

ogists and psychologists have emphasized the role and importance of playing in early childhood and have considered it an important factor in learning the essential techniques of life.

Observation of artworks and studying historical books of containing information for that particular era are the most important sources of this research. Other sources include using travelogues and some literary books of ancient Iran containing valuable information about the toys used in ancient Persia.

The study results indicate that most toys had simple shapes and designs and were made of bronze, clay, glass or silver. Most of these toys were used by children of upper classes. For the educational purposes ancient toys had influenced social, emotional, and physical domains with relative effects on mental and physical development of those children. This research has been conducted using a historical-analytical method through study of library materials and pictorial data.

Keywords: Game, Toy, Ancient Iran, Training.

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A Historical Survey of Children's Toys in Ancient Persia

Abstract:

The era of ancient Iran comprises of the time the inception of the Mede Empire to the fall of the Sassanian Empire and the Arab conquest of Iran. The present territory of Iran is a large part of a geographical feature called 'the Iranian Plateau'.

This natural unit possesses diverse climatic and biological features that have resulted in Iran's cultural unity. Prior to the migration of the Aryans to the Iranian plateau, there were other cultures civilizations inhabiting Iran; hence, perhaps leading the Iranian society to gain a new conception of the childhood period that embraced a new definition for all sorts of children's games.

Ethnographically viewed, culture and civilization, including customs and traditions, has left a great impact on the creation of playing dolls, particularly the handmade traditional ones. Archeological excavations conducted in Iran have so far unearthed so many antique objects including some small ones with others possessing a childish design and thus, believed to have been toys.

Today toys are considered ambassadors of culture which transfer cultural components of a single society from the old to the younger generation. Thus, toys both items of culture and its conveyor. Therefore, paying due attention to their cultural influence deems important.

Archaeological excavations conducted over the world's ancient civilizations have revealed children's toys and gadgets indicating that the importance of children's games has long been known to mankind. Archaeologists working in different parts of the Iranian plateau have discovered objects other than everyday tools which are believed to have been used as children toys.

According to Prof. Roman Ghirshman, these small objects made by artisans and craftsman of the ancient civilizations, reflect not only the social structure and the daily lives of the peoples but also the religious, private and military aspects of the corresponding ancient society. Therefore, these small figurines were created in simple forms to meet the daily needs of the population and probably, besides being used in religious ceremonies and magical endeavors, they might have also served as children's toys.

The climatic characteristics of each community determined the type of materials required for toy making. Thus, it was through understanding the nuances and subtleties of objects and combining them with their beliefs and ideals that the ancient people created various toys for children to both entertain them and express the symbolic values of their society.

Besides being an item of entertainment creating moments of pleasure for children and adults, sometimes toys reflect the broad ambience of the customs and beliefs of their corresponding society through their hidden rules and meanings; or are used for educational purposes, as educational tools for teaching skills and conveying knowledge. Today, people of various societies use toys as objects of education, aesthetics, health and hygiene, technology, economics, musical, entertainment, and more.

The paper at hand intends to answer these very questions that how the community in ancient Iranian civilization understood and perceived the use of children's toys? What were the features of the toys of this period, and how it affected children's training and education? This article aims to examine types of toys used in ancient Iran as well as their shapes, designs and materials.

In a macro perspective, toys must fit into the community's values, because it is during the games that the children become familiar with such concepts. Toys and items of entertainment given to the children are symbols of real objects which must not only comply with the society's culture, but should also please the child. They should strengthen and consolidate the values of society and don't contradict them, because one of the benefits of this alignment of culture and value is to provide psychological and emotional relaxation for the children.

The best opportunity and method of teaching Iranian culture and educating intelligent and exceptional children for the future generation of this country is to provide toys that best suit the culture and customs of this territory. As a major element in retrieving the role of social characters and its formation, games and toys play an important role in the community. Sociol-

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