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A Survey of Children's and Young Adult Books in Iran: 2000-2008

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Introduction

This paper presents a study of children's and young adult books in Iran from 2000-2008. The books were published for the first time in Iran, in the Persian language.

Iran is a country located in the geographical territories of the Middle East and Southern Asia, whose civilization has a 6,000 year history, with 2,500 years recorded, and is the home of many literary masterpieces. Pooladi (2005) says that, "Children's and young adult books and literature in Iran do not have a long history, although historians believe that they have been around for a long time. Children literature as an independent literature dates from the Constitutional Revolution" Before that time, Iran has many legends, poems, epics, myth, folklore, and fables that children could enjoy, but these are not exclusively children's and young adult literature. Hejazi (1998) says that, "Oral and folklore literature in Iran are very rich but there should be more progress in printed literature". Ghezelayagh (2004) adds that, "evidence shows that many years ago, adults educated children, but not everyone could read books. Printed materials belonged to the upper classes of society. Most people and children only listened and retold oral literature" (Ghezelayagh, 2004).

In the past, the amount of children's literature was insignificant. Finally, adult authors addressed the needs of children. Iranian literary masterpieces such as Shahnameh, Ghaboosnameh, Kalileh va Dimne, Golestan, and Masnavi have messages and moral points that children could understand and enjoy. The Constitutional Revolution (1906), and before that the establishment of the printing Industry (1816) in Iran, the establishment of new schools instead of "Maktab" (old schools in Iran) gave children more attention and gradually created special literature for them.

At first, educational books were produced for teaching in new schools, and after a few years, Iranian children's and young adult authors such as Jabbar Baghcheban, (1885-1966), Abbas Yamini Sharif (1919-1989) and Samad Behrangi (1939-1968) became active. Finally, children's and young adult literature in Iran developed an independent identity. In the last thirty years, authors and publishers have created many literary materials for children and young adults in Iran. Researchers have a wide realm for studying these literary works.

What do we mean by children's and young adult books? These are books which are written for

readers up to 18 years old, for their pleasure, amusement, and learning. Hunt (1996) believes that "children's literature, disturbingly enough, can quite reasonably be defined as read by, especially suitable for, or especially satisfying for, members of groups currently identified as children". So Children's and young adult books are all of the written and printed works, which authors of this field have written for children and young adults. Children's and young adult books are "printed reading materials which have excellent quality and children accept and enjoy them; any considerable printed material for children; works written by expert authors" (Shoari Nezhad, 2005). It is said that children and young adult literature "is part of literature which is suitable for children and young adults in different age groups" (Pooladi, 2005).

We should know that "children, like adults, read to explore the world, to escape the confining present, to discover them, to become someone else. We can say then of literature for young readers that it differs from literature for adults in degree but not in kind. Children are not little adults. They are different from adults in experience, but not in species, or to put it differently, in degree but not in kind. Children seek pleasure from a story, but the sources of their pleasure are more limited. Since their experiences are more limited, children can not understand the same complexity of ideas" (Lukens, 2003). Because of this limitation, literature for children and young adult is simpler and more enjoyable. Books written for them must be interesting, easy to read, and aligned with their age and understanding.

A review of the literature shows that there is no comprehensive study on this subject in Iran.

Methodology

A comprehensive list of children's and young adult books published from 2000- 2008 in Iran is available from www.khaneketab.ir. Khane Ketab (Book House) is a department of Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance. It was found that 14,475 new children's and young adult books were published in Iran from 2000-2008. Systematic sampling was used to select 962 books for this study.

Table 1. Frequency of children's and Young Adults Printed Books (2000- 2008)

Row	Year	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	January	February	March
1	2000										74	101	150
2	2001	49	95	106	105	85	78	79	91	88	75	167	140
3	2002	76	168	181	89	172	137	204	150	168	160	172	223
4	2003	74	270	196	200	168	126	117	157	155	147	149	283
5	2004	64	223	227	245	155	147	166	194	157	133	110	246
6	2005	35	170	251	175	102	106	110	64	183	121	169	379
7	2006	443	167	173	168	147	99	121	130	123	161	182	442
8	2007	126	364	216	104	138	103	121	11	107	99	100	218
9	2008	76	281	170	160	140	136	117	117	104	54		14,475

Table 1 shows that 14,475 children's and young adult books have been printed during 2000-2008 for the first time in Persian language in Iran.

Findings

The sample was analyzed and the results shown in the following tables.

Table 2. Frequency of date of published books

Date of publishing		Valid percent	Cumulative percent
2000	23	2.4	2.4
2001	77	8	10.4
2002	132	13.7	24.1
2003	135	14	38.1
2004	139	14.4	52.6
2005	118	12.3	64.9
2006	123	12.8	77.7
2007	126	13.1	90.7
2008	89	9.3	100
	962	100	

The dates of publication for the sample are distributed somewhat evenly over the years studied.

Table 3. Books written in Persian vs. translations

Printed Books	Frequency	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Translated	329	34.2	34.2
Written	633	65.8	100
Total	962		

Table 3 shows that about two-thirds of the sample were originally written in Persian.

Table 4. Gender of author

Gender of author	Frequency	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Female	313	32.5	32.5
Male	520	54.1	86.6
Male and female writing together	13	4.1	90.7
No named author	116	9.3	100
Total	962	100	

Table 4 shows that slightly more than half of the sample had male authors, with about one-third having female authors.

Conclusion

The findings show that in the nine years being studied, the highest number children's and young adult books was published in 2004. Two-thirds were by Iranian authors and written in Persian. More than half of authors are male. A great deal of further research could be done on this sample and on the entire body of children's and young adult literature published during this period. Popular subjects and authors, as well as genres such as fiction, adventure, and so on, could be explored as part of further research.

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