Marbles keep old childhood tradition alive in Hormozgan

Iranica Desk

Traditional and indigenous games in Iran have long been more than simple pastimes. They have formed an important part of the identity, collective memory, and social ties of generations. Across the country, these games have taken on the character of their local environment and culture. In the warm coastal province of Hormozgan Province, they became intertwined with maritime life, the familiar dirt lanes of neighborhoods, and the cool evening breeze blowing in from the Persian Gulf.

Among these games, marbles is one of the best-known and most fondly remembered pastimes shared across Iran. For generations, its simple rules and demand for precision brought excitement to old neighborhoods, public gathering places, and dirt alleys, particularly in the ports and islands of Hormozgan. Reviving and preserving such games offers a valuable way to maintain a sense of community and pass traditional elements of local culture on to younger generations, according to chtn.ir.

Before the rise of video games and smartphones, urban and rural streets and open spaces were filled with the noise and energy of children at play. In Hormozgan, the dirt lots and



● khabarfoori.com



● mehrnews.com

open areas around neighborhoods provided an ideal setting for these childhood competitions, where friendship, agility, concentration, and fairness were learned through play.

At the heart of these gatherings were small, colorful glass marbles. A flick of the thumb and forefinger sent the marbles rolling across the ground, while their gentle clicks and collisions created a distinctive soundscape. The game required neither a standardized playing field nor expensive equipment. A few marbles and a patch of level ground were enough to provide hours of inexpensive, healthy entertainment.

Archaeological findings suggest that games involving spherical pieces have existed for thousands of years in ancient civilizations. Numerous clay, stone, and bone pieces have been discovered at archaeological sites in Iran, Mesopotamia, and the Indus Valley, pointing to the deep historical roots of this type of pastime.

Along the southern coast and in the coastal areas of Hormozgan, children traditionally used smooth, rounded beach stones, fruit pits, or dried clay and mortar balls before industrially produced glass marbles became available. Later, the arrival of brightly colored glass marbles in local markets gave the game a new lease on life, turning it into a popular pastime enjoyed by successive generations.

Marbles can be played in several ways, including games involving holes or one-on-one target shooting. One of the most common and exciting variations involves targeting marbles inside a circle.

First, a straight line is drawn on the ground, and all players stand behind it. Each player shoots their marble forward. Unlike many other games, the player whose marble travels the farthest gets the first turn, with subsequent turns determined by the distance each marble has traveled.

A circle is then drawn around the original line, and each player places a predetermined number of marbles—such as one or two, depending on the agreement—inside it.

The first player begins from the point where their marble stopped during the previous stage. Using a flick of the thumb, they aim at the marbles inside the circle. If they succeed in knocking a marble outside the circle, they claim it and earn another shot as a reward for their skill.

If the shot misses or fails to knock any marble out of the circle, the turn passes to the second player—the one whose initial throw traveled the next-farthest distance. That player begins from the point where their own marble stopped.

The process continues until all the marbles have been knocked out of the circle. The player who has collected the largest number of marbles at the end is declared the winner.

More than a simple form of entertainment, marbles also served an educational and developmental purpose. On an individual level, the game helped children develop hand-eye coordination, estimate angles and distances, control the force of their shots, and improve concentration. Socially, it gave children practical experience in taking turns, respecting rules, judging fairly according to local measures such as hand spans and paces, and accepting both victory and defeat.

Its low cost also made the game accessible to everyone. Children from different backgrounds could sit side by side on the dirt, compete, and socialize without the barriers often associated with more expensive forms of entertainment.

Today, the spread of apartment living and the growing popularity of digital games have pushed many of these street-based pastimes into decline. Yet in many homes and neighborhoods across southern Iran and Hormozgan, small jars and containers filled with marbles can still be found on shelves and inside cupboards.

Those brightly colored glass balls are more than remnants of an old children's game. They evoke memories of childhood, uncomplicated gatherings, and a distinctive chapter in the cultural identity of Hormozgan — a tradition that once turned the simplest patch of dirt into a place for friendship, competition, and play.

Golabar emerges as new destination on Zanjan's tourism map

Iranica Desk

Golabar village in the town of Ijrud, Zanjan Province, is emerging as a destination for heritage and nature tourism, combining archaeological sites and traditional culture with recreational facilities developed around the Golabar Dam.

Located in a region where mountain landscapes give way to broad plains and river valleys, the village is known for its archaeological heritage, traditional livelihoods and natural attractions. The Golabar Dam and the tourism village established alongside it have added a new dimension to the area's appeal in recent years.

Ijrud has a long history that predates the political boundaries of modern Iran. Its location along ancient routes connecting Zanjan with other parts of the Iranian plateau made the area an important setting for the settlement of different communities and civilizations over the centuries.

Archaeological findings and field evidence from across Ijrud point to a longstanding pattern of settlement supported by water resources and fertile land. Historical evidence indicates that the area played an important role in agriculture, pastoralism and, at various periods, regional defense, while retaining elements of its historical identity through the centuries.

Among the town's historical sites, Golabar holds particular significance. Archaeological remains found at the Golabar



● IRNA



● wikipedia.org

historical site indicate that settlement in the area dates back to pre-Islamic periods. The availability of permanent water sources and fertile soil is believed to have contributed to the development of settled communities in the area.

Remains of residential structures, together with the village's location near the river, provide evidence of the importance of water and agricultural resources in the selection of the site for settlement. These archaeological remains have become an important part of the cultural heritage of Ijrud.

The area's heritage is also reflected in the traditional way of life of its residents. Agriculture and livestock farming remain important economic activities, while traditional crafts such as kilim weaving and Tanur-making continue to be practiced locally.

Golabar is also known for its archaeological record, with excavations and other evidence pointing to a long history of human settlement. Remains from different historical periods have been identified in and around the village, highlighting its significance as a site for archaeological and heritage research.

In recent years, however, Golabar Dam has become one of the main attractions drawing attention to the village. The dam serves as an important source of water for agriculture in the area and has created a large reservoir that has added a new dimension to the surrounding landscape.

A recreational and tourism village has been developed near the dam, offering visitors opportunities to enjoy the surrounding mountains and reservoir. Activities such as water-based recreation, recreational fishing and walking along the reservoir are among the attractions available to visitors.

Golabar also benefits from a four-season climate. Its relatively cool summers, green spring landscapes and colorful autumn scenery make the village suitable for visits throughout much of the year. Traditional houses standing alongside newer buildings add to the village's visual character, while surrounding orchards, natural landscapes and hiking routes provide additional attractions.

The local economy continues to rely primarily on agriculture and livestock farming. The region's fertile soil and access to water have created favorable conditions for growing crops such as wheat and barley, as well as a variety of fruits. Livestock farming is also an established economic activity, with locally produced animal products known in Ijrud.

Traditional crafts form another important part of Golabar's cultural identity. Tanur-making, the traditional production of clay ovens used for baking local bread, has been practiced in the village for generations. The craft represents both a household tradition and a form of tangible cultural heritage.

Kilim weaving is also practiced by women in Golabar households. Traditional patterns, colors and motifs inspired by nature and local culture are incorporated into handwoven kilims, which are regarded as among the area's traditional products and souvenirs.

Local crafts and cultural products could also provide a basis for handicraft festivals and local markets as tourism development plans for Ijrud continue to expand.

Golabar has gained a more prominent position on Zanjan's tourism map as provincial authorities have promoted new tourism routes, including the Golabar–Khuin–Kataleh Khor–Soltanieh route. Plans and initiatives related to tourism infrastructure, documentation of historical sites and promotion of local handicrafts are expected to further support the development of the area as a tourism destination.

For visitors, Golabar offers a combination of archaeological heritage, rural life and natural attractions. Exploring the village's historical remains, purchasing locally woven kilims, sampling bread baked in traditional ovens and visiting the reservoir are among the experiences available to travelers.

Golabar's emergence as a tourism destination is part of a broader effort to diversify and strengthen tourism in Zanjan Province, which combines archaeological heritage, historic monuments, natural landscapes and traditional culture.

Zanjan is home to a number of nationally and internationally significant attractions. The UNESCO-listed Soltaniyeh Dome, one of Iran's most important historical monuments, is among the province's best-known destinations and forms an important part of its cultural tourism potential. The province also offers natural attractions ranging from mountains, valleys and rivers to caves and rural landscapes.

The province's historical and cultural attractions are complemented by traditional handicrafts and local products. Zanjan is particularly known for crafts such as filigree work, knife-making and traditional textiles, while its local cuisine and rural traditions add to the province's cultural tourism appeal.