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DOLLS AND THEIR PLACE IN THE TRADITIONAL LIFE OF AZERBAIJANIS

The important place of toys in the physical and intellectual development of children, their artistic and aesthetic education is well known. It is not by chance that toys have served as an integral part of the material culture of mankind for thousands of years. Judging by archeological finds, the nature of toys is closely related to the level of development of material and spiritual culture.

Dolls stand out among the various types of toys. Having appeared in ancient times, dolls have attracted the interest not only of children, but also adults, especially by visually reflecting the spiritual world of man, people's ideas about public and social relations, connections with the living nature. Puppets, human and animal figures, were made of various materials, including fabric, clay, wood, paper, cardboard, etc., propelled both manually and with the help of ropes and poles (11, p. 3).

Even in ancient times, people made various figures and statues that served for cult purposes. In particular, idols were worshipped in Egypt, India and Greece and clay figures served as idols. Later, taking into account the increased interest of children in such figures, they began to make them as toys. This is how the importance of dolls in the education of children and their preparation for social life began to manifest itself.

Written sources contain information about marionettes, or puppets propelled by ropes, which were used in Egypt in the 2nd century BC. It turns out that already in ancient times Egyptian children used to play with wooden, stone and ceramic dolls, which had separate body parts and hair. Moreover, as early as in the 2nd millennium BC folk performances with the participation of dolls were organized in Ancient Egypt. Among such performances, it is possible to note a game in rolling



dough, where wooden figures driven by means of a wire were used. Dolls made of clay and ivory are found in ancient Egyptian tombs. The ancient Egyptian queen Cleopatra owned an extensive collection of toys.

The earliest mention of a puppet theater is found in the records of ancient Greek historian Xenophonte in 422 BC. The famous Chinese puppet theater “Pi-ying-xi”, i.e. “Lantern Shadow Theater”, has a history of approximately two thousand years. In the Song Dynasty (960-1279), puppet theater performances were widely popular and representatives of the nobility attended them with great enthusiasm. In Europe, actors belonged to the lowest strata of society at the time (14, p. 7).

In Ancient Greece and Ancient Rome, wax and clay figures were used as children’s toys. In ancient Greece, there was a custom of sacrificing dolls to the gods. On the eve of a wedding, girls carried dolls they had played with in childhood to the temple. This ritual was seen as a transition from childhood to adolescence (12). In this context, it is necessary to emphasize the famous ancient Greek doll “plagona”, which is considered to be the predecessor of modern children’s dolls. “Plagona” is a clay female figure, which served not only as a favorite toy for girls, but was also loved by adults.

Although very few samples of ancient Greek dolls have survived to this day, literary sources testify to the wide spread of puppet theater in this country of the ancient era. Thus, at one time Homer’s “Iliad” and “Odyssey” were staged on the scaffolding of puppet theaters. The origins of the European puppet theater go back to the

ancient Greek tradition. Clay puppets found in ancient Greek and Roman tombs date back to the 5th century BC.

Finds of dolls dating back to antiquity are also known in South Siberia (10, p. 290). Dolls called “emeget” were widely used in shamanic rituals, symbolizing protective spirits. Along with this, Siberian shamans and Central Asian Bakshi used dolls in the treatment of the sick to expel evil spirits. In funeral rituals, stone or wooden effigies were used to help the soul of the deceased. Altai and Central Asian dolls were eventually used as toys in the Caucasus and Asia Minor (4, p. 109). It should be noted that nine dolls symbolizing nine daughters of the Turkic god of good Ulgen were hung on the collar of clothes of Altai and Central Asian shamans.

It is also interesting that the word “doll”, which was preceded by the Japanese “kugutsu” (11, p. 4), is related to the Turkic-Mongolian words “kavurchak”, “kudevzhik”, “kabardzhuk” (8, p. 291), which have similar meanings. The famous “Dictionary of Turkic dialects” (1074) by Mahmud Kashgari mentions the word “kudurchuk” denoting human figures – dolls, which served as toys for girls (5, p. 479).

In general, dolls originally had cultic functions in Turkic peoples and were used in rituals to glorify the souls of ancestors and as amulets. In Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, there is still a custom to make and keep dolls in the house, personifying the deceased (8, p. 291).

In Azerbaijan and, in general, in the territories of historical settlement of the Azerbaijani people, puppet games (“bebek”, “oyug”) have been widespread since ancient times. Thus, in Zoroastrian tradition, every year on January 3 (on the 15th day of the month of Dey) a folk festival Muggoshi was organized, during which figures were molded from clay or dough



in memory of the deceased and placed in a place of honor in the house, and people bowed before them. At the end of the ritual such figures were burnt. Later this ritual lost its original essence and turned into a mystery directed against the Arab conquerors (1, 147). During the mystery, games were organized, in particular, with the participation of an effigy representing the Caliph Omar. Such mysteries, called "Omer-toyu" (Omar's fun), were popular in the villages of the Absheron Peninsula (1, p. 168).

In the western part of Azerbaijani lands, as well as in neighboring regions of Asia Minor, there was a custom when young people or elderly women carried a ritual doll "chomche-khatun", made of a spoon or ladle, around the village with chants, and on the way they splashed water on the doll from the roofs of houses (2, p. 5). It was believed that this ritual would bring rain and help irrigate crops suffering from drought. There was also a ritual in which, in rainy weather, special dolls wrapped in red cloth and representing the sun god (later the sun itself), called "godu", were taken by children to their homes with praise chants. It was believed that it would help to stop rain (9, pp. 139-140).

As a result of archaeological excavations carried out in Azerbaijan in the period 1936-2014, clay toys of various shapes were found. They belonged to a broad time period from the Early Bronze Age to the Late Middle Ages. Toys made of other materials, being less durable, have not survived to this day (13, p. 20-23).

The ethnographic fund of the National Museum of History of Azerbaijan stores dolls obtained at the early stage of this institution's activity - in the 1930s. Nine of them were brought to the museum during the 1931 expedition to Nukha (now Sheki) district (6). Many dolls have headdresses in the form of shawls or kokoshniks, as well as net covers and veils. Shirts and outer garments are rather primitive in general, but pants are multi-layered, made of various fabrics, tucked in at the waist. Some have silver threads or narrow laces sewn to the hem. One of the dolls in the collection is a 35 cm long piece of wood sewn into a white cloth. The head, consisting of a round plank, is wrapped in a shawl of red gilded cloth. The doll is wearing pants made of brown silk cloth, and the underwear is sewn from cotton cloth of indeterminate color. The doll's face is depicted by means of a diamond-shaped detail stitched with colored threads that indicate the facial features.

Another exhibit is a 27 cm long wooden stick sewn in white chintz cloth. The head in the form of a round board is wrapped in white cloth, on which the facial features are stitched with black and red threads, and the bangs are stitched above with black threads. On the doll's head there is a silk shawl of light brown color, on the body there is a taffeta shirt of green and violet tones, as



well as pants made of red golden silk cloth and an undershirt made of factory cotton cloth (7).

Quite recently, a very interesting exhibit dating back to the mid-19th century appeared in the collection. It is an improvised doll with a total length of 77 cm, which is a wooden spoon decorated with pieces of cloth, metal sequins, a bell, monistas, and pompoms. The upper part of the doll is covered with white satin cloth, and tied behind the head are black ribbons with a long pompom and 925 silver coins.

It is clear from the above that ancient dolls, among other things, serve as a reliable source in the study of the history of the textile industry. Judging by the dolls at the disposal of scientists, such fabrics as kamka, satin, chintz, silk, cashmere, kanaus, lace, gas cloth, etc. were widely used in Azerbaijan in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Along with this, dolls reflect the traditional style of clothing, its details and decorations.

Being an element of material culture, dolls also bring us information about how people in the past presented themselves, as well as ideas about what a person should be. Over time, the place of dolls in people's everyday life changed, as did their content. The original cult value of dolls gave way to the educational function as children's toys. It is noteworthy that although with the advent of the industrial era dolls, along with many other things, have become industrialized consumer goods, traditional handmade doll making has not been forgotten and continues to develop as an important area of folk craft. There are doll museums and exhibitions of applied art masters engaged in doll making in many countries around the world today. This means that dolls have retained their significance and place in people's lives not only as a toy, but also as a carrier of certain spiritual values. 🌟

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