

UDC 130.2

**TAKAM, HERALD OF NOWRUZ IN TALESCHAN OF GUILAN****A. Panahi  
F. Mohsini***Assistant professor,  
MA student,  
University of Guilan,  
Rasht, Iran*

---

**Summary.** Takamgardani is one of the celebrations and rituals to welcome Nowruz, which is performed to welcome New Year and renewal in nature. This imported show from Azerbaijan and especially Ardabil area has entered Talesh area and then has been performed palely in other areas. Since goat has an ancient root in Persian mythology and belief, some consider ancient history for it. Takam is male goat which is a musical puppet show in which Takamgardan, based on appropriate time and social situation, sings poetry in which religious roots, especially Shiism, are very tangible. Although in recent decades, the presence of this show group in villages and especially in the towns is little, in recent years it has been noticed by spiritual heritage lovers who have tried to keep and record these celebrations about which many articles have been written. In this paper, along with explaining Takamgardani celebration and exploring the symbolism of the show, the following questions are answered: What the relationship between Takam and the New Year? Can Takam be a symbol of the New Year? It can be said that as Nowruz is the celebration of renewal and fertility, and goat the symbol of rain and fertility, it can be the promise of spring. The present article aims to identify and examine the mythic and symbolic implications of Takamgardani in Talesh region, and using the way of collecting information deeply along with descriptive and analytical studies, by visiting libraries and resource documents and the data analysis are provided. As a result, it can be said that since the goat is the leader of the flock and the symbol of fertility for Iranians, this ritual took place to welcome Nowruz before other shows and promise of new life and fertility of nature.

**Keywords:** Guilan; Taleshan; Takam; Myth and Symbol.

---

---

**Introduction**

Taleshan includes parts of Iran and southern neighbor, Soviet Azerbaijan. Residents of the area have a rich culture and a common language. They, like other Iranians, believe Nowruz as a national celebration and celebrate it every year; and like other people, due to Nowruz, special events take place. These rites and ceremonies, though in recent decades, have faded, due to several reasons, or are dying, in the current years have been considered by spiritual heritage lovers and those who try to keep them up. One of these events is Takamgardani, which will be discussed in this article.

Takamgardani and Takamkhani rituals have ancient history in Iran. The scattering of this ceremony is seen in the North West, West, and Central and Northern Iran. In the area of Taleshan in Guilan, each year, Takamgardan people go to rural areas, and by singing poems on the Nowruz theme, which has Shiism faith, promise the coming of spring, and

on the eve of New Year, create happy atmosphere for people.

In this paper, by explaining Takamgardani event and exploring the symbolism of this show, the following questions are answered: what's the relationship between Takam and Nowruz? Can Takam be a symbol of Nowruz? The initial response may be, with regard to the fact that Nowruz celebration is a symbol of renewal and fertility of nature, and goat a symbol of rain and fertility, it can be a promise of spring.

The present article has been provided with the aim of identifying Takamgardani and examining the mythic and symbolic implications in Taleshan region, and using the information collection method, deeply, along with descriptive and analytical studies by visiting libraries and documentary resources and, then, data analysis.

**Appellation**

The word Takam is composed of two parts (Taka) and (M). Taka, in Turkish Language, means a robust goat which

always moves in front of the herd and leads the flock to pasture and certain geographic areas. M, is the first person singular possessive pronoun. Thus, Takam means (my male goat).

### Preparation of Takam

One of the characterizations of Iranian puppet is using light and portable the equipment [1, p. 94]; thus, the Takam doll is often made in a simple and portable form. Takam is a wooden statue like a goat which is about the size of two palms, the around of which is covered with pieces of cloth or wool, and a bell is hung from its neck. Then, with a piece of cloth, decorate it with colorful beads and feathers. [4, p. 113].

A little wood is attached to the goat's belly and gone through the hole of the wood on which the goat is placed. When the stick is moved up and down, goat starts dancing on the board. The sound of goat's legs and bell on board creates pleasant music with the sound of doll-movers. In some places in Guilan, two small mirrors are affixed in both sides, and call the «Takam mirror» (ibid).

### Members of Takamgardan

Performing groups of Takamgardani, regarding gender, are all men, and a woman accompanying them have not been reported so far. Regarding age, between them, all age groups, from young and middle-aged adults and adolescents have been observed. Number of people handling Takamgardani display is from one to three people. But, generally, it consists of three people. One Takamgardan or Takamchi, one singer, and another is responsible for collecting gifts. But, it has been found that the number was even less and only one person who could do all three tasks. It is believed to be due to differences in the distribution of gifts that as the number is fewer, they will get more gifts.

### Lyrics

Since Takamgardani is an imported customs specially from Azerbaijan and Ardabil region, the language of poetry is also the language huckster Takamgardan, which is Turkish. Takamgardans who had learnt the poetry orally from their elders changed the poetry according to time, place, and social context and addressee of

their lyrics. For example, if they entered into the master's house, they read poems addressing to the lord. If it was during religious occasions such as Ramadan, the religious dimension of poetry, especially Shiism, was dominant.

Some examples of Takamkhani poetry in Taleshan region:

In the village Navan, in the central foothills of Talesh, they read:

Takam takam ādāmā (Do not jump my goat) (Takam is the male goat, used in goat sacrificial ceremonies

qol qeçna qādāmā (Do not collect your hands and feet)

sābā birgon bāyrām gali (Nowruz is tomorrow or the day after tomorrow)

gedob čolda odāmā (We go to eat grass in the field) (It means if you do not eat today, you will eat tomorrow)

bāhār āmad. Bāhār āmad. xošāmad (Spring came, spring came, welcome)

sezen goniz, haftaneiz, āyoz, eiliz, mobā (Happy your day, your week, your month, and your year) [6, p. 405–406].

In Maryan village, in the Foothills of Central Talesh, the following poems are read:

takam takam ottāmā (Do not eat grass my goat)

qol, qeçoei qāttamā (Do not collect your hands and feet)

takam gedob meškina (my goa has gone to Meshkin) (A city called Meshkinshahr)

wada werob baiš gona (It has promised to five days)

galmade on baiš gona (It has not come to fifteen days) [6, p. 405]

or

spring came, spring came, welcome

spring came, spring came, welcome

Ali came with Zolfaqar, welcome (Ali is the first Imam of Shia Muslims, and Zolfaqar is his sword)

Ali came with Zolfaqar, welcome

The continuation of the poem in Turkish Language:

Happy your Nowruz Eve,

Happy your month, year, week, and day

Holy Jibrail brought a letter (Jibrail one of the angels of God which is responsible for giving the message from God to profits)

He gave it to holy Profit (The last profit, Mohammad (PBUH))

The profit raised his hands towards sky

Happy your Nowruz Eve

Happy your month, year, week, and day

Amir Almoumenin will sit on the throne (It means Ali will be Imam)

He will defeat Yazid (A corrupted person, who killed Imam Hossein, the son of Imam Ali, later on)

Sweet syrup will be running instead of water

Happy your Nowruz Eve

Happy your month, year, week, and day

Amir Almoumenin is the Sir of Ghanbar

He is on Doldol and Ghanbar is beside him

Happy your Nowruz Eve

Happy your month, year, week, and day. (Mostafa Khalatbari Limaki)

### Symbols

Mythologists believe, many rituals that modern humans do to emulate their ancestors are rooted in ancient mythology. Every year, they hold those rituals, but they even do not know the philosophy of these rituals, and they are even incapable of understanding them; but, every year, they try to preserve them, and believe that performing them will have a blessing in their life, and a lack of enforcement leads to punishment.

Although some mythologists say that myths are created around rituals to explain them [10, p. 240], with exact look, you can get the diverse issue; because rituals are practical language of myth, and by their repetition, actions of myths and mythical characters revive once again.

For a detailed understanding of the myths, understand the language of them is essentials. Language of myth is symbol, and sign of language symbol. Therefore, studies are needed to understand the symbols and rituals of Takam shows to have a better understanding of these rituals.

### Bells and Coins

Using bells and coins were due to making more noise and sound to take people out of their house to the alleys and doors. On the other hand, it creates a rhythm for the movement of Takam.

In another sense, it can be said that bells are instruments hanging on the neck of cattle which make sound as they move. Bell's sound is a sound of movement of herd, field, and life which occurs in the warm season. The presence of bells and their noise can be the symbol of the end of winter and moving herds [12]. On the oth-

er hand, the Christians believe the bells to be a sign to scare the devils and evil forces and make them escape. Of course, this case can be true, too; because in Ancient Iran, to remove the demon darkness (Solar and Lunar eclipse) and releasing light (moon and sun), people made sound.

Coins symbolize the provisions and blessings among Iranians. Hanging coins on Takam, in addition to making noise and rhythm, can be a symbol of blessing in the future.

### Mirror

Mirror is a symbol of reflecting the wishes and desires of the heart, the character or appearance of people and objects. The mirror has a high standing in the Persian beliefs including the use of a mirror as an object of a wedding table, which means «mirror of fortune». Therefore, here, the mirror symbolizes purity and simplicity of the New Year and the reflection of the beauty and virginity of the nature to resurrect.

### Goat

Just like the ram, male goat is a symbol of reproductive power, life force, libido and belief [9, p. 94]

### Horn

Horn is one of the symbols of Month in Ancient Iran (In ancient Iran, the moon which lit up the dark night and destroyed darkness evil had always been worshiped [7, p. 20]. Also, it was one of the Zoroastrian deities, and part of back of the moon is devoted to it [5, p. 320–323]. The Maltese Cross is another Moon symbol as well as deer, antelope, cows, peacock's eyes [7, p. 31–34]), especially the horn of mountain goat which was drawn as arc in the designs. Also, in Iran and Guilan myth, the moon was believed to be a symbol of man [3, p. 123], [2, p. 19]. Horn is a reminiscent of vitality, creation of an eternal life, and fertility [9, p. 2]. So, horn is a symbol of male and fertility.

### Feather

In many civilizations, feather is a sign of growing plants, flight, ascension, and sacrifice [9, p. 182–184]. Also, in many cases, it is a symbol of comfort and comfortable life. Using feather in Takam, regarding the

fact that goat does not have feather, can be a symbol of old sacrifice in the beginning of New Year for the fast and better growth of plants, accordingly, comfortable life and assurance of comfort in the New Year.

## Colours

Takams were generally made from colorful fabrics representing the colors of nature in spring. But, in this color composition, red is more pronounced.

## Red

Using warm colors, especially red, are sign of the warmth of the sun, the color of blood and animal life, modesty, and «Spiritual Love». In the construction of Takam, the red color is used to cover the body. Perhaps, it was because, in the old Azerbaijani, dress and lace on the bride's head were red, and they wanted Takam, like any wedding, to be a symbol of happiness and joy. It is also called Takam Tamashi [4, p. 112].

## Green

During the time rituals and ceremonies coincided with the merry feast, generally, Takamgardanan used the colors which had religious dimension, like green, in the color combinations.

In the semiotics of theatre, green is the color of life; it is a combination of knowledge and faith. And in religion, it is a symbol of faith, and, in holidays, an epitome of Doom [8, p. 106].

## Conclusion

Takamgardani is one of the puppet shows which were imported to Guilan province, particularly Taleshan region, which is performed to welcome Nowruz every year. Takamchies, most of all, come from Azerbaijan to Gilan, including Hashtpar, Anzali, and Rasht, to sing lyrics and performances to be the messengers of New Year.

This show which, due to the name of the doll, like a male goat, is called so, on the eve of New Year and fertility of land, has been a symbol of fertility and masculinity. Our ancestors, by performing these

rites and rituals in welcoming the New Year, every year, would promise the departure of bogey coldness and renewed life of nature and fertility to others, and ensured the renewal, fertility and new life.

In this paper, it is to describe Takamgardani rituals and examine the semiotics of this ritual which, as a result, it can be said that since the leading goat of the flock is a symbol of fertility for the Iranians, so, this ritual, to welcome Nowruz, was performed before other programs, and promised a new life and fertility of nature.

Although in recent years, due to different reasons, its importance and performance have decreased, the lovers of the cultural heritage of this land and have been trying for the revival of this ritual to leave cultural heritage for the future generation which roots in their identity.

## Bibliography

1. Beizaei Bahram: Play in Iran, 2012, Tehran, Enlightenment and women's studies.
2. Boshra, Muhammad, and Taher Taheri: Folk beliefs of the people of Guilan, 2007, Rasht, Farhange Ilia.
3. Hedayat, Sadegh: Neirangestan, 2536, Tehran, Iran.
4. Nazarzadeh, R.: Glossary of Iranian plays, 2012, Tehran, Afraz.
5. Pourdavoud, Ibrahim: Yashtha, Vol. 1, 1998, Tehran, Asatir.
6. Salimi Moayyed, Salim, Culture of the people of foothills of Central Talesh, Vol. 3, 1999, the General Administration of Cultural Heritage of Guilan.
7. Samadi, Mehrangiz: Moon in Iran, from the oldest times until the advent of Islam, 2004, Tehran, Elmi Farhangi publications.
8. Shahin, Shahnaz, Color symbolism in theater and literature in national rituals, 2004, № 18, Magazine of the Fine Arts.
9. Shovalieh, John, Alan Gerberan: Culture of Symbols, translated by S. Fazayeli, Vol. 2, 2006, Tehran, Jaihoon.
10. Vaheddoust, M.: scientific approaches to mythology, 2010, Tehran, Soroush.
11. <http://mkhalatbari.blogfa.com>.
12. [www.vmic.ir](http://www.vmic.ir).

© Panahi A., Mohsini F., 2014