

Animation Design, Special Project



‘தஞ்சாவூர் பொம்மை (Thanjavur Dolls)’

Report on ‘Thanjavur Dolls – A Traditional toy of India’

Special Project, Dec 2009

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2008-2010

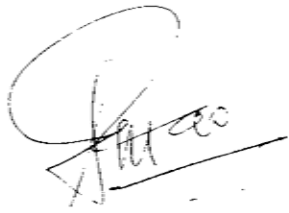
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Approval Sheet

This Special project entitled "Thanjavur Dolls", a Research & Documentation project on Traditional Toys of India, by Hannah Christopher (08634003) is approved in partial fulfillment of the Masters of Design Degree in Animation and Film Design.

Guide:



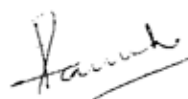
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24/06/10

Declaration sheet

I declare that this written submission represents the data that was collected as a part of this research project. I have adequately cited and referenced the original sources in all necessary places. I also declare that I have adhered to all principles of academic honesty and integrity and have not misrepresented or fabricated or falsified any idea/data/fact/ source in my submission. I understand that any violation of the above will be cause for disciplinary action by the Institute and can also evoke penal action from the sources which have thus not been properly cited or from whom proper permission has not been taken when needed.

Signature



Name of the student HANNAH CHELLA FLORENCO

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Date 24.06.2010

Acknowledgement

My greatest thanks to my Lord and all time friend, without whom I am nothing.

I sincerely thank my guide Prof. Sumant Rao for introducing me to the project and giving a chance to work on this topic.

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1. Introduction

The very existence of the dolls overlap the creation of human civilization. They speak not, but in every other way closely resemble human beings. Pre-historic dolls might have been crudely forged from whatever material, easily fashioned into a desired likeness. So if stone or wood or clay or cloth or rubber and paper can be called flesh, well they are pretty much a living thing in all.

India has glorious tradition in toys. The tradition of toys may have started from Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro or even before. They have thrown up a magnificent profusion of clay toys of considerable cleverness. These dolls are representation of a deity, dolls playing a significant role in ceremonies and rituals. Historically speaking, dolls have taken on several different figures, and a variety of unique forms.

Traditionally, dolls have been considered as toys for children. Presently, adults are collecting dolls as a hobby more than any other time in history. This is a report on Primary explorations and Data collections on Thanjavur dolls that are one of the varieties that have roots of origination in Tamil Nadu and those that speak language understood and appreciated by both young and old alike.

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2. Background Study – The Thanjavur Dolls

Many many decades ago, when the kids of Thanjavur wanted a play toy, The master mind artist of that region, made a toy out of the Coconut shell. The house of this artist , close to the river Kaveri, had access to plenty of nice alluvial soil and clay. When the lower part of this toy was filled with this clay it turned to a marvelous toy swaying to the tunes of gravity.

The technical term ‘Gravity’ would have not meant anything to them, so was the word ‘Creativity’. But their understanding was so high and so was their imagination. It was an exciting toy, yet simple to make. The kids went about collecting coconut shells (கொட்டங்குச்சி) and filled it with clay.

They then inverted the other half of the coconut shell on top of it and stuck the parts together with tamarind, a natural gum.

Creativity didn’t stop there, they drew eyes and gave the top half of the coconut shell a face to give identity to their toys. Well the region so well know for craftsmen, experts in bronze and stone sculptures, did take long for them to give clay filled coconut shell base a nice a pretty carved or sculptured body and face.

If the people of that era had lived till date, this might have been the story they might have narrated about the origin of this doll of Thanjavur called ‘Thalaiyaati Bommai’.

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These dolls when they were created first, might not have been any kind of representation of deities of any region or religion; but well as time went by, they started to depict the next powerful authority – The royal house.

They were image replication of the King and queen, the royal house of Thanjavur, probably the ones who would have promoted this as an art form and also helped sustain it over ages.

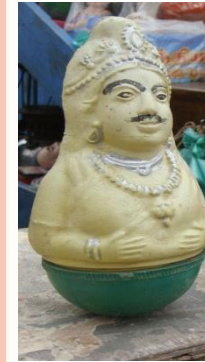
As the years passed, these dolls evolved into perfection and more sophistication and also started playing a role in religious ceremonies and rituals.

There are many varieties in these dolls like ones that roll, the ones that rock and so on. Though their birth place is still in debate, since Thanjavur is the place of their livelihood, its more often called the hometown of these dolls as well. Thanjavur dolls are one of the varieties that spoke art and science; One variety that revealed beauty in simplicity.



Tracing back into history, we see this type of doll in other parts of the world. These dolls that are shaped by the play of gravity are Cheap, anonymous, notorious Soviet consumer products known for their clunky robust look. They trace their origin to the start of the Industrialization era. These plastic dolls proliferated in great numbers at all levels of Soviet Society. But now they are in the list of extinct product of Soviet State Store ^[1].

There are dolls that fall under this same category but made out of a different material, the Wood. These dolls are from Russia and its evidence is seen in the similarity it shares with the Russian matryoshkas.



Plastic Rocking Dolls



Wooden Rocking Dolls



Modern day rocking toys



[1] Products from the former Soviet Union, Posted by Cory Doctorow, November 17, 2008
<http://boingboing.net/2008/11/17/products-from-the-fo.html>

Background Study – Outline of Thanjavur

Thanjavur is an ancient city in Tamil Nadu, situated on the banks of River Kaveri. The name Thanjavur is derived from "Tanjan", a legendary asura in Hindu mythology. Thanjavur is one of the oldest cities in India and has a long and varied history dating back to Sangam period.

The city rose into prominence during the rule of the Later Cholas when it served as the capital of the Chola empire. After the fall of the Cholas, the city was ruled by the Pandyas, Vijayanagar Empire, the Madurai Nayaks, the Thanjavur Nayaks, the Thanjavur Marathas and the British. It has been a part of independent India since 1947.

It is known as the Granary of the South India, lying in the deltaic region of the famous river Cauvery and criss-crossed by lengthy network of irrigation canals.

Thanjavur was the cultural capital of the country in 1790. It has contributed significantly to the field of art and craft.

Today, Thanjavur's economy is mainly agro-based. The town acts as a focal point for food grains transported from the adjoining areas of the Cauvery Delta. The town also has some medium and small-scale enterprises. Tourism constitutes a major portion of the town's revenue.



Location:	Tamil Nadu, India
Coordinates:	10.8° N, 79.15° E
Rainfall:	100 cm
Temperature:	Summer - 40°C to 28°C, Winter - 25°C to 22°C
Seasons:	Summer - (March-May), Monsoon - (Oct-Dec), Winter - (Nov-Feb)
Best Time to Visit:	Throughout the year

Royal House of Thanjavur

Thanjavur was the royal city of the Cholas, Nayaks and the Marathas. Chola kingdom was leading and patronizing literature, art, science and religion than the other two kingdoms. King Serfoji II, the Maratha king ascended the throne of Thanjavur in A.D. 1798..

By this time, the British had veritably ruled most of India and Thanjavur had to be handed over to the British throne. Serfoji patronized music, dance and the fine arts and encouraged a golden period before its eventual culmination at the hands of the British.

Architecture of Thanjavur

Raja Raja Chola during his rule built the Thanjavur Brihadeeswarar temple. The speciality of this temple is that it has been sculptured completely with stones

without a mountain in its surroundings. The palace, towers and the latest architectural marvel- Tamil University, all speak majesty and grandeur.



Tamil University



Thanjavur Bell Tower



Thanjavur Palace



Raja Raja Cholan



King Serfoji II



Thanjavur Big Temple

Big Temple of Thanjavur

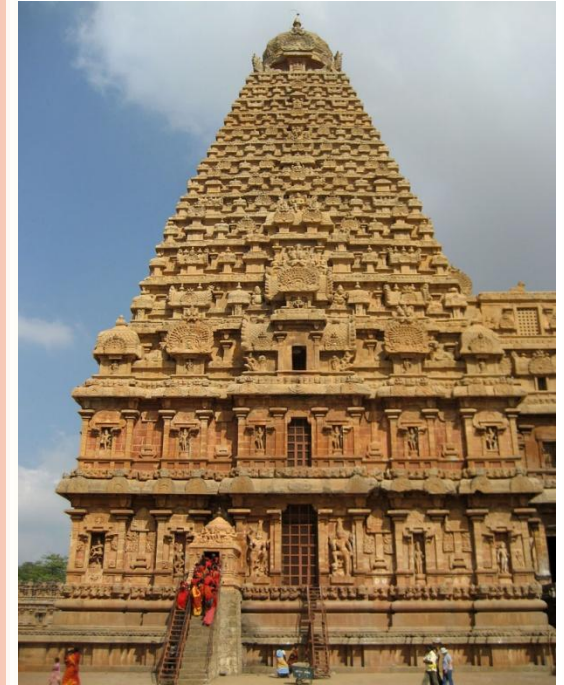
The Brihadeeswarar Temple was built to be the royal temple to display the emperor's vision of his power and his relationship to the universal order. The temple was the site of the major royal ceremonies such as anointing of the emperor and linking him with its deity Shiva, and the daily rituals of the deities were mirrored by those of the king.

The temple maintained a staff of 600 people in various capacities. Besides the Brahmin priest, these included record-keepers, musicians, scholars, and craftsman of every type as well as housekeeping staff. In those days the temple remained a hub of business activities for the flower merchants, milk vendors, oil merchants, ghee merchants, all of whom made a regular supply of

their respective goods for the temple for its pujas and during festival seasons.

The country was divided into subahs, seemais and maganams in the decreasing order of size and importance. The ruler collected his taxes from the people right from the village level onwards and were based on the agricultural produce of the village.

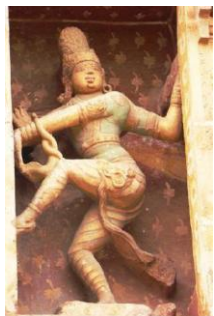
Moreover as evidenced by the inscriptions that found in the compound wall of this temple, the temple had always been serving as a platform for the dancers who excelled in the traditional dance form of Bharatha Natyam. Even today, the Brihadeeswarar Temple remains India's largest.



Art and Craft of Thanjavur

The district is famous for its exquisite ancient handicrafts-making of bronze icons, Thanjavur art plates, bell-metal castings, bowls, napkin, "Thanjavur swami work", pith-work, ornamental fans, mats and making of musical instruments of jack-wood. It is a flourishing center of handloom silk and cotton sarees. It is also known for the Thalayaati bommai's which have now entered the GI registry thus legally protecting its geographical origin.

The art and science of bronze sculptures reached the peak of perfection during Chola kingdom and so were Stone sculptures. 'Religious paintings with a royal heritage' is the best definition for Thanjavur paintings, the combination of canvas background with glass and metals. Thanjavur cut glass plates is yet another artifact of this place. Thanjavur Art Plate is another craft that adds feather to its cap.



Stone
Sculptures



Art plate



Thalayaati
Bomma



Cut Glass Work



Thanjavur
Painting



Bronze Sculptures

Art of Dance in Thanjavur



Devadasies, Tanjore Court

Thanjavur, the cultural capital, extended its power over the entire South India. The fame and fortune of the court dancers rose and fell with the royal dynasties of the region. The early Pallava, Chola and Pandya rule of South India laid the foundation for a great civilisation. Devadasi was a symbol of good luck because of her auspicious presence as the wife of the god. Waving the lighted lamp, the 'Aarathi', in the presence of the king and God was believed to have warded off the effects of the evil eye and ensured prosperity to the nation. The harbinger of this good fortune had to be the perennially auspicious woman, the Nityasumangali or Devadasi.

Devadasies were the servant of the God re-invented as the Rajadasi, the royal court dancer to do ritual worship in the monumental temples. The music and dance served the purposes of sanctifying the temple and also to serve the king. The charitable deeds of these Devadasies are evident from the innumerable inscriptions from Chola times. As an acknowledgement of their public service, Devadasies were given certain privileges like waving of the Chamaram (whisk) before the deity during the temple chariot procession. A village was named after a Devadasi and the ultimate honour was an invitation to join the royal household^[2].



^[2] <http://www.thehindu.com/mag/2009/03/15/stories/2009031550060200.htm>

Like their predecessors the Maratha rulers too went about appointing royal musicians and dancers. By establishing the Sangita Mahal (music palace), Nataka Shala (dance hall) and the Sarasvati Mahal library they emphasized the artistic prerogatives of their times.

The kings fully understood the interdependence of the arts and saw to it that a support system and infrastructure were carefully installed. Temples were once again specially endowed with wealth for employing singers of hymns (odhuvars) and ritual dancers. The king Sarabhoji II of Thanjavur, was relieved of the duties of governance by the British. So he took the situation in his stride and concentrated on patronising Art and craft

in his grand palace. The temple in Thanjavur too played host to new dance productions - Sarabendra Bhupala Kuravanji, a 'Natakam' or dance-drama of the Kuravanji genre, in praise of Sarabhoji, danced by a group of select Devadasies on festive occasions.

Artists flourished and so did the king, for he was pensioned off by the British and was not expected to be politically active. Sarabhoji himself composed many songs for dance, and lent his name as a signature to compositions by court musicians.

The decline of the court dancer had begun as early as the early 18th century when Britain began its domination of South India.

In short, all those who depended on the patronage of the royal court were deprived of even meagre sustenance. Large numbers of women were driven to penury and, in all likelihood, prostitution.

The sociological changes affected people's perceptions to such an extent that the once venerated Devadasies, fell from grace, never to regain her position of respectability.

The dance was re-invented for the modern proscenium stage, re-named Bharatanatyam, found new patrons, and taught to the new generation girls.

The fragrance of dance and music enveloped the green Thanjavur delta. The arts were nurtured by a line of Maratha kings, especially Serfoji II. In his court was the Thanjavur Quartet, the four brothers who shaped the modern Bharatanatyam repertoire. The Maratha rulers of Thanjavur integrated perfectly in the Tamil country, enriching it with folk arts such as *Poikkal Kudirai* (dummy horse dance) from Maharashtra.



Poikaal Kuthirai Aattam

Poikkal Kudirai Aattam is a Dummy Horse dance in which the dancer puts on the dummy figure of a horse on his/her hips. The dummy is made of lightweight materials and the cloth at the sides of the dummy swings to and fro covering the legs of the dancer. The dancer has to don wooden legs so that the legs look like the hooves of the horse. Dummy Peacock and Cow were other varieties of dance of similar genre.



Poikaal Kuthirai Aattam



Karagaatam



Mayilaatam

Music and Dance in Thanjavur

Thanjavur is one of the chief political, literary and religious centres of southern India, known for its contribution to music and dance. It has produced many classical musicians and Bharathanatyam dancers. Carnatic music of Thanjavur represents the rich musical ancestry of the bygone era. The 'Sangeetha Mahal' (hall of music), house all the celebrations that boast the thriving of classical music and dance of South India.



Legends of Carnatic Music

Tiruvaiyaru, which is close to Thanjavur, is the place where the great musician Saint Tyagaraja lived. Also it is in fact a popular destination for Natyanjali Dance Festival. The musical instruments of Veenai and Thavil, that takes pride of originating from this soil, casts a magical spell on the audience by the enchanting melodies.



Classical String Instrument Veenai



Classical Rhythm Instrument Thavil



Classical Dance Bharathanatyam



Natyanjali Dance Festival

Theatre Art of Thanjavur

During the second phase of evolution of theatre, the classical theatre's roots were based on Natya Shastra whereas the Traditional theatre evolved out of rural roots that was more simple and closer to rural milieu. Folk theatre evolved around the 15-16 century.

[3]Kuruvanji forms a part of Tamil literature in poetry and song. Kuruvanji stories circle around a good women or the princess in love with God or the King or some Noble men.

The Kuruvanji or the gipsy is a fortune teller who carries the story ahead by determining whether the love will work or not. The Kuruvanji is performed in dance ballet form with Barathanaatyam

techniques. This was the earliest form of theatre in Tanjore region.



Kuruvanji – Earliest Tamil Theatre

Around the same time developed another art form. Thanjavur Nayak ruler, Raghunatha Nayak (1600-1645 A.D.) gave birth to a dance drama, the Bhagavata Mela, the Tholu Bommulu (puppetry) to the Tholu Bommalatam.



Bommalattam



Bommalattam

[3]Kuruvanji - http://www.culturopedia.com/Theatre/theatre_tamilnadu.html

Festivals and Rituals of Thanjavur

The festivals of Thanjavur are celebrated with great enthusiasm and religious vigour. Upholding the unique traditional ancestry of the place, numerous social and cultural celebrations, exhibitions and fairs are held to display the richness of the region. The Natayanjali Dance Festival is organized every year in Chidambaram area of Thanjavur. The Carnatic Classical Musical Festival is celebrated at Thiruvaiyaru region



Karthigai Deepam



Navarathiri Golu

The Big temple has its own set of ritualistic celebrations in the list of Thanjavur Festivals. Also Thanjavur, the Rice bowl of south India does celebrate Pongal festival with great pomp and show. It isn't a surprise that this land that produces dolls in huge numbers celebrates Navarathiri with greater splendour. The display of dolls, known as the Golu is a celebration of great joy among the women folk of this region.



Temple Car Festival



Pongal Celebrations



Jallikattu Festival

Bomma Golu is traditionally a women's festival that Tamilians celebrate during Dasshera. It is a traditional practice to have the wooden dolls of Marapaachi', a traditional couple, symbolic of fertility. Marapachi Dolls are a pair of male and female dolls, mostly made of reddish wood. During display, the wooden couple is beautifully adorned with colourful attires and jewellery. These dolls are given to the girl from her parents during her marriage and are called "Marapachi Bommai". From this day she starts the ceremony of Golu going on adding Bommals and observing the ceremony annually. Preparations for the Golu begin months in advance. The dolls, wrapped in

cotton rags and neatly stacked in huge wooden trunks, are carefully taken out, dusted, mended and sometimes, given a fresh coat of paint. New dolls purchased every year to add to the collection. The dolls were mostly mud icons of various gods and goddesses painted in bright colours. Some families displayed dolls made of rosewood, sandalwood and ivory. A new development is the thematic golu where the entire Golu, revolves round a particular theme. These dolls from moist river banks, moulded by skilful fingers sculpting them, painted till they shone all glossy travel across towns and cities to reach each home and become a part of some



Golu Celebrations



Marapachi dolls

family collection and make friends with the other dolls of their masters collections. They carry the style of individual artisans and hold their unique mark of these men who gave it life. 'Aarthi' is taken for the dolls every night before they are put to sleep.



The tradition has been in existence for at least 500 years, from the reign of the Vijayanagar kings. Some of the inscriptions mention the Navaratri kolu. An old Marathi record at the Saraswathi Mahal library (Thanjavur) mentions the supply of dolls representing people belonging to 18 different castes for the Navaratri kolu. The kolu tradition, it is believed, was popular among the royal families of Thanjavur and Pudukkottai.

This doll festival has many features similar to Hina Matsuri festival of Japan.(The Japanese Doll Festival (Hina-matsuri), or Girls' Day, is held on March 3. Platforms covered with a red carpet are used to display a set of ornamental dolls representing the Emperor, Empress, attendants, and musicians in traditional court dress of the Heian period.) The dolls are usually handed down from mother to daughter, often the dolls on display being family heirlooms handed down over generations.

It is also a doll festival exclusively by the women. The same belief as in Japan prevails here, that these dolls protect the people inhabiting the house from evil and misfortune.

3. Data Collection

The study started with intension to document history and development of the art work - Tanjore dolls. But after visiting the Tamil university and Tanjore Library, I figured that there were no projects nor book or any other form of documentation done about this art form. Hence I decided to carry out Primary Research of collecting as much information as possible to figure out the origin and development of Thanjavur dolls.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

- Literature study about the history of Tanjore, its culture, traditions and how it had impact on the artforms.
- Site Visit to Tanjore Temple, Palace, Tamil University, Tanjore Library and Tanjore Museum, South Zone Cultural Centre
- Location and Interviewing Artisans and Businessmen involved in making and distribution of these dolls
- Interviews with Shopkeepers , Government sales outlet and Tanjore art society about the sales and promotion strategies of this art form.
- Survey with People(Buyers) on their views and opinions on the origin and use of these dolls

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Thanjavur Dancing Dolls



Types of Dolls

Thanjavur Thalayaati Dolls (Rocking Dolls)

Raja Rani pair

Minister Doll

Thanjavur Dolls (Dancing Dolls of Thanjavur)

Single part dolls

— Chettiyaar Chettiyaachi

— Joker

Double and Triple part

— Court Dancers

— Poikaal Kuthirai (Dummy leg horse) Doll

Golu Dolls

Kalyaana Set (Marriage Dolls)

Religious Dolls

Christmas Manger set

Thanjavur Thalaiyaati Bommai

Made of clay, wood pulp and paper mache, these dolls come as a pair raja-rani (king and queen) . They are weighed at the bottom in such a way that they rock with the gentlest touch, but never topple over. A clay tablet placed inside the round curved pedestal of the doll lends it a unique characteristics of making the dolls always remain upright. Not depending on any other force or source, just by pure gravitational force, it

comes back or regains its upright position always. When the dolls are made to lay on ground they would defiant and stand erect. This is artistic feature which is a subject of surprise. As this kindle the interest of onlookers, it has earned supporters in millions. Later designs include the Christmas father Rocking roll and the Minister rocking doll. A Mukkadu lady doll was tried and dropped as it was a failure.



Thanjavur Thalaiyaati Bommai



Raja



Rani



Christmas
Father



Minister



Traditional Raja Rani Pair

Thanjavur Dancing Dolls

JOKER DOLL: I am a little boy and when I shake my head and look around you will definitely smile. That is why they call me Joker. I may have been inspired by Vidooshaka (Royal clown) character In Koodiyattam, the dance drama.



CHETTIYAAR: We are single part dancing dolls basically belonging to Karaikudi region of Tamilnadu, but now, a part of Thanjavur dolls. I am clad in silk veshti, flashing a belly button on my protruding

tummy, with gold chains around my plump neck. My round head swings and my smiling face nods delicately, if touched. My wife, dressed in a bright colour sari with jasmine in her hair and gold jewels painted over her. We are otherwise grugged as skinflint merchants but as dolls on the Golu, we are prosperous mascots for the home. The modern version wears trousers, a shirt and has an oscillating-head.



Chettiar couple in other cultures

Dancing dolls and Other Religious Dolls

Dolls in various sizes and colors await customers at the gates of the Big Temple, Tanjore. Standing on a pedestal this doll's head and body dances independently. Thalayaati Bommai in Tamil means a doll that shakes its head. This name misled to these dancing dolls being called the Thanjavur Thalayaati Bommai.



The truth is that these dancing dolls are not as old as this Tanjore rocking dolls and not from Thanjavur say most of the artisans. Dancing dolls are from

Vilupuram district say some while other call it a doll from Kadalur region. These dolls may be the Devadasies of past who played a important role in temples and royal house of the south Indian dynasties, mostly having the headquarters in Thanjavur and its neighbouring places.

The other religious dolls are mostly made for the purpose of Golu. These dolls include various gods and goddesses, Gurus, saints, religious personalities and other highly respected figures, Set dolls of marriages and important festivals , Business, crafts activities. A Ramayana set, a Dasavatara set, a set of musicians are most wanted dolls.



Religious Golu dolls



Set dolls



Christmas dolls

Performing Arts dolls

The dance of kings and queens on the horse to show their valor bravery and royal charm was translated to the dummy leg horse dance. Now it is depicted as a doll. This was a very recent addition to the list of Thanjavur dolls. Its purpose is to delight the senses and bring about a pleasant feeling of cheerfulness or to bring out a tear.

The head, horse and body are 3 detachable parts. They sway in the wind and give an appearance of the dummy horse dancing. Handcrafted as they are, customers hardly find the cost affordable. But for the artisans, a price cut would mean loss. So the sales of this doll is not as much as the dancing doll.

The same process of making is followed to make the huge dummy horse dance models used in the poikaal kuthirai dance.



Poikaal kuthirai model



Plastic Art -Thanjavur Dolls

With the increase in number of tourist each year and the demand for light weight and easily portable cheap souvenir dolls, these plastic dolls came into existence. From the very first day of their announcement, the sales is always sky rocketed compared to other dolls because, the cheapest paper mache doll is 4 times costlier than these plastic dolls. These dolls are cheap, long lasting , easily transportable and also light weighted; So who wouldn't buy these dolls.

There are three models in it. A Raja Rani doll with the image of Raja on one side and the Rani's image on its behind, a baby doll which is a new introduction

and a duplicate of the Joker doll, a minster or the Chettiyaar doll.

Mr. Ramesh
Businessman, Plastic dolls

Century old toys have become increasingly machine-crafted plastic toys these days, thereby losing their original charm. It seems like the new generation toy-makers aren't too bothered about the art form.

They pose a serious threat to the art and our lives. Soon everyone who makes this art work will be reduced to traders from skilled artisans."

Artist Mr. Selvam
Maker of Tanjore dolls



Raja, Rani, Baby (Joker) dolls



Minister (Chettiyaar) dolls

Process of its Creation

Making of the mould is the most essential part of this art. Not every artisan knows to make it. The basic experimentation is with the mould making as the designs are designed therein. After attempting several trial moulds, the final one can be settled upon.

Mould Making:

First make the doll. Then mark the centre of the doll. Use clay and make the base of the mould, half way. Make a paper walling around the doll to get the cement inside a particular area. Now apply Oil (velakaennai/nallainnai) so that it does not stick. Before using plaster of paris or cement. After this mixture of sand and

cement dries, give enough force to make the details in it. Let it dry for a day. Then next day, take the mould off. Repeat the same for the next side of the mould. But apply greese or stick wet paper to prevent the base mould from sticking with other mould. Then sculpt the outside by cleaning it. Using sharp instruments remove the mould the next day, and when it is not that fully set, make the needed intricate design details. Remove the doll that is inside, it mostly will break off. Keep the mould in water for 2 days for curing to set the mould. Then use the low quality face power and clean the edges.

Artist Mr. Selvam



Single Mould



Double Mould

Interview: Mr. Selvam

How and when do you decide on which doll to make and the number of pieces to be cast?

Everything depends on the sales strategy. We have to study the market to find the taste of people and demand and popularity of each model of dolls. Then the moulds are made or reused. In case of introducing new dolls we have to experiment. Unused moulds are dumped away. New moulds are made when the old ones wane away.

Do people appreciate new models?

Different and new design is liked well enough and are appreciated when it stands out amidst the old and similar dolls. Knowing the tastes of people and some detailing of these new dolls helps.

Older generation used to learn the art over a period of 10 to 15 years. “But nowadays, many do it just after their training at the government-organised workshop. I think there is hence a constant erosion of skills of making these toys

Is there a threat for the extinction of this art form?

Any art that is a souvenir or has any other usage other than just being an artform, will sign as if it nears extinction, but it will never. The art work has become a souvenir of the place. So as long as the big tanjore temple survives, this art form will. If the families give up, poorer families will take it up. But the quality of work is constantly depleting is my opinion.



ஸ்தபதி Mr. P.K.Selvam

SSLC, TTC trained Drawing Master
President of Tanjore Paper craft and Arts
Society (Few yrs back), Now a member

Contact info:

Vadakku Vaasal, Vadakku Alangam,
192, Kodimarattu muulai,
Kuthirai vandi veedu,
Thanjavur old bus stand

How long have you been doing this profession?

It was in the early 19th century during King Serfoji's regime that these dolls became famous. I am the fifth generation doll-maker. This has been my profession for 33 years. I was barely 13 when I took over from my dad. Those days doll-making was a natural thing to do.

Can you explain the nature of your work

Doll-making is a difficult labor intensive work. I work for a minimum of 15 hours every day. We don't use any modern machinery. I create POP moulds using my hands to make the dolls cast with them.

How many types of dolls do you make?

The Raja-Rani pair is my speciality but to sustain a regular income I began making

Chettiyar aachi pair, dancing girl and gollu dolls.

I also make most of the gollu dolls like the marriage set, Dasavatharam set, Ramar set, Ashtalaksmi and set of Lakshmi-Saraswati-Ganesh.

Why didn't Karagattam and mayilaatam get translated as dolls while the dummy horse found its way with the other classical dances?

Balance is the key thing in these Tanjore dancing dolls. I guess, because of the difficulty in achieving it in the peacock dance and Karagattam they might not have got translated to dolls. Also it will be a single part doll unlike the 3 part dummy horse doll. I think there was not so much of appeal for that.

Having been in this profession for years, how much do you see this art form accept changes?

I've seen my grandfather use discarded coconut shells as the base of these dolls and tamarind seeds as gum to stick different parts of the doll together. Vegetable dyes were used to colour them. Such natural ingredients ensured the dolls posed no chemical hazard to kids even if they put them in their mouths.

Well now we use clay and Paper Mache. And because of using moulds, pretty much all the dolls have similar looks. The difference and beauty of the dolls is in our signature displayed in their cloths and expression in their eyes.

You have been making dolls for so many years; do you have any advantage you have over the new comers?

Definitely yes. But the percentage is very less. My dolls are long lasting, I can ensure that. There are certain things that come over experience only; it cannot be learnt.

Paper dolls can be destroyed by insects like Anthus Poochi. So preservatives like Thirusu and thutthanaagam are added. I don't think many do that. Adding it, helps in long run of these dolls.

Some times you see that the dolls when put to dry shrinks. This is because of the mistake in the mix. During mixing there is something I call "Patham Paarthal". It comes by experience that you can feel if the proportions of each element in the mixture is right.

My dolls have more detailing, because of my skills in sculpting. Just like how important balance is, the eyes of the dolls are the elements that speak. Painting the eyes and the eyeballs comes with practice. Almost a lot of the doll making families use water color to paint and use varnish on top of that. We use oil paint to give glossy look and also allows the dolls to be wiped with wet cloth to preserve it in a better fashion. Also in the dolls I make, spray painting is used to give the base coat and with good care details are painted on top to give it real look.

I have so far made around 1000 varieties of doll. My experience helps me design dolls and make moulds all by myself, which now the current doll making families lack. They get the moulds done outside.

I am worried that after my times, families to make dolls will be there but mould makers will be extinct.

Can you give suggestions on how to promote this art

About 50 years ago, a collector named Mr. Palaniappan did a lot of help to the artisans from the government side. More exhibitions were held and somehow more dolls were sold. Some body in such high position with real interest in art can help make a good change.

Government had training classes in the past, to promote this art and encourage new comers. I was a tutor for some time. The participants were given a stipend of Rs 100/- . Nearly 30 people learnt. But the income is not sufficient, so almost all of them backed.

Process of its Creation

There are two types of dolls, classified based on the type of Mould used to make them.

- Single mould Dolls– These are 2D Dolls , mostly wall hanging panel type.

- Double mould Dolls – These are made by joining 2 parts(back and front) of paper mache cast figurines, the joints sealed together to form a hollow space in-between. Base is made with cardboard.

MAKING OF THALAYAATI BOMMAI:

The unique production method involving plaster of Paris, papier mache, wood pulp and sago is the actual Thanjavur Doll. The alluvial soil and clay available on the banks of river Cauvery enhance the uniqueness of the Thanjavur Dolls.

Plaster of Paris is grinded well and then along with Paper and Wood pulp are immersed in the rate of 1: 3, with tuber flour (Sago) and they were bundled into dough, like a chappati flour. The same is put in the die or the mould. Then part by part these dolls are cast and then let to dry in shade for ½ hour. Then the other side of the doll is made in the same way and after it dries, it is fixed together and let to dry for another 1 ½ hours. After that the doll is given a coat of flour to fill any gap left in the Doll.

Later on, clay is added on the bottom in case of Thalayaati dolls or pedestal is made for dancing dolls. After that is dried, the Doll is painted and final touches are given.

Artist. Balu



Materials used

Interview: Mr. Ramesh, Business Mind

What is your experience as a business man, trying to sell and promote an art form?

All the techniques or the process of making these dolls are kept secretive and hence the art form dies. Being a business man, I realized that the sales for Tanjore dolls are very even and might be a business of constant profit. There are more sales and lesser people to do it. So I decided to venture in. I have 6 to 7 families involving in this cottage business of mine. Making the mould and keeping the balance is the only difficult task. I get that done outside. To make the dolls is not a very difficult one except for keeping balance. In my team there are ladies and kids helping out to make these casts of dolls and do the base painting.

I pay the families based on the number of pieces they do per day. The eyes of the dolls and the ornamentation add beauty and that is done by experienced among the group. I enjoy this business. We had recently done a new model of Krishnar Thalayaati doll with a feather cap in his head. It was a big hit that now we have no pieces left of it. I have to make a new mould of it again. I have a shop called Pathanjali handicrafts, which is one outlet for the sales of these dolls apart from the shop I have at the temple Gate.



Mr. Ramesh

Contact info:

101 Chellaiamman Kovil street,
Big temple entrance, Karandhai,

Thanjavur

Ph: 919994708987

Making of thalayaati bommai:





These are the different parts of the dancing doll of Thanjavur. Carefully balancing these parts make the doll dance to the tunes of the wind.



The metal wire that is seen in these images are the pieces that balance on the other parts of the doll.



This also called 'Balance'. These are the vital parts of the doll. These are the difficult process in the making of these dolls. Any mistake in these will result in the dolls failure to move as the equilibrium position of the doll is at stake.



This is the last piece of work left to finish before the doll is called complete. This is again to maintain equilibrium.



Interview: Artist. Mr. Balu and Family

How long does it take to make one finished doll?

It costs Rs 1,200 to make one mould. From this, we can make about 600 -800 pairs a week. But do to space constraints, I make around 150 pieces a week. We need a lot of space to dry these dolls. Seasons play a very important role. It takes longer during rainy season.



Artist. Balu (Helpers: Mrs. Rani, Mrs. Lakshmi)

What do you feel about this Job?

I had an interest in craft work. Two years ago I went to Chennai and I learnt this art from one family who have been doing this business for g=few generations. I was working for them and learnt this art from them.

Now, I partner with Mr. Ramesh. He takes care of the distribution and sales. I make these dolls. We have few other



families helping us. The ladies of those houses help us do the parts of these dolls and do the base coat also. The work for commission.

I do the final painting and the balance. Doing these dolls are very simple as they just have to be cast using the moulds. So anyone can do it. The challenge is to keep the balance wire. If that goes wrong the doll will not nod its head. That's why not many choose to do this doll. They prefer the other Golu dolls.

Contact Info:

Thannappu Kaalvai road,
Near Antoniyar Church, Vadakku vasal
Thanjavur

Interview : Artist Mr. Balu(Dancing doll maker)

How and when did you start making these dolls?

A decade ago, over 50 families were practicing this art. Today, it has shrunk to like 5. Among these, the number of families solely dependent on this art is less or none. That is why I started doing this art form. I am doing this business for about two years. I guess with some more experience, over the coming years, I hope to become an expert that the masters of this art will appreciate me for my work.

Can you explain the nature of your work?

The base clay is prepared, put in mould and then after it is made it is dried. The paper mixture is prepared by grinding

the paper into the specific (patham). Pakkuvam paarthal is another art and it comes with practice and experience. The mixture is made like a paste, similar to chapathi flour mix consistence. Then it is cast in the mould and then taken out and dreid.

Finishing includes patching the spaces and giving the finished looks and enhancing features. Then is the painting and other gold embossing work.

How many pieces do you produce on daily basis or weekly basis?

About 250 to 300 dolls are made per week, in summer. They are sold at 8/- per piece by us, at its whole sale rate. But as it reaches the market it is sold for Rs. 20/- or Rs.25/-

What would you say is your signature in your dolls?

I use only Oil paint to get the vibrancies which is not achieved by water color. There are intricate designs painted on my dolls.

Sometimes the detailing and oil paints cost us more. Again, I also make sure that my dolls don't look like inverted triangles like many others. I make sure that the chin and cheeks are done properly as they are ones that make the face look more realistic.

How do you decide size of the dolls?

They come in 2 to 3 standard sizes. These size having evolved over ages, considering material usage and reasons like showcase height, portability etc.

Interview : Artist Mr. Ravichandran(Thalayaati Bommai maker)

How long have you been doing this profession?

My father was inspired by this art and was inspired enough to take it up as his passion and livelihood, though my grandfather was a farmer. This is the second generation but also the last generation in my family. My son is doing Poly Technique Diploma and I would prefer him to have a better future than what I have now.

What is the future of this art?

Till about 7 to 8 years back there were about 10 families in my village alone doing this art form. We were specialized in the Thanjavur rocking dolls. Though a small hamlet, my village was known for this art.

Now its just 2 families left, including mine, doing this profession. I don't see a future for this artwork, atleast in my village.

What makes you feel that this art form is not a good profession for your son (Younger Generation).

King Serfoji appreciated this art form. He encouraged it and hence this art form was flourishing. The best part was that we were respected, as was our art. Today, Thanjavur's traditional doll-making profession is waning. Who plays with clay these days? They have video games, cartoon characters, plastic guns and stuffed toys. The novelty of the thalai aatti bommai has worn off. And people like us are the sufferers.

Why do you feel that your passion for the art is gone?

Mould making is the most creative part. The more the demand, the more varieties we can make. Due to lack of interest people show toward these genuine and detailed crafted artwork, we reuse the old moulds to cast multiple models of the same doll. The template is same, our job is just to make the paper-mâché cast . Also now the demand for the dancing dolls, that are wrongly marketed as the Thanjavur dolls have made our market a little bad, so does the Plastic rocking dolls. The years that I did this artwork as passion are all gone. Now this is my profession, and just that.

Making of Plastic Dolls

Requirements:

The initial investment is little high and so is the cost of maintenance and electricity charge. This needs a room, few machines costing about 25000/- each, The moulds may cost about 75000/- for making and casting it and the material or dye and the paints.

Materials:

The moulds are made by hand in Madurai and also there are places in Mumbai where it is done with aid of machine, saving the time. Basically these are places that make moulds for electrical fittings. The dye materials are purchased from Trichy.

Production process:

The production unit consist of what he

calls the male piece – The blow machine and the female piece - the injection machine. The blow machine involves the process of air compression to make the doll whereas the injection unit does not. The machine is heated and the pieces are produced and finally finishing is done.

Precautions:

High amount of concentration is needed. The machines are capable of throwing the person away resulting in fatal damage if operated carelessly. Use of Blow machine is complicated and little unpredictable. Care must be taken to utilize the dye material. More than 5 pieces per Kg of the dye, if wasted is not an effective production.

Mr. Ramesh, Plastic doll maker



Blow Machine



HD Plastic



Injection Machine

Why is it that you don't paint the dolls?

We have already invested in the colours. Also, painting it would require more work requiring more number of workers, more investment and hence the price increases which will turn the whole project against its purpose to reach the crowd at a low cost.

The clay or paper mache dolls, apart from being a toy, which is just its secondary concern, are primarily made for display in people's houses. So they need better ornamentation and decoration in terms of colours and accessories. These plastic dolls are not intended to be treasured articles. So I believe this is sufficient for the amount of time spent with it, playing.

Mr.Ramesh, Plastic doll maker

How is the market for these plastic dolls?

Cheap rates attract people easily. As compared to 40 Rs/- Raja or Rani doll, which as a pair again raise to Rs 80/-, these plastic dolls are just Rs 10/-. So there are year round sales.

The market for plastic dolls is seasonal too, though they don't find the way to the Golu nor are related to any other festival. It is sold mostly during the April, May vacation time, when families bring the kids to come visit the Big temple. Sales increase tremendously during holidays as there is increase in crowd. And round the year, schools visit this spot as picnic area allowing year round sales.

Mr.Ranganaathan, Distributer



Dye(mould) for Plastic dolls

Interview: Mr. Ramesh & Mr. Ranganathan

How did you come into this business?

I was a government employee, but I knew that I would profit better and do well as a business man because I thought I had the business knack. While selecting the business that I wanted to do, all I considered was how long any business would last. I chose to do this Doll business because I was sure that as long as the Big temple existed, which definitely would go beyond my years of life on earth, this art will never die. People want a cheaper version of any art form. They want a long lasting and most durable work of art. Hence I decided to get into producing these Tanjore rocking dolls in plastic. Reusable plastic, cheaper material and more durable item are the

key plus points in my business. I can guarantee my product for years unlike the clay or plaster dolls that can break anytime.

Do you think there is beauty in these plastic dolls?

Who cares of beauty now; the ones who appreciate it will not be bothered to pay its price. I reach the common man who wants to gift a souvenir to his friend upon returning home; I help the mothers who want to get their little baby's dolls that need no monitoring and that which can last long; I want to reach the child who has come here for a picnic, with a very small pocket money in the purse;



Mr. S. Ramesh

(Business mind, Plastic Doll)

No 6 A, Tamil Nagar, 1st street Ext
medical College gate, Thanjavur -04

Ph: 919843983410



Mr. Ranganathan

(Salesperson and Distributer)

Ph: 919715634837

Can you tell about the machines used and the materials?

ENI material is used for making dye. I don't make the dye/mould. I get them made. I have 2 Blow machines. The big blow machine can make 30-40 gm pieces , any design. The other machine is for 20 gram weighing dolls or objects. Injection piece is for small piece production like switch, clips, electrical fitting or small parts of dolls. It takes 2- 3 minutes to make a single piece. We can make about 600 piece per day unlike the 250 units of clay and papermache made in a weeks time. So the production is fast.1 piece is fully completed in 3 minutes (after heated, production time). That is running time 1 min , cooling time 1 min and finishing time is 1 min. After that only the gold ornaments are painted. 2 more minutes

are needed to keep balance.

The material used is High Density (HD) Virgin plastic. It cost Rs 60 per Kg unlike the original plastic which is Rs 110/- per kg. Sometimes there is price fluctuation depending on the price of petrol. This will be reflected in the price in which I do the whole sale selling. I sell it for approximate Rs 4 – 4.50 /- per piece. At the temple gate it is sold for Rs8/- to Rs10/-

Who buys these dolls? Is there any sales strategy you use?

I started with electrical fittings, this is side business. I have dye worth 2 lakhs but only If I get a order of certain number of pieces, I do that doll. Cheitiyaar is regular doll, that is why I do that. In Vellankani they get candle, in Madurai they buy kungumam, so

Thanjavur is famous for this doll. So sales mainly happens in Tanjore temple gate. May be to a certain extent whole of Thanjavur. So its just easy to do the market study of which doll is selling good. This is a small scale cottage industry. But market analysis and knowledge is also very important. This is more of business tactics. There are some seasonal ones. Baby doll, elephant – these are other famous plastic dolls.

The foreigners prefer the clay but they also buy this just because it is easily portable, it rolls more, mostly because of lighter weight and also it looks different. But our main target is school children who come for picnics and small kids, as their play toy.

Government and Support Organizations

THANJAVUR PAPER ART PLATE WORKERS INDUSTRIAL COOPERATIVE SOCIETY

I am the member of the Thanjavur Art society for nearly 35 years. I was the director and president for few years. It has about 50-70 families enrolled with them now from places such as Kancheepuram, Panruti, Pondicherry, Cuddalore, Mayiladuthurai and Athiyamankottai. The society is about 40 to 50 years old. It is located on the first floor of Thanjavur Sangeetha Mahal. They have members from Mayavaram, Sirkalli, Panrutti, Thanjavur, Kadalur and these members place their dolls and other art works here in this society. This place acts as an exhibition centre for tourist to see collection of dolls from every place; at the same time they sell

our dolls and once all the dolls are sold we are asked to get back and get our payment. Thanjavur Paper art Plate Society does good business by selling the dolls for 25% profit and it distributes this profit to the artisans. Since activities are monitored by the society the price is reasonable so is the quality of work. The only disadvantage is that we deliver our products to them and it takes a very long time to get our payment for that.

The society faced lots of problem in the near past. There was a threat to remove it from its present location in the Palace complex. Our sales are good majorly because of its location inside the Palace campus. We had to battle to get back the permission to stay in the same building.

- Artist Mr. Selvam



Palace Museum

Geographical Indication Mark

G.I. – APPLICATION NUMBER 96

Applicant : Thanjavur Chamber of Commerce

Represented by: Mr. P. SANJAI GANDHI, Advocate & IPR Attorney, High Court of Madras

Geographical Indication : Thanjavur Doll

Geographical area of Production and

Map: Thanjavur is located at Latitude 10° 48' 0" N 10.8° and Longitude 79° 9' 0" E 79.15°

Class : 28

Type of goods : Handicrafts, Toys

Description of goods: Thanjavur rocking dolls are made both in crude and artistic modes. Of the former kind are the well-known Thanjavur rocking dolls. The

latter kind are the fine paper toys of realistic appearance of fruits, animals and human beings. The dolls are made of paper and provided with rounded bottoms of clay and the weight of the clay at the bottom makes them assume always an erect position.

Specification: The globally acclaimed Thanjavur dolls (Toys) are made with plaster of Paris, Wood pulp and the clay obtained from the banks of river Cauvery. The Thanjavur Dolls, which is produced on the basis of gravitational force used to be produced in pairs i.e. Raja and Rani.

Uniqueness:

Thanjavur Dolls are the unique creations of artisans, living in the

around Thanjavur incorporating the concept of the gravitational force, even before and in fact very earlier than the period of its discovery made by Sir Issac Newton

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Geographical Indication Registry

Guna complex, No.443/304, Anna Salai,

Teynampet, Chennai-6000 018

Phone: 044-4314293/94/95/96/97/98

Thanjavur Chamber of Commerce

Mr. R P Seenivaasan

33 Sivaji Nagar, Mempaalam,

Opposite Rani Paradise Theatre,

Near AKC Nursing home, Thanjavur

Ph: 919360575045, 919361575045

The GI recognition would ensure the authenticity of the dolls. A lot of people mistake the Chettiyar aachi pair as the thalaiyaatti bommai. From now on I suppose with the GI mark the dolls would refer rightly to the authentic raja-rani pair.

R Venkatesan,

Industrial co-operative officer

Thanjavur dolls inclusion in the GI Registry. This is a statutory recognition of the toy's nativity to Tanjore. But the artisans are un-aware of its significance. "In any case, how is this going to benefit artisans like me?" "We get no subsidies or loans, No pension, no insurance.

-Boopathi, Tanjore
Artisan

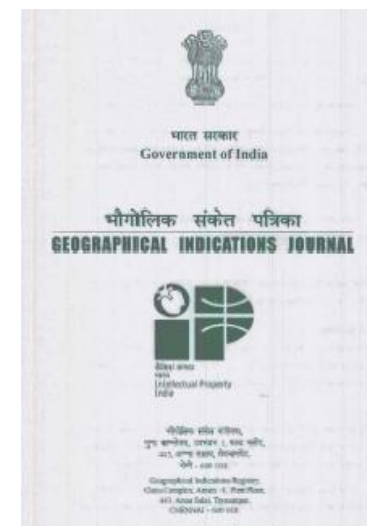
Each geographical reputation was carefully built up and painstakingly maintained by the masters of that region, combining the best of Nature and Man, traditionally handed over from one generation to the next for centuries.

Today we are moving towards an increasingly global economy where Regional specialties have been taken for granted.. Hence now, protection for the brand of the region is inevitable. GI mark confers legal protection to geographical indications preventing unauthorized use by others.

It boosted exports by providing legal protection and promotes economic prosperity of producers



Geographical Indication Registry
Chennai



SOUTH ZONE CULTURAL CENTRE

A South Zone Cultural Centre (SZCC), corresponding to the North, West and North-East zone cultural centres, was moved to Thanjavur after functioning initially from the town of Tiruvaiyaru.

It is the only one of its kind in South India and is dedicated to the promotion of fine arts, dance, drama, music, theatre and other arts by providing opportunities for the artists, documenting dying art forms and ensuring the participation of the youth in cultural activities.

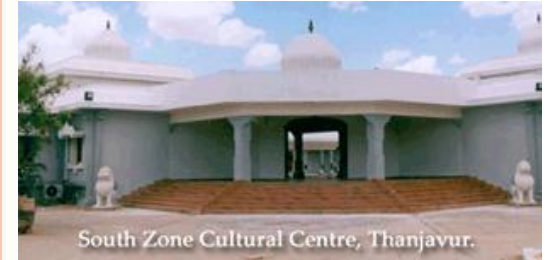
It organizes special programs and collaborative programs with the Lalit Kala Akademi, Sangeet Natak Akademi, Sahitya Akademi and National School of Drama. Thanjavur Doll artwork is most like a small family business. It is a small cottage industry. We have

art programs and classes conducted here, but they are mostly general and sometimes cater to Thanjavur painting skills. But so far we have no programs conducted for the promotion of this particular art, says the AO of South Zone Cultural Centre.

POOMBUGAR GOVERNMENT OUTLET

Dolls in various sizes and colors await customers and tourist at Poombugar outlet along with the other art and craft materials of Tanjore like the art plate and Thanjavur paintings.

Here again the seasonal sales of Golu dolls takes place in the form of a big exhibition. Dolls of various genre are displayed in one place and maximum of them being Tanjore dolls due to local rationality.



South Zone Cultural Centre



Poombugar Sales showroom

CONTACT INFORMATION:

South Zone Cultural Centre, Thanjavur

Ph: 04362-240072

Poombugar Kalai Kuudam,

Near railway station, Thanjavur

Interview: Mrs. Vasugi Selvam

How does Madhavi Kulu help promote this art?

We do organize annual training camps. These camps are to sharpen the skills of the artisans at the same time introduce this art form to new artisans to keep this art alive. These camps have been successful in generating interest among the younger generation, but definitely it is not enough. I trained 15 women last year, but only 3 come over to help me now. This interest should be monitored and nurtured to sustain it. Else it helps not.

What do you think of Government's support for this art?

Government does provide loans. For making dolls it lends 1 kasu vatti loan.

But the Loan given for materials only. Loan money directly sent to dealers for material getting the material ready for us to start the work. But I do not approve of this method. There are other areas like transport and salary for the helpers and well important, our food for survival. What do we do with just that big bulk of material with no one to help us around. This system is not welcomed happily by many yet the government does not seem to oblige to our request. Also the finished products are then kept in society for sales and it takes a long long time even about 6 months to receive our pay for those dolls. I found that during the rule of Chief minister MGR, we had better help.



Mrs. S.Vasugi Selvam

Head, Madhavi Makalir Kulu

Contact info:

Vadakku Vaasal, Vadakku Alangam,
192, Kodimaraththu muulai,
Kuthirai vandi veedu,
Thanjavur old bus stand

Market for the Dolls

REGULAR MARKET

These dolls are either for children to play with, or wonderful decorative objects. But chiefly they continue to be sold as tourist souvenirs to this day. Hence there is regular market for these dolls.

SALES SEASON

The idea that a family which has a Golu during Rama Navami has to buy a new doll every year works in my favour. Hence during these festivals the orders increase. It even sores to as high as orders for 500 pairs of Thanjavur bommai during the golu season. But then it lasts only for three months — August to September. The thematic Golu's and the Community Golu's work to our advantage as more people buy the dolls.

BUYERS

The dolls come in various sizes and price. The price of these dolls depends on the size of these dolls. There are dolls ranging from Rs.10/- to Rs.1000/-

There is sales of about 150 to 200 pieces every day, at an average.

Some of the customers for these toys may be from nearby villages and towns. But majorly its being sold for outsiders. People from North India Buy these dolls apart from the buyers during the Golu season. Foreigners prefer something exotic like the Thanjavur paintings, silk scarfs, zari items or leaf paintings. Not many among them buy Thanjavur dolls because these dolls are fragile and need to be packed well.



Saraswathi Mahal, Palace complex
Museum/Sales center



Government sales outlet
Poombugar Sales showroom



Big Temple Gate, Regular Market

EXPORT SALES:

These are exported through Saravana Stores to Singapore and Malaysia in large numbers. There are 40 families staying in Tiruparkundram, Madurai employed to do these art and craft works, mainly for export business.

SEOSANAL MARKET -PLATFORM SALES AND EXIBITIONS:

During the Navathiri season these dolls travel to the neighboring cities and towns and in some cases out of the state too.

They get sold in platform shops and also exhibitions organized at various places. It is a huge market and also a profitable one if the Artisans sell their own toys without intermediate vendor..

SALES OUTLETS

Thanjavur Handicraft Society,
1st floor, Sangeetha Mahal,
Tanjore Palace.

Kandiya Heritage

Mr. Sakthi Ganesh
No 97/618, Fast main street,
Opposite Palace Complex, Thanjavur
613001
Ph: 04362-231293, 919894587836

Poombugar Kalai Kuudam,
Near railway station,
Thanjavur

Print Magic,
No 2, First floor, Guru Complex, Rajappa
Nagar, Medical collidge Road
Ph: 04362-277308



Seasonal Market - Platform sale, Chennai



Antique shop, Thanjavur



Seasonal Market - Exhibition sale, Trichy

Interview: Mr. Karthikeyan

Which has charm, Dancing doll or rocking doll?

The rocking doll works on the concept of centre of gravity. It is kids favorite. The Dancing dolls attract elders and mostly bought for display purpose. No battery, no current yet they gently move on their own as if they are dancing in the winds.

Do you have any sales strategy?

I can say if the tourist will buy or just having a glance by even looking at them once. The ones who look at it in awe, as if not seen this before by this. The ones who like art and the ones who appreciate it, buy the big and better ones. No one knows the a history. They buy depending on the art and its background economic status of their family. So on seeing the people, I can now kind of

predict their personality and I make up stories according to that to help boost my sales. Also, Kaivinai porulukku mathippu kidaiyathu. That is why we hike the price and then reduce it. So the discount will help more sales for us.

Can you share some of those stories?

“Thirai kadal oodiyum thiraviyam thedu.”
எப்படிப்பட்ட செல்வந்தரானாலும், காலத்திற்கேற்ப இந்த பக்கம் அந்த பக்கம் சாய்ந்தாலும், சொல்லிலும் செயலிலும் நிலையாய் இருக்கவேண்டும்’ that is how much ever money or possessions you have, Do not turn to sides, be stable in what you are. money should not determine your action This is my favorite quote and this is one story, even I believe should have been the story behind the creation of the rocking dolls.



Mr. Kaarthikeyan,

Contact info:

Shop Keeper

Big temple gate, Thanjavur

Ph: 919360824644

Which doll sells in huge number?

There is nothing like one particular doll selling in huge numbers. The dancing dolls and the Chettiyaar dolls are equally popular.

If I have to be specific I can say that the chettiyaar doll has a very stable market. It is used in Golu display and hence it has its sales quite constant throughout the year.

The plastic dolls, which is actually the chettiyaar doll, because of its cheap price is also a good sell.

Are there any stories that you say about these Chettiyaar dolls?

Chettiyaar dolls are associated with lots of sentiment. They are Old couple who lived together without misunderstanding for about 300 years. These dolls are hence associated with bring peace and happiness in every family if kept in their homes.

Chettiyaars are believed to have donated huge amount for the construction of the big temple. These dolls are as a token of gratitude is another story.

A gundu Chettiar is believed to bring good fortune so it is fondly bought by traders.

The chettiyaars were the symbol for richness. Next to the royal house these guys were rich and had money to sit at home and enjoy happy living for atleast two three generations without having to toil. Their belly is a symbolism of that. These dolls were symbolically meaning prosperity in houses where it was kept and treasured..



The Buyers market, Mainly children and Women

Interview:

Being sold at the gate of Big Temple, do you see it having any religious restrictions?

No, there are no religious considerations. Infact in the varieties we tried, there was a Christian mukadu lady and a Christmas father doll in the thalaiyaati doll variety. The mukkadu lady was a big flop, not for any religious reasons but for the fact that the only parts of interest in these dolls were the detailing and ornamentation lacking that that doll looked too plain and unattractive. The Christmas father is a big hit and is in constant production now. The muslims do not buy idols. Though these are dolls, they relate it to idols and hence nothing is tried with them.

Golu dolls that mostly focuses the Hindus

Have pieces run out during sales?

In rare cases, yes. During the festival season when the tourist crowd is more, it does. But the atleast one or two families making these toys are local, mostly allowing a replacement with back up dolls.

Why do the sales of these dolls happen only at the temple gate and Palace and why not in bazaar?

These dolls are used in Golu display. But that is a seasonal market. So during that season, shops, bazaars, markets and even platform shops have these dolls for sale. Else these dolls being the souvenir of Thanjavur sells best at these tourist places.



Why are these dolls sold only in Traditional outlets and museums and not in common shops or globalised areas?

They don't find the way to the shops because the shops demand it to be sold for certain minimum price and that cost is not affordable for this doll.

Which season has good sales?

There is never a problem of no sales or low sales. But there are certain seasons the sales are comparatively more.

The foreign tourist mostly visit during the seasons September to January. November and December has lots of local visitors. During the Sabarimalai season the sales is lesser. During Golu season it is very high.

How do you pack the dolls when they have to be transported long distances?

This is a small scale industry. There is no special packaging system that we follow. We just wrap them with lots of paper, just that. These are paper dolls but not that easily breakable when dropped or moved. The parts being small are pretty compact.

Where do you Buy the dolls from?

Each of us here have link to one or few doll makers. Few doll making families live in Thanjavur, but mostly these dolls are made in other places of TamilNadu and we transport it here. The Dummy Horse dolls are made on Villupuram-Pondicherry highway; Dancing dolls in Kadalur and so on. Sometimes we get help from some distributors.



Analysis



These images show the dressing style of the dolls. This style called the 'Half Sari' is a traditional wear in Tamil Nadu. Though in the present day, not many are seen wearing it, these dolls help remind those days of past when this was the chief style of dressing by women of Thanjavur.

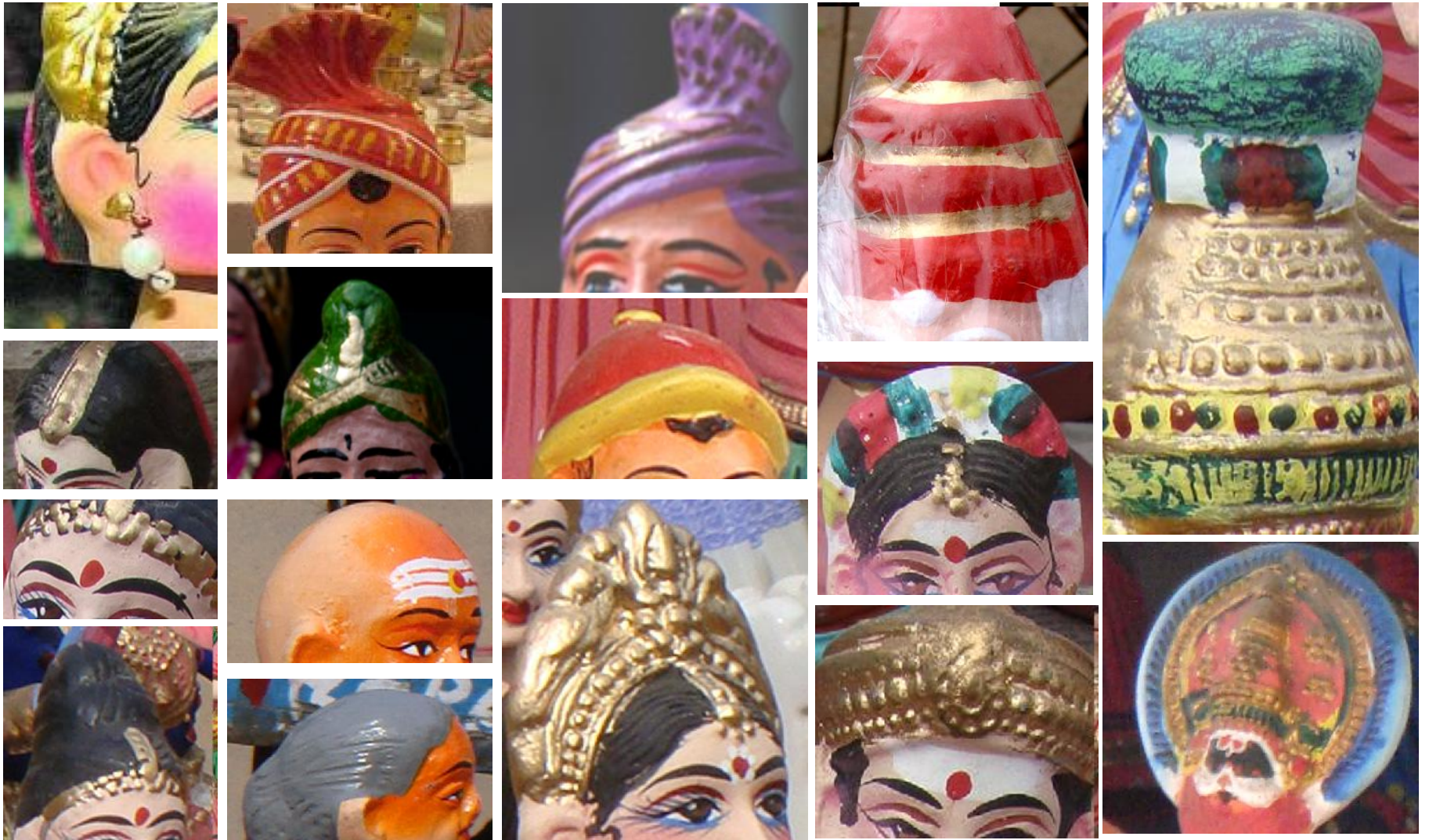
The dolls in the initial days may or may not have had the golden ornaments, as seen in the top images. But these ornaments were introduced to give it grander appearance.

These ornaments worn by the ladies are the imagination of the artisans who make each mould of these dancer dolls. The colours they chose and combinations that they use are different from each other. This is what gives us the varieties to choose from, though almost all dolls look similar.



These images show the different ornament worn by the dolls. If clearly observed they also indicate the common motifs that are being followed, with slight variations in each piece to give it the difference, variety and beauty.

The Different types of Head gears worn by the dolls





Here again these images show the variety in the style of coloring the skirts of these dolls. Some of them are very elaborately done and that adds to the beauty. Some are done in simple patterns.

The simple dancer dolls mostly seem to wear normal skirts with just few lines to mark the border. The other state dancer dolls seem to have the style of dress of those regions. Here again the some dolls are given golden borders making them look grander and sparkle in the shining sun.



These are dancing dolls that have been introduced in the recent past. The style of dressing mostly follow the dress that each dance form demands.

The colours used in most cases coincide with the colour combinations predominantly seen in the dance performances of these dance forms. This retains the identity and the feel of that particular dance style and the region from where it originated.



The dolls come in various sizes. There is no specific size. The size depends on the mould size that the artist who makes the dolls are comfortable working with. If necessity to be classified is a must, it can be combined under four or five sizes.

The dancing dolls have sizes ranging from about 15 centimeters to as big as a feet. Bigger the size of the doll, the balancing and maintaining equilibrium is very difficult. Smaller the size, the making of moulds for the hands and other small parts become complicated. These are the factors that decide the size of the dolls.



These images show the detailing of the female face. The regular dances or the small size dolls have simple eyes but the ones that are big have their eyes elaborated with eyelashes and decorated bindi. In addition to the bindi, in the punjabi doll, a vermillion mark in the parting of the hair just above the forehead is seen, symbolically indicating a married status.

Eyes and Lips are very carefully and beautifully done in the case of dancer dolls depicting the emotions of the dance form.



The Rocking dolls have very poor make. Their face lack the appeal that the dancers have. The detailing is not seen in any of those dolls. Though they represent a queen, not much of ornamentation is seen in them. The drop in demand for these dolls are evidently seen in the faces of these dolls.





These are the faces of the male counterpart of the Thanjavur dolls. As seen mustache is clearly one way of marking that. Though beard is not a common element to be sighted in and around Thanjavur, with the introduction of the Punjabi dolls, the entry of beard is also seen.

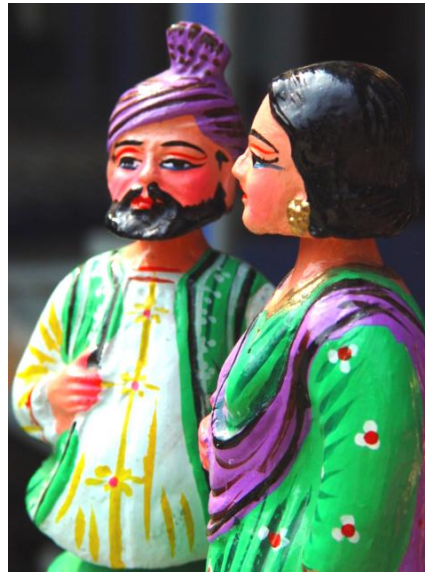


The stronger eyebrow, the absence of eyelashes are elements that differentiates male and female dolls. There are differences in the head gears also.

Tilaka is one element that is seen in all the elements. In the form of a ornament in the head or a bindi in case of women. Even men seem to have Tilaka on their forehead, may be applied for religious or spiritual reasons, or to honor a personage, event, or victory. They seem to be having either a red Tilaka or a black one. In some cases, beautifully decorated.



Influence of Tradition and Culture



Most of the dolls, apart from the dancer dolls, all come in pair. This sheds the importance of family and togetherness that existed in the Culture and Tradition of Thanjavur.

These dolls are just artwork to us. It might be either the culture or tradition that demands these dolls to be paired. These dolls shake their heads at the slightest breeze and nod their heads at each other. This is just a part of the experience we derive from the dolls. But it does communicate a bigger message that for people to live in harmony they need to adjust and get along with their partner by listening and nodding to each other.

May be, if this message was the basis in the creation of these dolls, the necessity that these dolls be paired goes without saying.

Influence of other Art forms



Dancing Dolls



Portrait Painting of the
queen of Thanjavur



Thanjavur Painting Gold embossing

These photographs clearly depict the influence of Thanjavur Painting on the Thanjavur dolls and vice versa. The moulds of all these dolls are more or less very similar. The difference and actual beauty of each doll depends on the detailing of the ornaments that these dolls wear. The gold embossing of the Thanjavur painting and the ornaments of the dolls share some common elements. Though the Thanjavur paintings have more complicated motifs and better appeal, it sure doth have influenced or have taken initiation from these dolls. The Maratha kings are have said to have influenced both the art forms, so no clear evidence exist on which art form was birthed first.

Controversies in the History and origin of these dolls

Whose face do you see in these Rocking dolls?

King Serfoji II, according to the Maratha history was the one who signed the treaty with British selling Thanjavur for some ransom and monthly pension. He was given the Thanjavur palace and the area around it, but mostly he was like a dummy king with no actual ruling powers. May be the dolls are symbolically representation that he can just shake about to the rules and orders of the British.

Name withheld under request,
Tamil University

Thanjavur king Raja Raja Cholan king was a very strong believer of Hindu God Shiva. He must be the one who introduced dolls because he celebrated Golu. I think even Thanjavur dolls must

have been created because of that only, during those times. So the artisans must have made his face as a token of gratitude.

Name withheld under request,
Tamil University

Thanjavur was the royal city of the Cholas, Nayaks and the Mahrattas. Chola kingdom was leading and patronizing literature, art, science and religion. King Serfoji II ascended the throne of Thanjavur in A.D. 1798 when British ruled most of India and Thanjavur had to be handed over to the British throne. Serfoji was deprived of all power, leaving him a mere titular head. Serfoji patronized music, dance and the fine arts. His rule in Thanjavur was the golden period before its eventual culmination at the hands of the British.

It left behind a rich legacy of art, music and architecture, the aroma of which still lingers within the city's structures.

Mr.Sakthi Ganesh
Kandiya art emporium

Cholas were not thalayaati Bommais. They respected their close friends and people. They took necessary advice from them. Karikal Cholan took advice from his uncle and escaped from Uraiyur. He made great history. Rajaraja Cholan took advice from Kunadavai made him emperor. Cholas respected their friends, royal relatives, commanders, soldiers and utmost the people. That's why their empire withstand for 450 years. Thanjavur dolls nothing to do with the Cholas.

– Ponniyin kathai
<http://ponniyinselfan.in>

Whose face do you see in these Rocking dolls?

The image of the king is there for publicity. His greatness is publicized through these dolls.

- Mrs. Kanaga, Mother

This is the King of Thanjavur. He was the one who promoted this art and that is why his image is found in the dolls, as token of appreciation for his motivation.

-Mr. PremKumar, Tourist

This doll was made during the times of the kings of Thanjavur. If any other persons image was cast it would be considered a insult to the king. The king might even slay/execute the person or the artist dead. So it should be his face

- Mrs. Sundari Krishnan

Being a souvenir this doll should have its roots of origin associated with Tanjore's history. May be because it was the Maratha kings who promoted this art and gave them a future that their face is replicated in the doll's image.

-Miss. Deepika, Tourist

Madurai

-I guess that this is the Chola Kings face. If I am not wrong I guess the Maratha kings wore a turban and not a crown unlike the Chola kings. Since these dolls have crowns painted so brilliantly, they must be Chola kings

-Mr. Ragunathan, Localite

This is definitely King Serfoji II. King Raja Raja Cholan did not have a mustach I think.

- Mr. Senthil, Localite

King and Queen Motif



[1]Historian believe that Thanjavur was captured by Vijayalaya Cholan (AD 846-880) from Perumpidugu Muttaraiyan. From then till Rajaraja Cholan, Thanjavur was flourishing. Sevvappa Nayak (AD 1549-1572), an erstwhile viceroy of the Vijayanager empire assumed independence and founded Thanjavur Nayaks dynasty lasting one hundred and twenty five years till Vijayaraghava - the last prince of the line - perished in a tragic but a heroic war with Chokkanatha of Madurai in 1662 AD. His General Alagiri ruled for another fourteen years. Sivaji the Great, defeated Alagiri and seized the throne in 1676 because of the dissensions in Nayaks. Mahrattas kings

for one hundred and seventy-nine year ruled with Thanjavur as the capital.

The English first interfered in 1749 AD with a view to the restoration of deposed King, Saiyaji. In 1758 AD French attacked but was retaken by British in 1773 AD.

Thanjavur became a protected state under the East India Company. In 1799 AD Thanjavur became a British principality and its ruler Sarafoji II was given the fort of Thanjavur and an area outside it. Sivaji, his successor died in 1855 AD without an heir and after him Thanjavur passed directly under British. Its acquisition never costing the British the life of a single soldier, in the same

manner as the Mahrattas had taken the country previously from the Nayaks. Tanjore danced between various rulers, but never had to sacrifice a single life during any transaction just like the rocking doll always resuming its position of stability.



Thanjavur Palace

[1] <http://www.tanjore.net/history.htm>

Interview: Dr. A. Selvaraj

Do you have any details about the origin of dancing dolls?

The performing arts and theatre of Thanjavur had a lot of influence on the art forms and craft works in Thanjavur. The bommai kuuthu naadagam was a very popular in the past. When it was about to reach extinction, to prevent it some dolls were made to replicate the chief characters of it. But merely making dolls didn't satisfy because the key factor of theatre was movement. The artisans wanted to give the doll that movement and thus ended up in dancing dolls. So the earliest dolls were the Kuravan Kurathi dolls. Also History talks about devadasis who were respected court dancers of the

past. They might have been the inspiration for the Dancing dolls. There is also details about the theatre form called Kuruvani dance that might have been a source of inspiration, again for the dancing dolls

How long is the life of these dolls according to you?

These artifacts are in every way an output or the product of either some occupation or some culture or tradition (சடங்கு சம்பரதாயம்) . Till an end comes to either those cultural habits and styles or those occupations, these art forms will never die.



Dr. A.Selvaraj, MA, PhD

Tamil University, Thanjavur

Ph: 919787852658

Thesis: தஞ்சை வட்டார மரபு
வழி கைவினை பொருட்கள்
(Craft work of Thanjavur region)

Guide: Dr.Shanthi, Folklore Dept

Do you have any insights on the origin of other dolls?

India has a longest and richest tradition in theatre going back to at least 5000 years. Koodiyattam is the oldest existing classical theatre form in the entire world. Koottu (Chakiar Koottu) is considered as the precursor of Koodiyattam. Koodiyattam was traditionally a part of the temple rituals and is normally performed in koothambalams or temple theatres that are decorated with exquisite carvings.

In Koodiyattam, there is a Vidooshaka (Royal clown) who humorously narrates the thematic development of the text. The joker doll might have had its origin from that.

The origin of all these dolls must definitely have its base in the History of Tanjore region or its neighboring towns. The more we dig the more details we can get. But the validity of the details on how these dolls might have originated is just a guess. Because it was failed to be documented we might not be able to trace the actual story of its creation that easily.

Do you think that creating a doll as extend effort to keep alive classical literature and folk art has succeeded?

The dolls are sometimes a visual representation models of the characters of some literature stories of the past. All people can't visualize when it's in the book. This visual medium is used to

give a form , a look and personality to these dolls. Now instead of imagining a form, these dolls give an idea of how the dolls might have looked like, in the past. Those ancient literature and ancient performing art are all modified over the years. The dolls should help us keep in mind the past and its glory. To a certain extent they do perform their job, but as

These dolls also undergo modifications as they travel along time, they have also become modern and mostly depict dances of today. It is sad that the old dolls like the gypsi dolls are no longer existing.

Interview: Mr. Sakthi Ganesh

What is your role in promoting this art form?

This shop, The Kandhiya heritage, is 50 years old. It was started by my father and now all of us, his children take care of it. This might not be a place for the below income or middle class person. Our Dolls being antique products might be a little expensive for them. But for anyone who knows to appreciate the art forms of our South India, especially Thanjavur and for the foreigners who come here hoping to see these art form with real and exact precision as in the past, this place serves like exhibition place as well as a sales counter of antique objects.

Its location of being situated just opposite the Palace site also aids to our

advantage in the direction of easy advertisement.

But not just here, we have another shop in Pondicherry and planning for more shops in such tourist places, to exhibit the intricacy and value of Indian traditional art forms to tourist and localities of these places.

What do you think of the Future of Thanjavur Dolls?

Thanjavur dolls are actually named so because of its unique production method in terms of material and process.

The raw materials used include light weight basic wood coated with saw dust on top along with kapae and painted with natural dye after it is dry.



Mr. Sakthi Ganesh Kandiyar

Kandiya Heritage
(Antique emporium),
No 97/618, Fast main street,
Opposite Palace Complex,
Thanjavur 613001
Ph: 04362-231293, 919894587836

But these dolls are not existing any more. They were probably dead atleast 70 or 80 years ago. The saddest part is, no artisan today does that craft any longer.

The concept of rocking doll was one that is unique and belongs to Thanjavur, so these thalayaati dolls of Thanjavur started being called Thanjavur dolls. They are Thanjavur Thalayaati dolls, not Thanjavur dolls. The actual term 'Tanjore doll', according to me refers to those wooden sculpted dolls and not the clay moulded dolls.

Why do you think that Thanjavur dolls become inexistent?

Probably these dolls originated the same time as the Thanjavur paintings, about 250 or 300 years ago, by Maratha Kings.

Huge sculpted dolls decorated the Palace during the rule of these kings keeping the production alive. But now the demand for these dolls is less unlike the Thanjavur paintings. This might be because of the size of these dolls. Reducing the size meant greater skill to sculpt these dolls with exact precision in the small size. This might be the reason for change of the materials for these dolls to make production process simpler. The materials and technique of the making of these dolls were passed over generation verbally and also this business ran down generations along their family line. Lesser demand would have slowed the production of this art work gradually and due to lack of it

being documented, with the death of the last artist, this art would have anyway died.



Do you see the influence of other art forms of Thanjavur, in the Thanjavur dolls?

Thanjavur painting's effect is seen unspeakably on the face (Artificial side facing) of the dolls and the style of dressing and Gold ornamentation. Same artisans worked on both art forms in the past as both the art forms basically originated from Thanjavur.

Where were the original Thanjavur dolls used?

Those dolls were mainly used in the temple procession of the Big temple's deities. These huge dolls were also displayed as art work in the palace of the King. Slowly they found their way into the homes of rich people. May be this might have been the starting point of the origination of the festival of Golu, which is mainly display of dolls. Majorly these the theme of these dolls centered on the images of temple deities, kings and other royals. In later days, the Indian Cinema, the Indipendance struggle all had its influence in the dolls. There are dolls of Baby artist Saroja, Mother India doll, Mahatma Gandiji doll, Dolls of British police men and so on.



*The last model of the actual Thanjavur doll,
Kandiya Heritage, Antique emporium,
Thanjavur*

Do you think the Chettiyaar and Chettichi dolls are actually the Thanjavur thalayaati Dolls?

The Chettiyaar and Chettichi dolls are basically from Karaikudi region of Tamil Nadu state but now have become a part of the Thanjavur collection mainly because of its dancing head which literally when translated is Thalayaati dolls.

The Big temple is said to have been built by the money and time donated by the people of various levels , according to their capabilities. It is said that the Chettiyaar families being so rich might have donated huge amounts next to the Royal family. Tracing that part of history might give us clues if this statement is tru or made up to increase its sales.

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What is your opinion on these dolls which according to you are not Thanjavur dolls?

How can I expect to see beauty and intricacy in these dolls when it is no longer a form of art. The people who are working on these dolls are merely doing it for their livelihood. It's their business or profession and nothing more than that.

They might not even be aware of the actual art. They are just first or second generation artists. This is the reason, that everything is just business oriented that I feel that plastic dolls are taking over now. These dolls are souvenir of Thanjavur and hence these dolls will be a good business as long as the big temple exist and is an important tourist location of India.



Promotional Strategies

WORLD HERITAGE SITE- BIG TEMPLE, THANJAVUR

The Peruvudaiyar Kovil or Brihadeeswarar Temple (Tamil: பெருவுடையார் கோவில், Rajarajeswaram, at Thanjavur is the world's first complete granite temple and a brilliant example of the major heights achieved by its patron RajaRaja Chola I. The temple is part of the UNESCO World Heritage Site "Great Living Chola Temples" so enjoying tourist attraction throughout the year. Since these dolls are souvenir of Thanjavur town, mainly sold at the temple gate, the sales is pretty constant as the tourist flow is there throughout the year.

-Salesman Karthikeyan,
Temple Gate shop



CIENEMA SONG THAT BOOSTED SALES

After the release of the movie Porkaalam, the sales of the dolls boosted for a while. That song infact did not say anything about the Thanjavur thalaiyaati bommai but just mentioned about dolls made of Thanjavur cavery river soil. But the very word thanjavur bommai probably must have made people think that there are special dolls in Thanjavur.

- Artist Balu



Song – 'Thanjavur maan yeduthu, Movie: Porkaalam

The Tamilnadu board has introduced poems on these dolls as a part of standard two curriculum. As the teachers are allowed to choose poems from the list of given poetry, schools in Thanjavur pick this poem as kids can relate to the doll. The other places mostly omit it from their portions.

உருட்டும் சட்டி யானை பார்
மிரட்டும் நல்ல மீசை பார்
தன்ஜாவுரு கடையிலே
தாத்தா வாங்கி தந்தாரு
தட்டிவிட்டா எழும்புதா
சுத்தி சுத்தி நடக்காது
இரண்டு காலும் இல்லையே
உருண்டு உருண்டு ஓடுமே
சாஞ்சு சாஞ்சு ஆடுமே
ஆனா ஓஞ்சு சாய்ந்து தூங்காதே

தன்ஜாவுரு பொம்மை
தட்டி விட்டால் நன்றாய்
தலையை தலையை ஆட்டி
தானே ஆடும் பொம்மை
சையா சையா என்று
நாட்டியங்கள் ஆடும்
சுத்தி சுத்தி ஆடும்,
ஜோரான பொம்மை
அத்தை வாங்கி தந்த
அழகான பொம்மை

Translation:

An elephant that's like rolling pot
A mustache that is scary
In the Thanjavur shop
My Granddad got it for me
Knock it down, does it raise?
It wont walk round and round
Does not have both the feet
It will roll and run away
It will dance on the sides
will never fall and sleep, even if tired

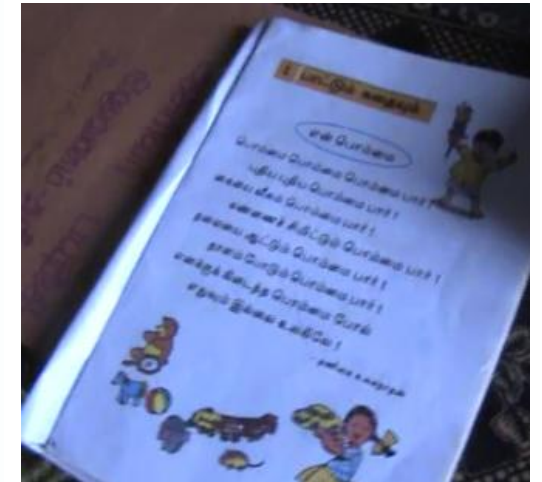
Thanjavur doll

Push it, beautifully
It will shake its head
It dances on its own
Saiyaa saiyya
It will dance
Will dance round and orund
Beautiful doll
My aunt gifted me
Beautiful doll



Il grade children

ARASAR SCHOOL, Thanjavur



Il grade book

Tamil Nadu curriculum

Changes through the years

There were lots of changes that happened along the travel of time. The dolls saw changes, based on the likes and dislike of the people. The first one being the exploration of the best suited material. Starting with coconut shell and natural binding agent, all the way to the Paper mache dolls with clay base to now plastic dolls.



Natural dye



Water color



Synthetic colors and Gloss paint



Paper mache Dolls faking effects of other materials

The greatest advantage of Paper Mache products were that it is light weight and after giving the final paint coat, it can fake to look like the material of ones choice. Natural dyes were replaced by synthetic colors for their brightness and glossiness.

Impact of Thanjavur painting started showing up on the ornamentation or detailing on the dolls, becoming the signature of the artist. Cheap and light weight plastic dolls that are unbreakable became kids choice.

Dolls also started being displayed in marriage celebrations and other cultural functions. Thanjavur well known for Classical music, started depicting themes of traditional music bands.

The raja Rani pair was followed by a new addition called the Minister/Chettiyaar doll. Dolls that spoke of royalty then spoke Hindu mythology with introduction of the Krishnar doll and then started speaking Christmas language with the creation of the 'Mukkadu' doll and Christmas father rocking dolls.



Punjabi Dancing Dolls



Music themed set Dolls

More varieties of dolls started showing up in the Dancer dolls, like Odisi dancer, Kathakali dancer, Barathanatyam dancer, the dummy horse dancing pair and the latest, the Punjabi couple.



Varieties of Dancer dolls

More set dolls like the park set , Family set, Music and dance set, cricket set, independence sets got introduced as new themes for Golu festival became a fashion

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‘Mukkadu’ doll and Christmas father rocking dolls.

Amid the array of these dolls, there suddenly appeared were neither folklore nor royal house. But expression of protest against the British regime and some to kindle the spirit of freedom in every Indian heart, during 1940's.

Dolls started going one step further by becoming a display in schools and started telling stories. More stories were depicted through these dolls.



Story telling Dolls



Religious Dolls



Family Theme Dolls

The New Generation: The Artisans Children

We help roll the mix and also help make the cast. We also can paint the base coat for the dress of these dolls.

-Kirthika & Karthika ,D/o Artist Balu

I can help out in every step but keep balance. That is the most difficult one. even my mother cannot do that.

-Appu , S/o Artist Balu

I see my father make these dolls everyday. I tried to do it a little different by clothing it and using glitters. I also know to melt wax and make decorative candles. I can make paper crackers. I love all these type of art and craft work. I love to do it as my hobby but I want to become a math teacher .

-Ramya, D/o Artist Balu

I love to see my grandfather work with these dolls. I try to observe and learn it from him. I don't want to keep doing the same dolls as I love to do new dolls every time. My grandmother teaches this art work in Magalir Sangam. I help her with the demonstration.

G S/o Artist Selvam



Ramya, Kirthiga, Kaarthiga, Appu

Complaints and Fears

As an artisans I feel the government hasn't done enough in terms of creating a safe market for our toys. I am a members of the society, but I am barely placed an order, hardly once in six months.

Thiruvila shops come up seasonally that supplied with dolls by the sangam. They will have stalls and will sell it through it.

The effort is fair enough but the complain is that, this does not guarantee good sales. The government will have to do something about that.

Anonymous,
Anonymous Artisan

Well its not that complex to set up a toy making unit and start business. But to make the traditional Tanjore dolls, you need experience. That comes with the refinement of your hands over years and experience. The eyes, the intricate detailing of its features and the balance in case of the rocking dolls needs practice. The ones who have done some minimal courses at government-sponsored training camps starts business immediately, but do they realize they compromise on the quality of the art work? They can barely make around 10 varieties of these dolls. Mostly women and kids are used for painting. Tanjore dolls are now done for business, no longer as Art work.

Artist.Mr. Selvam

My son assists me in my work. I would love it to be a family legacy, In fact, his son runs it these days. But this is not and cannot be their bread earning profession as it does not pay in profit. The market conditions are not good so how do I trust my future generation with this profession? Instead I want them to study and land up in cities to have a secure future

Artist Mr. Boopathy

We barely earn enough to provide a decent life to our family and this is the main reason a lot of us to drop out and move to other profession or take it up as seasonal job.

Artist. Ravichandran

4. Inference

From the primary research it is observed that neither the local people nor the artisans are clear about the origin of this art form. It may come to existence during King Raja Raja Cholan's rule, with its stories centering the Big Temple or might have been created during the reign of King Serfoji II.

But one fact is clear that its just for the sake of business that dolls from other local neighboring regions are sold in the name of Thanjavur Dancing doll. The actual Thanjavur Thalayaati Bommai being the age old Raja Rani pair which is now mostly nearing its extinction. It has also been observed that this artform will survive as long as Big temple exist.

Thanjavur Thalaiyaati bommai art, the souvenir of this place, will no doubt survive, but the families doing this art are dropping one by one due to poor response in the market in competence with other dolls that misuse its name. Newer families take up this craft work but to develop the necessary skills needed, its no longer a concern now. This art work is being done for livelihood, as a profession just with business motives. But the development of so many new varieties over these years are commendable making Thanjavur dolls, a group of various types of dolls made for a range of differing purposes.

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5. Future Possibilities

Appreciative changes have already taken place, like introduction of new varieties, the morel story telling dolls, the Golu set dolls etc to keep up the art of doll making alive. But somehow the traditional value of these dolls seem to have been getting lost somewhere in the process. That is they are seeming to get modern day by day. Some initiatives should be taken to preserve this ancient art in its actual form.

Pamphlets of the Thanjavur dolls with its history and details can be made available in the Big Temple to create awareness among local people as well as tourists.

The Internet has lots of details on the Navarathiri Golu dolls but information on the Thanjavur dancing dolls and Rocking dolls are limited. An updated version of all details and the types of dolls, sizes available and their history might be of some help.

These dolls are supposed to be replication of some member of royal family or representation of some other art form. These classical stories behind each doll if explored and if each doll can recite its story, every piece will become unique as against the monotonous cloned look they have today.

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CRAFT WORK IN SCHOOL:

COCONUT ROCKING DOLL

This was the earliest form of the actual Thanjavur doll. The base is a coconut shell sliced in half. Fill it with clay.

The top can be as simple as any light weight structure, even a paper cone, well sealed with the bottom half. Now this should act in the similar way like the Thanjavur dolls.



EGG ROCKING DOLL

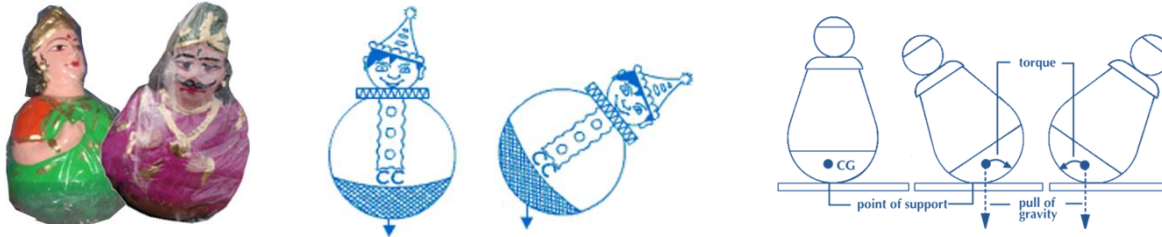
The egg has the natural form of the doll in itself. This form can be explored and rocking dolls can be made from it.

Little bit of the top portion of the egg shell is to be removed and the egg white has to be removed. Melted wax can be poured and allowed to solidify. Then exterior can be painted to face of king and queen.

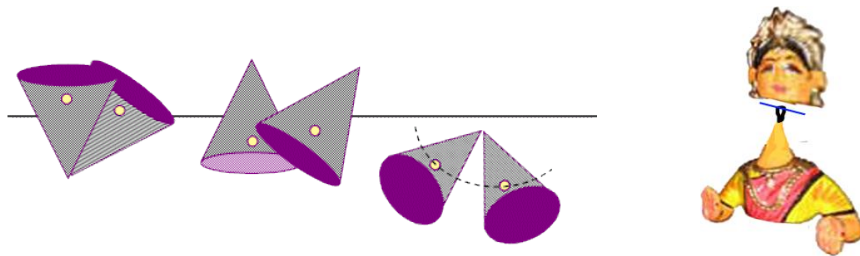


- These toys exhibit not just beauty but science. They can be added a part of the Educational curriculum of Tamil Nadu State Board Syllabus. These dolls can be used as models to explain simple laws of Physics.

CENTRE OF GRAVITY



The degree of stability in an object's position depends on how must its centre of gravity will be changed if it is moved.



The left cone is **unstable** since its center of gravity is lowered if the cone is tilted in any direction. The center cone is **stable** since work must be done to raise the center or gravity if the cone is to be tipped. The right cone is **neutral** since rolling the cone along the surface of the table does not raise or lower its center of gravity. careful balancing of the parts to result in their being moved simply by the wind.

The stability of balancing toys is built in by constructing them so that their center of gravity always remains below the pivot point. If the toys are tipped in any direction the center of gravity is raised. This results in gravity exerting a restoring force (actually a torque) which pulls it back towards an upright position.



6. Conclusion

It was a great project in all. I had chance to learn about an art form that has its birth place just about hours drive from my place. It was a nice learning experience as I got a feel of how the art might have originated from just the scrap to how it has changed and developed over years.

I am glad that I was able to use the chance, to learn to work with a video camera and editing software, though I was not so successful in making this a documentary video. With all this basic data collection, I wish I get further chance to work in this project and try to make a documentary film on this particular art work.

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THESIS

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