

Study of the Importance of Contemporary Iranian Traditional Handmade Dolls and Puppets¹

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ABSTRACT

Dolls and puppets are more than decorative objects; as part of the earliest relics, they have played many roles in society. This study deals with the functions and aesthetics of Iranian dolls and puppets in art and humanity to show their importance. In most cases today, the dolls are at risk of vanishing. Based on regional diversity, abundance and currency, five examples have been chosen for analysis. The dolls and puppets are assessed semiotically through the descriptive analytic system. The discussion also examines the process of elimination, exaggeration and stylisation, and the dolls' ability as a cognate medium for advertising other types of traditional arts. Finally, through inductive analysis, the findings suggest that dolls preserve traditions and tribal identity from homogenisation.

Keywords: *Iran, doll, puppet, tradition*

INTRODUCTION

Traditional art is akin to making artifacts by hand instead of using the machine; the methods of this type of reproduction are transferred from generation to generation. Traditional art therefore contains rich values of the past. In Iran, Persian painting, carpet making, calligraphy and doll or puppet making represent various types of traditional arts. This article traces the development of dolls and puppets in Iran; focusing particularly on the aesthetics and functions of five different forms. The three dolls and two puppets selected for discussion are from the collections of Ms. Azimpour² and Ms. Kafashzadeh³ and the International Dolls Museum.⁴ Through the analysis of the colours, patterns and symbols, this essay shows that the dolls and puppets are closely linked to religious rituals and beliefs; as such they help to preserve the traditions and identities of the diverse ethnic groups. They are also useful tools for communication and education. This study is important, as there is a dearth of written materials on the Iranian doll and puppet. Only one book entitled *Iranian Ritual and Traditional Puppets and Puppet Shows Dictionary* by Poupak Azimpour, has been written thus far.

The equivalent word for both doll and puppet in Persian is *arousak* (*'arūsak*) which literally means "the little bride" (Dehkhoda 1994: 15841). Bride is a representation of the mother-goddess in Mesopotamia, Ishtar, who was the goddess of love and fertility in the sacred marriage tradition. During this rite, that used to be held in Nowruz, the King (in the role of Dumuzi) married the clergywoman (in the role of Ishtar). The clergywoman predicted the fortune of the king in the year ahead and granted him jurisdiction to safeguard farms and land security (Bahar 2005 : 35). Additionally, the term "bride" is commonly used for dolls and puppets as limbs that are connected to fertility are emphasised in many ancient Persian female figurines (Photo 1).



Photo 1 Left: Venus from Tappeh-Sarāb, Neolithic (6000 BC).

Source: National Museum of Iran;

Right: Clay fertility idols from Marlik and Sefid-Roud (Sefid-Rūd), Iran, 11th–12th BC.

Source: The private collection of Mohsen Foroughi.

The most ancient object that is similar to a real doll was found in Iran. Dated around 3000 BC, it was excavated in Jiroft, a city in the province of Kerman, the origin of the Aratta civilisation (Photo 2). This puppet has a fragmented body with holes in its limbs. Yusef Majidzadeh, the Iranian archeologist and director of the excavations at Jiroft, believes that the limbs were connected to each other with an Iron wire via holes (Shadjou 2007: 187); this suggests that they were dolls or puppets of that time.



Photo 2 The remains of a hinged doll from Jiroft, Iran, 3000 BC.
Source: Archaeological site of Jiroft, Kerman, Iran.

Since art, culture and beliefs were connected during the ancient eras, this hinged puppet could have been linked to ritual functions. In other words, historical sources indicate a deep association between puppets and dolls with human beliefs. Indeed they were important parts of religious rites that accompanied humans in occasions of mourning, dance, worship, banishing evil spirits, and so on (Ruizendaal 2009: 10).

Among the statues from the Parthian era, of interest is the statue of King Sarratrug II that has a miniature figurine of the king in his hands (Photo 3). There is no definite information on what the miniature figurine is, but the latter can be considered to be an amulet or a present to the sun god Mehr or Mithra. Terracotta figurines in old Greece "were brought to temples and sanctuaries as offerings to the gods and deposited in graves either as cherished possessions of the deceased, as gifts, or as protective devices" (<http://www.metmuseum.org>)

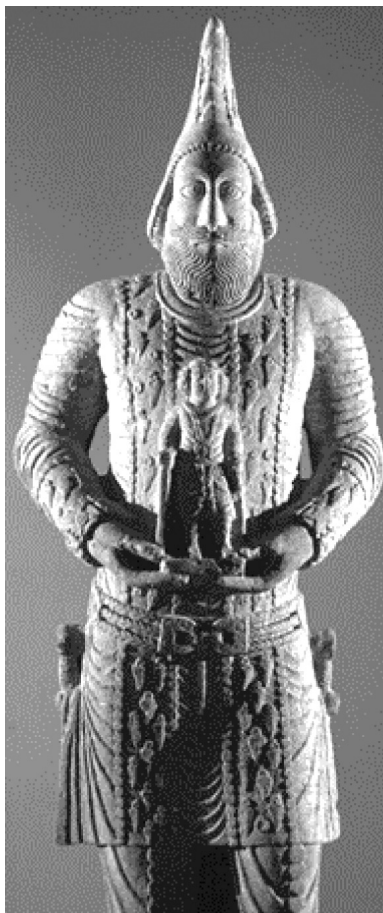


Photo 3 Parthian king Sarratrug II, from Hatra, 2nd–3rd century BC.
Source: www.iccdc.us/history/hatra.

Following that era, no further information about the presence of dolls and puppets were found for a long time. Some Iranian poets mentioned the word '*l'obat*' in their poems, which is an Arabic synonym for the doll. However, figurative talismans and amulets were common in the Qajar era (Photo 4). They were almost always made from metal and had religious and ritual functions.



Photo 4 Metal talismans from 19th century AD, Qajar era, Iran.
Source: The private collection of Parviz Tanavoli.

After the 18th century, during the industrial phase, manufactured dolls were imported for noble families, such as the women of the king's harem (Photos 5 and 6). These monotonous products that were made of standard materials (mostly wax and porcelain), with faces and bodies, gradually achieved more popularity rather than traditional handmade ones. At the same time, in more traditional societies, especially tribes, the tradition of making dolls and puppets was hardly continued. During the industrialisation process, the individuality of traditional handmade dolls faded. The lost quality was akin to what was called "aura" by Walter Benjamin, the German Jewish philosopher and cultural critic (Benjamin 1968: 218–219). The ritual aspect of dolls and puppets has been trivialised. As Benjamin further says, "It is significant that the existence of the work of art with reference to its aura is never entirely separated from its ritual function" (Benjamin 1968: 220).



Photos 5 and 6 From family Photo Albums, early 20th century, Qajar era, Iran.
Source: Digital Archive of Harvard Library.

VALUES OF IRANIAN TRADITIONAL DOLLS AND PUPPETS

Generally, the first difference between dolls and other handicrafts is the fact that dolls can communicate with humans. "It is also well known that after a few months, infants of either sex become fond of playing with dolls, and that most mothers allow their infants some special object and expect them to become, as it were, addicted to such objects" (Winnicott 1971: 1).

Winnicott, the English pediatrician and psychoanalyst in the field of object relations theory, referred to the dolls as "transitional objects", which help the infant to know them as "not-me" objects and use them to achieve independence from his or her mother. Consequently dolls and puppets deal with the problem of identity.

In addition, in the past, it was a tradition for some people like Etruscans to bury toys with children when they die (Adams 2011: 240–241). Here the dolls or puppets act as the transitional objects again. According to the tradition, the major task of these dolls is to help the children cope with their phase of death.

Therefore the doll or puppet can be considered as an outstanding and effective transitional object, which is able to convey messages, old patterns, beliefs and some rites that are being forgotten. Moreover, they are designed in primary colours, which according to psychologists are the representations of essential needs like the need for love, grandstanding, success, looking for the future and materialising wishes (Ferraris 1994: 90). However, different existing beliefs and desires in local regions have led to developing various dolls and puppets with individual aesthetic criteria. In addition to the mentioned points about the general nature of dolls and puppets, contemporary tribal examples that represent different subcultures, have some individual and particular values that need to be placed in perspective.

Lopatu

One of the prominent dolls in the province of Sistan-o-Baluchistan, on the border with Pakistan, is *Lopatu* (*lopatū*), which literally means "what resembles a beautiful lady" (Photos 7, 8 and 17).



Photos 7 Contemporary Lopatu with scarf from Sistan-o-Baluchistan, Iran.

Source: The collection of Poupak Azimpour.



Photos 8 Contemporary Lopatu from Sistan-o-Baluchistan, Iran.

Source: The collection of Poupak Azimpour.

The usage of warm colours can be found in Baluch art, rugs and embroideries. Red, black and yellow are also the most popular colours, which reflect the desert climate of the province. The doll's dress has a simplified design of the real women's costume of the area. Since embroidery is the most important craft that can bring financial profits, the main features of this Baluch art can be found on the dolls. Here the Baluch geometric embroidery patterns are also repeated (Dakali and Dakali 2006: 97). The pattern has been embroidered at the front of the doll's skirt that formally resembles the house in children's drawings. Furthermore there is a similar motif in the Caucasian *kilim* (tapestry-woven rug), which shows a pregnant woman looking towards a baby (Photo 9). In concordance with the mentioned pattern, it is a metaphor for the abdomen (Photo 10) and suggests the continuity of the doll's role as the promoter of fertility (Opie 1998: 85).



Photo 9 Detailed pattern from Photo 7.
Source: The collection of Poupak Azimpour.



Photo 10 The Caucasian *Kilim* (tapestry-woven rug) motif of pregnancy.
Source: Opie (1998: 85).

Another noteworthy point is the symmetrical quality of the embellishments, which have been formed using two contradictory colours, light and dark. This duality evokes the concept of Yin Yang and also the problem of close relationships between Baluch people and Turkomans (Behnam 1973: 4; Vambery 1969: 150). Black, like blue, indicates femininity; red expresses masculinity. Together they suggest the sacred marriage tradition and the nature of the mother (as seen in the costume of Saint Mary in Christian icons).

Another outstanding issue is how an illiterate Baluch woman can create such designs. These patterns might be rooted in the collective unconscious or the patterns might have been passed from generation to generation orally.

In the embroidery of other *Lopatu* (Photo 8), the pattern on the doll's back, is an antique design on a seal excavated from Shahr-I Sokhta (The Burnt City)⁵ in 5000 BC. This form is also used as the sign of Zabol University and demonstrates the sun (Photo 11).



Photo 11 A seal from the burnt city, 5000 BC.
Source: The museum of Shahr-e-Sūkhte, Zabol.



Photo 12 The pattern at the rear of a doll's dress.
Source: The photo was taken by the author.



Photo 13 The pattern of Gole-chärtāk in Baluch *kilim*.
Source: hahbakhsh (2005: 143).

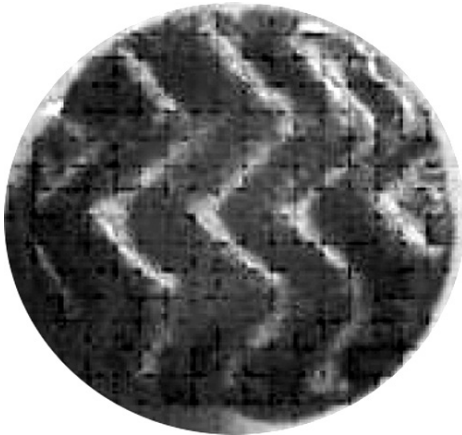


Photo 14 A seal from The Burnt City, 5000 BC
Source: The museum of Shahre-Sūkhte, Zabol.



Photo 15 The pattern on sleeves.
Source: The photo was taken by the author.

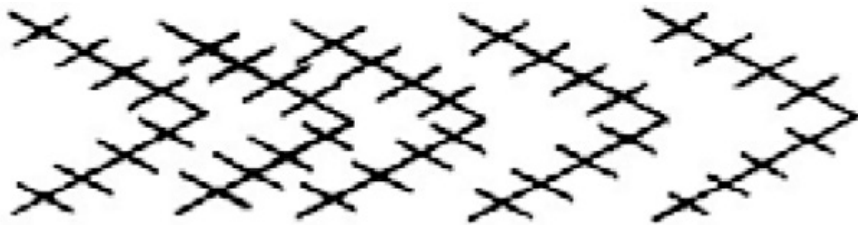


Photo 16 The pattern of Sabā-Sabā in Baluch embroidery.
Source: Dakali (2006: 100).

The other pattern on the wristband of her dress, which is called Saba-Saba, has been seen on another seal from The Burnt City (Photo 14). Also the chain of angular forms, which resemble the isosceles triangle, indicates the element of water in contradiction with the red background as the sign of fire (Hohenegger 1997: 66). But in some other cases, the craftswoman has preferred to use prepared pieces of *kilim*, instead of embroidery, to accelerate the act of decorating the dress.



Photos 17 Contemporary Lopatu from Sistan-o-Baluchistan, Iran.
Source: International Dolls Museum of Iran.

Lobat

In the south of Iran, near the border of Iraq, where Arabic language is commonly used, the doll is called *lobat* (*l'obat*). In Arabic, the word indicates two meanings, the "toy" and the "beautiful lady". There is also a male version. Both of these versions are generally made from some pieces of cloth mainly in warm colours, covering two sticks forming a cross. Some colourful yarns can be added as well (Photos 18 and 19).



Photo 18 Lobat, Shadegan, Khuzestan.
Source: The private collection of Leyla Kaffashzadeh.



Photo 19 The male doll of the south, Shadegan, Khuzestan.
Source: The private collection of Leyla Kaffashzadeh.

In spite of the simplicity of the dolls, there are some outstanding points. Choosing warm colours reflects the climate of the provinces of Khouzestan and Hormozgan where the dolls originate and the colours of the handicrafts of the region. Observing Islamic religious rules, the faces are depicted in an abstract way. In the female figure, the aboriginal craftswoman has only shown the eyes and lips, in addition to the pattern of coloured yarns embroidered on the doll's face that evokes the stylised form of the *burqa*, an enveloping outer garment worn by women in some Islamic traditions to cover their faces when in public (Anjomrouz 1992: 19–20). The *burqa* is usually made using warm colours. The colour orange, red and black signify adolescence, being married and elderly or being widowed respectively (Valizadeh 2010: 60).

In the male figure, the horizontal black yarn is used to form the eyebrows, which intensifies the masculine quality. Wherever Islamic rules have penetrated into the art, an abstract style has become predominant such as what is seen in Islamic geometric design (Photo 20). This has led to some difficulties in understanding the nature of the patterns.

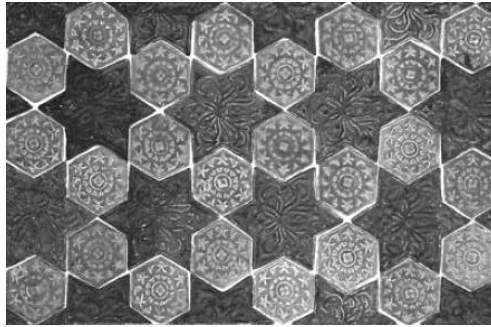


Photo 20 The sun pattern, Molded tile panel, 13th–14th century; Ilkhanid period, Nishapur, Iran.
Source: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Islamic Art and Geometric Design (2004: 13).

As I have explained in Photo 4, many dolls have amulets on them. Since belief in the "evil eye" (in Persian, *chashm-zakhm*) is widespread in Iran, there are some types of dolls that are used to protect people from bad fortune and harm. One of the well-known patterns, which is thought to dispel harm is the lozenge (Photo 22). There are also some *lobats* that have faces embellished with this pattern (Photo 21) and are supposed to be amulets.



Photo 21 *Lobat* from the province of Hormozgan.
Source: International Dolls Museum of Iran.



Photo 22 Evil eye amulet, the province Mazandaran, Iran.
Source: Soleymani, 2014, p. 96

Leyli

The Arabic name *leyli'* (*leylī*) originated from a love poem in ancient Arabia and literally means "what resembles the night". The story of *Leyli* was adapted by Nizami Ganjavi, the

Persian poet (12th–13th AC), and gained a huge reputation. *Leyli* is the symbol of the beloved who is spiritually beautiful (Azimpour 2010: 554). According to Nizami, she was black skinned, hence the reference to the 'night'. To put it in the perspective of the *yin* and *yang*, the name *leyli* indicates the *yin* qualities of femininity, the earth, darkness, the moon and passivity (Hall 2004: 18). Since Mitra (the sun god) was born from the darkness of the longest night of the year, which is called Yalda in Iran, it suggests that the doll has links to rituals.

Leyli is a hinged dancing doll, which is popular among the people of the Lor tribe that inhabit the provinces Chaharmahal-o-Bakhtiyari, Kohgilouye-va-Boyerahmad, Loristan and Fars (Photo 23).



Photo 23 Leyli dolls, in the Lor costume, contemporary.

Source: Azimpour (2010: 554) (two on the left); International Dolls Museum of Iran (one on the right).

Children can make the doll dance by pulling a string that is tied to their hands (yellow string in Photo 24). The structure of this hinged doll is simple and noteworthy. Natural materials are used except for the embellishments such as sequins, glass beads and colourful ribbons.

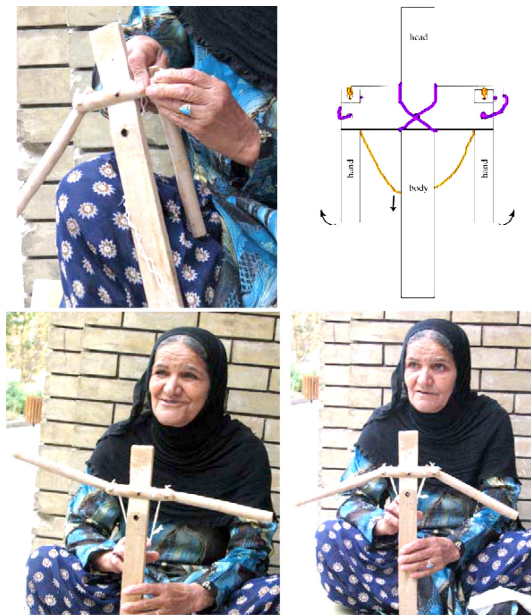


Photo 24 The skeleton of the doll *Leyli*, made by a traditional doll-maker Khadijeh Bey'atfar, Gachsaran, the province Kohgilouye-va-Boyerahmad.
Source: Photograph by Leyla Kaffashzadeh.

According to the Islamic rules, the act of dancing in public especially for women, is a taboo. But dolls or puppets have free and independent identities and are able to do what is not feasible for the real person. Dolls, puppets and masks⁶ allow ordinary people to state what is impossible in the real situation; for example in the Qajar era in Iran, people criticised the politics and social conditions of Ahmad-Shah's reign via puppetry without any fear of punishment (Beyza'i 2004: 98). Leyli also represents and maintains a cultural tradition, which is gradually vanishing in urban life. Indeed, as they moved from villages to the cities to enhance their living standards, women gradually began to wear the *chador* and *manto* (Iranian public overalls) as general outer garments, with a limited range of colours. This has led to uniformity among the newcomers in the city who were originally from different tribes.

Takam

There are some puppets in Iran, which are known as harbingers of Nowruz, the most important holiday in Iran. One puppet that is common among the Turk people in the provinces of Azerbaijan (eastern and western) and Zanzan, is the *takam*, a wooden goat twice as big as the human hand with four hinged feet. It is usually decorated with pieces of *kilim*, a bell, coins, and pieces of mirror (Esmailpour Motlagh 2000: 17) (Photo 25). The word "*takam*" in the local dialect means "my male goat" (Azimpour 2010: 34).



Photo 25 Takam, contemporary.
Source: Azimpour (1389: 51).

According to historical evidence, the goat has been a part of some rites accompanied by the tree such as in the story of *Drakht-i Asurig* (The Babylonian Tree) from the Sassanid era; it is also painted on pottery vessels from Shahr-I Sokhta (The Burnt City). Although it is the sign of masculinity, it also indicates fertility, femininity and abundance. Moreover four goats on a pottery plate from Mesopotamia stand for Ea-Oannes, the commanders of the water (Cooper 2007: 57) (Photo 26). The ware shows a Swastika (the Mehr Carrousel), an ancient sign of unity and worship in the Mithraism era in Iran and Mesopotamia (Bokhtourtash 2001: 1–33).



Photo 26 Pottery designs, Samarra ware, 4000 BC.
Source: Cooper (2007: 57).

The goat has also been found in seals and paintings. A seal excavated from Tepe Gawra (an old city in Mesopotamia) illustrates a dancing man or shaman, together with goats, a snake and a fish, raising his hands upward (Root 2005: 62–63). This refers to a shamanic dance that has been changed during the next few centuries; later in the Safavid era, a painting of the Tabriz school led by Sultan Mohammad, demonstrates three dancing men with goat heads (Photo 27). This theme is also repeated in two other paintings, one of them again by Sultan Mohammad (1519 AC, Freer Gallery of Art in Washington) and another one by Mohammadi Mosavvar (1590 AC) (Khazaei, 1989: 81, 130).



Photo 27 Persian painting by Sultan Mohammad, Hermitage museum, 1519 BC.
Source: Beyza'i (2004: 60).

Among the local people of the province of Mazandaran, there are local plays where dancers (one woman and two men) wear goat masks; one of the men is the woman's husband and the other is her lover. The woman goes to the center and men turn around her; the latter carry two wooden swords, fasten bells on their waist and dance with the folk music (Sharifpour 1996: 207). This triad evokes one of the basic types of tragedies where the son fights with the father to get the mother as his beloved woman. Some examples include *Rostam and Sohrab* and *Oedipus the King*. In these tragedies, the story finishes with the killing of the son who is a sacrificed god; an agricultural god whose blood brings fertility to the soil. The red colour in the *takam* is the symbol of the sacrificed god, new blood and rebirth from the earth. The red colour is also found in the puppet Mobarak (or Mubarak, an Iranian puppet and the most popular harbinger of Nowruz in Iran represents Haji Firuz, the Persian myth), the goat costume and the board on which the goat stands.

A wooden bar, connected to the goat, passes from a hole at the centre of the board.

The puppeteer who is called Takamchi (*takamchī*) shakes the bar upward and downward so that the goat looks like it is dancing. This can be considered as the symbolic act of mating between the goat and the field to get a good harvest.

In the lyric poem of this play, traditions of Nowruz such as decorating eggs, wishes or beliefs are expressed. Therefore, *takam* is not only the harbinger of spring, but also the supporter of ancient music, dance and beliefs in the region.

Katra-Gisheh

In the regional dialect *Katra* (*katrā*) means big spoon or fish slice, and *Gisheh* (*gīshae*) means bride. This is one of the handmade puppets for the tradition of rain-making⁷ and sun-making⁸ that is customary in the north region of Iran, in the provinces of Golestan, Mazandaran, Zanjan and Gilan. Woodturners (type of woodwork) make the puppet from walnut, plane tree, buxus or pear tree wood (Azimpour 2010: 38). With a piece of coal, an affectionate face can be drawn on the convex side of the spoon. It is dressed with a miniature *chador* (*chādor*), the outer garment worn by Iranian women, but is fastened behind the puppet's neck and decorated with colourful beads (Photos 28 and 29).

Azimpour has claimed in her book that the *katra-gisheh* is merely a rain-making puppet; however, this seems unlikely due to the rainy climate of the region and local research that has been carried out. Rather, people of this region use the puppet to stop the rain and prevent rice fields from being damaged. In the rite, children gather and take *katra-gisheh* around the village or town while they are singing a folklore poem with the content: "Please turn sunny and/ Dry the herd/ Make happy the shepherd" (<http://www.iribresearch.ir>). In turn, people give the children some grains; finally a traditional meal is prepared and distributed among the residents of the village.

This tradition is rooted in the agricultural and fertility rites of ancient Persia in which dolls or puppets were the medium of communication between humans and gods or

goddesses. The doll has been the symbol of celestial presence and it is supposed to be the representation of the grain goddess, the mother or the virgin (Cooper 2007: 258). Likewise, in Iran, the *arusak* (doll) is the symbol of Ardivisuranahita (one of names of Anahita), the ancient Persian goddess of water (Afifi 1995: 430). It is noteworthy how the dolls help to preserve the ceremony of stopping the rain via a street public play. Children who are the symbols of innocence are the other salient part of the ceremony.



Photo 28 *Katra-Gisheh* making process.
Source: Azimpour (2010: 38).



Photo 29 Other samples of *Katra-GiSheh* made by a traditional doll-maker Ziba Hosseyjnani.
Source: Children's Book Council of Iran⁹ (left); International Dolls Museum of Iran (centre).

In addition to presenting the appearance of the northern woman, the doll can be considered as an advertisement for the craft of making wooden spoons of the region, which is financially significant.

CONCLUSIONS

The language of dolls and puppets is the language of symbols, cultures and beliefs. Dolls and puppets originated from rituals that enable them to influence the human mind. Although they are supposed to have lost their ritual power today, the concepts of fertility and jurisdiction are still salient even in modern examples, such as the statue *The biggest and the best woman in the world* made by Niki de Saint-Phalle (in Moderna Museet, Stockholm) (McLuhan

and Fiore 1964). In fact the modern example can be considered as a sequel to early fertility idols with large hips (Photo 1). Furthermore, the concept of fertility has been emphasised in contemporary dolls and puppets utilising special colours (mostly in the warm tonality), patterns (Photos 9 and 25), symbols (the goat), and specific names that indicate the ideal woman as the bride or the sacred marriage tradition. Omitting dispensable components, for example, eyebrows, fingers, feet (in most cases) or head (in early cases) and exaggerating other organs are important properties of dolls and puppets that allow them to be utilised as an educational-advertising medium. In the past, people used to promulgate religious messages and promote reproduction by means of dolls and figurines. Contrary to observing realism and naturalism in industrial dolls, traditional ones can enhance the visual literacy of children though their abstract and stylized expressions; as described in Photos 18, 19 and 21, visual literacy is achieved by the process of elimination and exaggeration.

In its role as a transitional object, the dolls have accompanied humans in different transitional occasions, for example, the transition from infancy to childhood, life to death (grave dolls), and sunny condition to the rainy condition or vice versa. Furthermore, they have served as the medium of communication between god and the human such as the harbingers of Nowruz and *takam* or messengers like *katra-gisheh*. Meanwhile, they have conveyed and transferred cultural values through time and maintained folk lyric poems, music, costumes, patterns, rites, beliefs and local crafts (Table 1).

Table 1 The role of Iranian dolls and puppets in preserving different aspects of art and culture.

Name and Province	Dolls and Puppets	Other Contemporary Sorts of Art in the Region	
<p>Lopatu (Sistan-o-Baluchestan, Kerman)</p>		 <p data-bbox="817 954 1188 979">Baluch rug, the motif of Toranj (Medalion)</p>	
			 <p data-bbox="848 1295 1153 1344">Source: http://blog.iran-carpet.com/images/0000000113330.png</p>





(continued on next page)

Table 1 (continued)

Name and Province	Dolls and Puppets	Other Contemporary Sorts of Art in the Region
Lobat (Khuzestan, Hormozgan)		
Leyli (Chaharmahal-o-Bakhtiyari, Kohgilouye-va-Boyerahmad)		

(continued on next page)

Table 1 (continued)

Name and Province	Dolls and Puppets	Other Contemporary Sorts of Art in the Region
<p>Takam (Azerbaijan Zanjan)</p>		 <p>Takamchi is doing the ceremony of Tokam-gardani in Nowruz and people follow him wearing costumes. Source: (www.negahmedia.ir/assets/uploads/preview/22581.jpg)</p>
<p>Katra-Gisheh (Gilan, Golestan, Mazandaran, Zanjan)</p>		 <p>Gilan wooden spoons. Photo by Masoumeh Mofidi (www.negah.irib.ir)</p>

As an allegory, the tale of the Trojan horse, shows the ability of dolls and puppets to hide a tumultuous concept behind a tranquil appearance. It has been mentioned earlier that the traditional doll *leyli* justified the tradition of women's handkerchief dance behind her innocent appearance, and that *takam* helped to preserve a shamanic rite in spite of Islamic religious prohibitions. In fact, the dolls protect customs from being abolished due to religious rules or being forgotten due to modernity (Table 1).

Moreover, puppets dolls help to protect the environment as they are made from natural materials. Even though the natural materials do not last long, using accessible and economic materials along with aboriginal patterns and aesthetics, protects the cultural identity and diversity of the traditional dolls and puppets.

On the whole, the traditional doll or puppet is not merely an object but introduces its rich background culturally and aesthetically through colours, patterns, signs and other visual qualities. As a medium, it conveys messages such as fertility, beauty and tradition. As Walter Benjamin says, it preserves the emanation and aura. It also prevents cultures and subcultures from being homogenised in the industrial era of modernism. Making Iranian dolls and puppets incorporates a panoply of traditional arts such as *kilim*, embroidery, woodturning, metalworking, tailoring and other intangible cultural heritage. Ignoring this valuable function, they are considered worthless by many and seem to be fading away. This study aims to detect the ignored values of some of these dolls and puppets, in the hope that scholars and administrators might pay more attention toward this endangered traditional art.

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NOTES

1. This paper is adapted from the MA thesis of the first author.
2. Poupak Azimpour, the Iranian puppet theater researcher and faculty member of University of Tehran University, has taught theory and history of puppet theater at different universities in Iran since 2000 and collected a glorious collection of Iranian tribal and ritual handmade dolls and puppets. The major part of her collection was published in the book *Iranian Ritual and Traditional Puppets and Puppet Shows*.
3. Leyla Kaffashzadeh, the former director of the Children and Adolescents Department of Golestan Palace and Director of the research department of children's education at the Research Center for Conservation of Cultural Relics, has collected about 70 tribal and traditional dolls from different regions of Iran, and cooperated with the virtual museum of Iranak (www.iranak.org) from 2009. She was also the expert for registering the method of doll-making of the province of Khorasan-e-Jonoubi (Southern Khorasan) as a part of the national intangible heritage in 2013.
4. The International Dolls Museum of Iran, which was opened on the International Day of Peace, is a private museum established through the joint efforts of Masoud Naseri and Ali Golshani, with the support of Farideh Naseri. It was launched on 23rd September, to mark International Peace Day. Many dolls, including puppets and dolls wearing tribal dress, are displayed in the pavilions of the museum, at no. 4, Negarestan 5 (Haj Hadi) Street, Pasdaran Street, Tehran.
5. Shahr-e Sūkhté (The Burnt City), is an archaeological site of a sizeable Bronze Age urban settlement, associated with the Jiroft culture. The reasons for the unexpected rise and fall of the Burnt City are still unknown.

6. Developing masks to puppet-masks and then marionettes, is a logical process which occurred in many primitive societies' (Baird 2002: 36).
7. Rainmaking is a weather modification ritual in the occasion of famine that attempts to invoke rain using dolls or puppets or holding specific ceremonies and serving ritual meals.
8. Sunmaking is a weather modification ritual that is accompanied by dolls or puppets, ceremonies or specific meals. It is held in the north of Iran, a wet area, in order to stop the rain and prevent rice fields from being damaged.
9. The Children's Book Council (CBC) is a non-governmental organisation created in 1962. CBC carries out its cultural and research activities in the field of children's literature on a not-for-profit basis relying solely on voluntary contributions of time and labour. It joined the International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY) in 1964 and represents the Iranian National Section.

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