of Monuments and Archaeology, Amsterdam, find number WLO-124-6 and WLO-293-26.

14 Bureau of Monuments and Archaeology, Amsterdam, find number WLO-190-18 and WLO-36-6.

explanation for their rarity may be that a part of them was made of organic materials, which might have not been preserved. An example of a rattle made of organic material can be seen in a Dutch painting by Jan (Salomon) de Bray dating to the mid-17th century (figure 2). Over the course of the 16th century, open-work lead alloy rattles and rattles made of bone and pewter or copper elements were introduced. The shape and appearance of these rattles are similar to the more expensive fine worked silver or golden rattles, which are pictured on many 17th century children's portrait paintings (figure 3).¹⁵ This type of rattles combined multiple functions. The upper part was meant for children to nibble on when they were teething. This element was termed the 'wolf's tooth', which in folklore was thought to serve as a repellent against evil spirits and to give strength to the child. Bells were contained in the middle part of the rattle and its lower part, which was used as a handle, sometimes also functioned as a flute.¹⁶

Fragments of three of such rattles have been recovered among the analysed finds from Vlooienburg (figure 4). It seems most likely that they date in the (early) 17th century as they look very similar to the design that is shown on the painting of the Sonck family (figure 3), though they were produced from less expensive materials. Two of the rattle elements are made of a combination of bone or antler and pewter and functioned as the upper and middle part of the rattle. In both cases, the top parts show clear bite marks. It is also interesting that they indeed seem to have been shaped in the model of a wolf's tooth. The middle part of one of the rattles still holds two bells. The second rattle has the attachment rings for the bells left on it as well. The other rattle element is made of bone and functioned both as a handle and a flute. Two additional bone rings found at Vlooienburg (not depicted in figure 4) were most likely part of teats, or rattles dating to the 18th century or later. The rattles and potential teat rings indicate a clear care for younger children, paying attention to both the development of their teeth and their amusement.

The finds from Vlooienburg also include two breast glasses (figure 4), which are similar to pieces that have been found in Delft.¹⁷ The glasses, that were used to collect breast milk, were most likely produced in Germany and generally date to the 17th or 18th century. The examples from Vlooienburg come from find complexes that date between ca. 1725 and 1775. The glass was placed over a breast to collect milk. The child could later drink the

¹⁵ Willemsen 1997, 407-408.

¹⁶ Collectie Westfries Museum, Gemeente Hoorn: Double Portrait of the Sonck Family, 1602, by Jan Claesz.; <https://wfm.nl/topstuk-dubbelportret-van-het-echtpaar-sonck>.

¹⁷ Henkes 1994, 335.



Figure 2

An example of a basketry rattle in the painting *Laughing Boy with Wicker Rattle*, by Jan (or Solomon) de Bray, mid-17th century (courtesy of Victoria and Albert Collection, London).



Figure 3

An example of a so-called *rinkelbel*-type rattle in a detail from the *Double Portret of the Sonck Family*, dated 1602. The picture shows the son of Frans Albertsz Sonck holding a silver rattle with bells in his right hand. The flute (lower part) and a wolf's tooth (upper part) are clearly visible (courtesy of Collectie Westfries Museum, Hoorn).



Figure 4
 Example of a breast glass, dating ca. 1725-1775, and three rattle elements, dating ca. 1600-1700 (archaeological collection city of Amsterdam, findnumbers WLO-190-18, WLO-322-10, WLO-155-215 and WLO-267-9; photographs breast glass courtesy of Bureau of Monuments and Archaeology, city of Amsterdam, photographs rattle elements by the author).

milk from the little sprout on the edge of the glass.¹⁸ All in all these finds show that the care for infants in the Vlooienburg neighbourhood was rather developed at that time. Historical sources mention that breastfeeding was considered of significance for the survival rates of the young children during this period.¹⁹ Hiring a wet nurse was possible, but extremely expensive and not common in the 17th and 18th century according to contemporaneous Dutch ego documents.²⁰ So the use of breast glasses and earlier versions of breast pumps²¹ were most likely used by mothers to improve breastfeeding and the care for their little ones.

TOYS AND GAMING PIECES: PLAYFUL KIDS OR GAMBLING ADULTS?

When discussing toys within an archaeological assemblage, it is important to distinguish between toys, which were specifically designed for children, and gaming items, which might also have been used by adolescents and/or adults. Amongst the toys that directly relate to children, we can include objects such as dolls, spinning tops and marbles, whereas amongst the group of toys that might also have been used by adults items such as dice, tokens, balls and other gaming pieces can be included. It is for example known that gambling games and ball sports were played

¹⁸ Henkes 1994, 334-335.

¹⁹ Dekker 2000, 99-100.

²⁰ Dekker 2000, 99-100.

²¹ Examples of 17th century glass breast pumps are known from archaeological contexts in Delft, Hoorn, Alkmaar and Egmond aan den Hoef (Henkes 1994, 334-335; Bitter 2016, 150; <https://www.erfgoedalkmaar.nl/vondst-op-vrijdag/kolfglas-uit-beerput-aan-bierkade>).

Type of toys or gaming pieces	Material	No. of examples
Balls	wood	6
Dice	bone and ivory	8
Dolls and figurines	wood, pewter and porcelain	10
Dollhouse parts	Wood	3
Domino tile	bone and wood	1
Gaming pieces and tokens (round and square)	bone, ivory, wood and ceramic	29
<i>Kolf</i> game attributes	wood and lead	2
<i>Kootwerpen</i> game attributes	worked talus bones (sometimes filled with lead)	4
Marbles	ceramic, stone and glass	373
Miniatures	ceramic, porcelain, glass, metal, wood.	170
<i>Pinkel</i> game attributes	wood	10
Skittle	wood	1
Spinning tops	wood	4
Toy weapons (one miniature)	pewter, copper alloy	2
Toy soldiers	pewter	2
Totals		625

Table 1

Overview of toys and gaming pieces found at Vlooienburg dating between ca. 1600 and 1800.

by adults at the neighbourhood in the 17th century, because they are referred to in historical sources. A tavern with a *kaatsbaan*²² was present at Vlooienburg in the middle of the 17th century and “a tavern, which functioned as a gambling hall”²³, was owned and operated by the Portuguese Jew Jan Sabbatai Sena in the same period.²⁴ Although it is known that the taverns were located at the street called the *Lange Houtstraat* within the Vlooienburg neighbourhood, there are no specific concentrations of toys or gaming pieces from the excavated cesspits in this street that could reveal their exact locations. This is why it is important to keep in mind that not all of the toys and gaming attributes can be interpreted as children’s toys and that some of them could have functioned for adults as well.

Even though for a part of the artefacts it remains unclear who the actual users were, there is a large number of artefacts that can be interpreted as children’s toys. The most frequently found type of toys and gaming pieces, which can be related to children, are ceramic, stone and glass marbles (table 1). One possible explanation for the large number of retrieved marbles from Vlooienburg is that it was an easily accessible game and that marbles were inexpensive. Losing a marble or intentionally throwing them away in a cesspit may not have been a great loss for its owner. The second most common category of child-related objects from the Vlooienburg cesspits are the miniature artefacts,



Figure 5

Wooden doll, dating ca. 1750-1775, and wooden spinning top, dating ca. 1650-1675 (archaeological collection city of Amsterdam, findnumbers WLO-244-5 and WLO-237-19; photographs courtesy of Bureau of Monuments and Archaeology, city of Amsterdam).

22 A *kaatsbaan* was an area meant for ball games.

23 This gambling hall was later on owned by Abram de Crasto Tartas and remained in use until at least 1710.

24 Hell 2017, 223-224.

which were used to 'play house' (discussed in more detail later on). They occur in different sorts of materials such as various ceramic wares, wood, metal and even glass. Other than that, dolls and skill games seem to have been quite popular too (figure 5). Among the finds from Vlooienburg there are figurines, spinning tops and wooden sticks, which were used for the Dutch *pinkel* game.²⁵ Whereas most of the toy artefacts were specifically produced for gaming activities, sometimes objects were recycled and repurposed to create toys. An example of this is a former lead cloth seal, which was transformed into a buzzer functioning as a sort of whirligig (figure 6).²⁶

A specific toy category that cannot always directly be related to children is the group of dollhouse parts. They might have been used by children, but were sometimes part of elaborate dollhouses. These were used by women as collection cabinets in the 17th century to display fine and fragile pieces of craftsmanship.²⁷ Among these luxurious dollhouse parts were, for example, very tiny pieces of pewter, silverware and porcelain or carefully crafted pieces of furniture.²⁸ Three wooden doll house parts have been identified in the Vlooienburg cesspit assemblages. Besides these, there are a number of tiny porcelain vases, which could be interpreted as children's toys or as dollhouse parts (figure 7). The relatively large amount of porcelain miniatures at Vlooienburg – 15 in total, from ten different cesspits – either suggests that such dollhouses were quite popular and not limited to the higher classes of society, or, more likely, that miniature porcelain items were sometimes also used as toys. And there is even a third possibility. Some believe that these miniature artefacts could have functioned as collectibles or souvenirs as well, since they originate from Asia.²⁹ Porcelain miniatures may have arrived from the East in bulk, as they are mentioned as a component of ship ballast between 1690 and the 18th century. This circumstance shows that these items were probably not too exclusive or expensive from the later 17th century onwards.³⁰ We can state, that in cases like this it is rather difficult to strictly address the function of toys and miniature objects. Besides, we cannot exclude the idea that similar objects might have fulfilled



Figure 6
Buzzer made out of a lead cloth seal, dating ca. 1700-1750 (archaeological collection city of Amsterdam, findnumber WLO-240-48; photograph by the author).



Figure 7
Examples of some miniature porcelain vases, dating ca. 1675-1700 (archaeological collection city of Amsterdam, findnumbers WLO-199-81, WLO-199-82 and WLO-199-26; photographs by the author).

²⁵ *Pinkelen* is a game of skill, in which one hits different pieces of wood with a bat, in order to make them shoot in a certain direction.

²⁶ Buzzers were objects, that were spun around by tightening and loosening a rope, which would make a buzzing sound.

²⁷ See for example the 17th century dollhouses of Petronella Dunois and Petronella Oortman in the Rijksmuseum collection; respectively inventory number BK-14656 and BK-NM-1010.

²⁸ Lukezic 2007, 57-58; Pijzel-Domisse 2000.

²⁹ The possibility that miniatures were used as souvenirs or mementos is for example described by Mills (Mills 2010, 37, 53).

³⁰ Sönmez 2015, 349.

different functions in different contexts. So, whereas an adult might have considered a porcelain miniature as a show piece or souvenir, for a child it might have been one of its miniature toys. Concluding, the significant amount of toys, various gaming attributes and fancy collectables tell us that both children and adults in the Vlooienburg neighbourhood must have had sufficient time for leisure activities. The variation amongst the children's toys shows that there was quite a variety in quality of materials, ranging from wood to glass and from reused lead to finely worked copper alloy (table 1). This corresponds with the conclusion of Willemsen's research, which states that children's toys must have been accessible to all layers of society in the Medieval period and at the start of the Early Modern period.³¹

MINIATURE ARTEFACTS: REFLECTING DAILY HOUSEHOLD LIFE

Perhaps the most interesting category of toys from Vlooienburg is constituted by the group of 170 miniature artefacts. Miniatures of full-sized objects are known from a great variety of archaeological sites ranging through time and space and they fulfilled different functions, depending on the context in which they were used. Miniatures sometimes served as grave offerings or as part of ritual practices, as was the case in for example Inuit Canada, Iron Age Italy and Viking Age Scotland.³² Within the household contexts of the Vlooienburg neighbourhood however, it is reasonable to interpret the miniatures as children's toys, as is often the case in comparable archaeological settlement contexts in the 17th and 18th century.³³ By mimicking adult life during infancy children became familiar with prescribed, approved and appropriate patterns of behaviour as part of their socialization.³⁴ By playing with miniatures that represented daily adult life, children were able to practice with generally applicable skills, customs, knowledge, values and habits and thus interact with the basic structure of a certain culture or identity.

The presence of miniature objects as toys within cesspit assemblages is a common phenomenon in Dutch post-medieval archaeology.³⁵ Most of the miniatures in the 17th and 18th century were made of the same material and had the exact same appearance as the full-sized artefacts. The ceramic miniatures were often produced in the same workshops as the full-sized ones, but in some cases the production of miniatures was more

³¹ Willemsen 1998, 295-299.

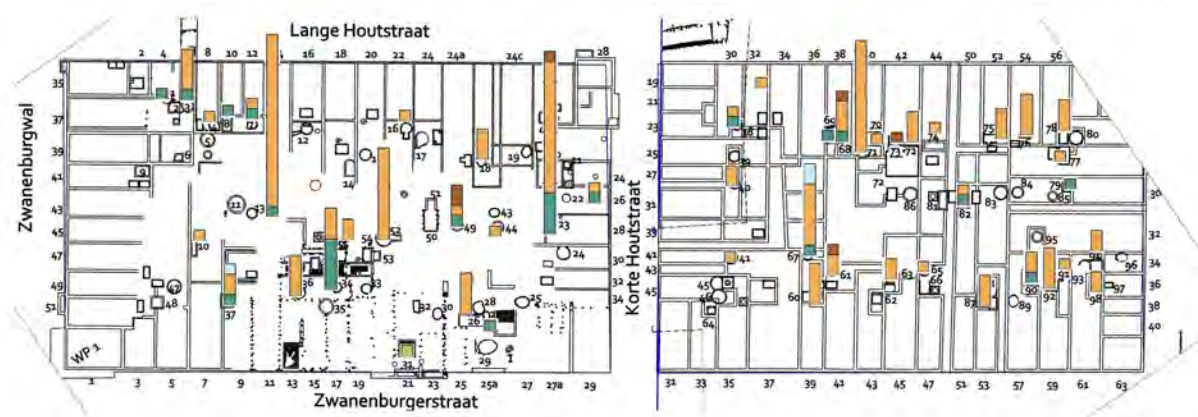
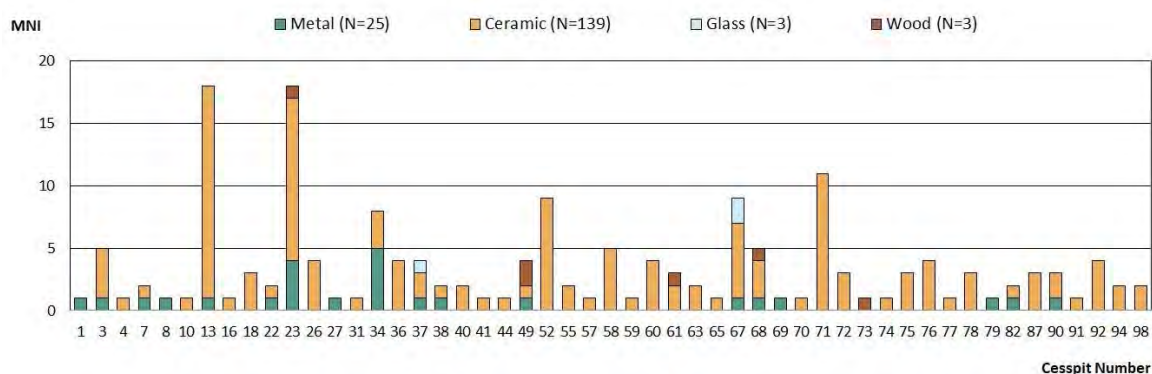
³² Park 1998, 275; Bietti Sestieri 1992, 227; McGuire 2013, 18-27.

³³ Gomes et al. 2018, 1-12; Bitter 2016, 153-155; Willemsen 1998, 92-95, 182-188; Gawronski/Jayasena 2017, 52-54.

³⁴ Lillehammer 2010, 10-11.

³⁵ Bitter 2016, 153-155; Gawronski/Jayasena 2017, 52-54; Ostkamp et al. 2001, 153-154.

Miniature Artefacts per Cesspit (N=170)



specialized, as was the case with pewter alloy objects for instance.³⁶ There is also historical evidence dating to 1648 which mentions the inventory of a toyshop at the Zeedijk in Amsterdam.³⁷

Miniature artefacts are present in at least 48 of the circa 100 cesspits within the Vlooienburg neighbourhood and are spread relatively evenly across the different streets in the neighbourhood (diagrams in figure 8). Whereas some of the cesspits only contain just one miniature artefact, others contain multiple examples, ranging up to whole sets, as is the case in cesspits number 13, 34, 52 and 67. Archaeological miniature artefacts can broadly be divided into three game categories: playing house, playing with dolls and playing with tools or weapons.³⁸ The material participation of these categories are all to be found among the Vlooienburg finds, though the first category is by far the most often encountered. Other than this, a few dolls and toy weapons were retrieved from the Vlooienburg cesspits (table 1). In fact, one

Figure 8
A diagram overview of the ceramic, glass, wooden and metal miniature artefacts recovered from the cesspits, dating between ca. 1600 and 1800 and distribution map with the diagrams of the miniature artefacts plotted on an overview drawing of the neighbourhood (created by the author, base map courtesy of the Bureau of Monuments and Archaeology, City of Amsterdam).³⁹

³⁶ Bitter 2016, 153; Willemsen 1997; Willemsen 1998, 182, 188-189.

³⁷ <https://www.amsterdam.nl/stadsarchief/stukken/kinderen/spelgoedwinkel/>.

³⁸ Park 1998, 274.

³⁹ It is possible that there are some more ceramic miniatures in total, than there are represented in this table, because not all of the ceramic assemblages have been completely scanned and/or analyzed yet. At this point of research, full ceramics studies are available for the following cesspit numbers: BP1; BP23; BP 24; BP 29; BP 37; BP 48; BP 52; BP 62; BP 63; BP 71; BP 82; BP 90, the ceramic content of the other cesspits had only been scanned.



Figure 9
Copper-alloy handle of a rapier sword, dating ca. 1675-1700 (archaeological collection city of Amsterdam, findnumber WLO-8-91; photographs courtesy of Bureau of Monuments and Archaeology, City of Amsterdam).

beautifully crafted copper-alloy miniature handle of a rapier was found in cesspit number 1 (figure 9). Although it might be tempting to understand the different mimicking games, like playing with dolls or playing with weapons or tools, through gender stereotype roles in life, this is of course a debatable issue. On the basis of ethnographic observations in earlier studies, it has been concluded that gender roles have not always been that fixed and are not of great concern among children younger than nine or ten years old.⁴⁰

Most of the miniatures from Vlooienburg are related to the preparation and consumption of food, and as such they can be interpreted as early parallels of the modern 'toy kitchens'. Most of them are ceramic and metal artefacts from local Dutch or German origin, but wooden or glass ones have also been recovered (figure 8). Within the ceramic miniature assemblages, there are cooking pots, frying pans, lids, strainers, oil lamps, plates, cups, and almost every other item that one could find within a full-sized household assemblage (figure 10). Among the metal miniatures, porringers and plates are relatively common, although there are also other objects such as a fire grill (figure 11). Wooden or glass miniatures are relatively scarce at Vlooienburg, as is the case in general for this period. The wooden miniatures consist of a knife, a jug and a tub. The three glass miniatures represent two different types of drinking glasses, namely the *berkemeijer* type – a conical pruned beaker – and the *roemer* type – a more convex glass on a higher stem (figure 12). Both of these forms are very common types of drinking glasses in the 17th century and were most often produced in the Netherlands or Germany.⁴¹ These miniature types are of quite high quality and must have been luxurious toy objects. Similar examples are found in Delft and Alkmaar.⁴² A differently shaped glass miniature is known from a castle moat from the 16th

⁴⁰ Park, 1998, 279-280.

⁴¹ Henkes 1994, 189-195.

⁴² Henkes 1994, 194-195; Bitter 2016, 154.



Figure 10
 A variety of Dutch red ware miniatures, including cooking wares with soot tracks, dating ca. 1600-1750. From left to right, top to bottom: a cooking pot; a frying pan; a strainer; an oil lamp; a dish; a skillet; a spouted pot; lid and a marmite (archaeological collection city of Amsterdam, findnumbers WLO-312-2, WLO-15-7, WLO-261-20, WLO-199-109, WLO-51-6, WLO-73-2, WLO-51-16, WLO-266-5 and WLO-250-25; photographs by the author).



Figure 11
 Miniature pewter grills and porringers, dating ca. 1575-1675 (archaeological collection city of Amsterdam, findnumbers WLO-241-67 & WLO-106-5 and WLO-127-30 & WLO-95-16; photographs by the author).



Figure 12
 Miniature drinking glasses: a so-called berkemeier and a roemer type, dating ca. 1600-1650 (archaeological collection city of Amsterdam, findnumbers WLO-240-64 & WLO-240-65 and WLO-138-58; photograph by the author).

century in Eindhoven.⁴³

It is interesting to note that some of the cooking wares and at least one oil lamp in the Vlooienburg miniature collection have clear soot traces. This indicates that children were apparently in some cases playing with fire. This was an important and useful skill to learn at that time, since taking care of the fire was a daily routine in households. Moreover, it was the main supply of warmth and acted as the hearth for cooking. We could ask how this relates to social stratification, taking into account that upper-class households most likely had servants to take care of the fireplace and the cooking. In this case, we might not expect the children of such a household to be mimicking this behaviour. Furthermore, it is striking that some specific eating and drinking habits from adult life found their way into children's play. Prime examples of this are the miniature drinking glasses, which in adult life were used to consume alcoholic drinks. A second example is the prevalence of tea pots and tea sets. The increasing consumption of tea from the 18th century onwards encouraged the development of children's play focused on acting out tea ceremonies with miniatures assemblages (figure 13).

The excavations at Vlooienburg have also produced one remarkable ceramic miniature with a very specific foreign origin. A Portuguese miniature drinking cup (figure 14), which was probably produced in Lisbon, was found in an early 17th century cesspit layer.⁴⁴ A few parallels for the typical Portuguese miniature drinking cup have been found in wealthy contexts in Lisbon.⁴⁵ This Portuguese miniature, together with a number of Portuguese cooking wares that have been found at Vlooienburg, form a clear representation of the Portuguese immigrants living in the neighbourhood.⁴⁶ Portuguese cooking wares are otherwise only found within Portugal or within Portuguese colonies and were no part of the Portuguese export products in the 17th century, nor were they wanted by non-Portuguese.⁴⁷ Consequently, the presence of the Portuguese miniature indicates that it was not only adult migrants emigrating in the early 17th century, but that at that time complete families, including children, were migrating to Amsterdam. This specific Portuguese miniature can therefore consequently be interpreted as a representation of an original ethnic background.



Figure 13
Miniature marbled lead glazed teapot, dating ca. 1675-1750 (archaeological collection city of Amsterdam, findnumber WLO-219-2; photograph by the author).



Figure 14
Miniature puchero (typical Portuguese drinking cup), dating ca. 1600- 1625 (archaeological collection city of Amsterdam, findnumber WLO-8-433; photograph by the author).

⁴³ Willemsen 1998, 394.

⁴⁴ Personal comment T. Casimiro, Instituto de Arqueologia e Paleociências, da Universidade Nova de Lisboa.

⁴⁵ Personal comment T. Casimiro, Instituto de Arqueologia e Paleociências, da Universidade Nova de Lisboa

⁴⁶ Stolk 2018.

⁴⁷ Casimiro 2014, 6045-6051; Newstead 2014, 75-92.

CONCLUSION

The finds from the Vlooienburg complex provide us with interesting insights into a 17th-18th century Amsterdam neighbourhood. However, future research and parallel studies are needed in order to provide a more in-depth analysis of children's identities in direct relation to the inhabitants and households in the area. About three quarters of all the cesspits contained child-related objects in a wide range of materials, quality and value, which shows us that the material culture of children, and childhood, has much to offer. First of all, these findings have allowed to identify the presence of babies and infants by the find of specific artefacts, such as rattles and breast glasses. This shows the relatively developed level of nursing and infant care that was available for at least part of the population in the Vlooienburg neighbourhood in the Early Modern period. Secondly, the amount and variety of toys shows us that adults acknowledged and supported childhood play activities. Whereas some children were provided with finely crafted and more expensive glass or metal miniature objects, others played with simple toys made from wood, bone or even reused materials. It seems that no matter which social class, children had the option, time and objects to play their games. This corresponds with the general image of Vlooienburg as a multi ethnic neighbourhood where families from different social backgrounds lived side by side in the 17th century.

On the other hand, one can conclude that, while playing games, the children were being prepared for adult life. Examples of toy cooking pots with soot traces, the introduction of miniature tea sets and the very rare Portuguese toy drinking cup, are all clear illustrative representations of the socio-cultural development of children at the Vlooienburg neighbourhood. Different games and playing house taught them certain sets of skills and by mimicking adult life through playing with miniature objects, they practiced with the general customs, knowledge, values and habits of their surrounding society. In this way, this case study does not only allow us to shed light on the socialization of children, but also gives us the possibility to see adult life through the activities of children.

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