

COMPARISON AND ANALYSIS OF ZAND AND QAJAR IRANIAN PAINTING WITH SHAH ZEYDHOLYSHRINE MURALS

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ABSTRACT

Art of Zand and Qajar periods has various values that have been less considered in Iranian art studies. The wall painting of Qajar era follows the visual tradition of murals in Safavid and Zand periods. The composition of Qajar era has been greatly influenced by the European art. The Zand art, and particularly Qajar art, can be regarded as an important step for passing through the traditional painting to a new style and development of an Iranian practice with a fusion of western painting traditions and achievements. The influence of western art in Iran became more prominent and affects the various aspects of culture and art, particularly the wall painting. Qajar era is the pinnacle of the wall painting, the art that is in the heart and soul of the people in the streets on the walls of the holyshrines, tombs, coffeehouses, and zurkhanehs. Once it is painted on the wall of a holyshrine, indicating the love and passion of the artist to the subject that is originated from the heart, and thus, what came out of heart could affect the heart of others, the soul of simple and ordinary people not those palace-dwellers who only search for the world and its pleasures. In this article, there has been an attempt that in addition to investigate the Zand and Qajar art, the murals of Shah Zeyd Holyshrine are also studied.

Keywords: Qajar, Zand, mural, holyshrine, painting

Introduction

Wall painting is one of the Iranian art branches, and the murals of Parthian and Sassanid periods (Khajeh Mountain in Sistan and Ivan Safavi in Susa) are their reminiscences. In Zand era, mural is changed along with painting on tiles and lithography toward the new approach of artists in this era. Although, there are no reminiscences left for painting on governmental and public buildings of Zand era in Shiraz, the capital of this dynasty, still the legacy of mural is remained in AbNeyeh, such as "Karim Khan Castle" and "Tekye-ye Hafttanan" (referred to "Agha Sadegh" the famous painter of that era), revealing the aspects of the establishment and development of murals. In the murals of Zand era, the considerable popularity of flower and bird paintings on the walls and ceilings of the public and religious buildings as well as homes can be seen.

Zand era painting that was also a continuation for western-influenced tradition of Safavid era moved to the Qajar era with minor changes. It can be said that "Qajar" tradition was indeed began since Karim Khan Zand era (Pakbaz 2006, p. 150). At Fath Ali Shah era, the conditions were appropriate for the renewal of court art. Fath Ali Shah Qajar gathered some of the most famous artists in the capital (Tehran), and appointed them to paint large-sized screens to be installed in the new palaces (Pakbaz 2006, p. 150). Composition and arrangement of the Qajar era art reveals the influences of European art. Perspective has a renaissance resemblance, especially Italian. The fabric motifs in the paintings are often influenced by the 18th century French art. Replication technique of natural texture is seen frequently in these works, representing the objective resemblance. This representation reaches to the maximum level in the portrait paintings (JalaliJafari 2003, p. 44). Qajar era is the pinnacle of wall painting in terms of quantity. These

murals are found in cities such as Tehran, Isfahan, Shiraz, Tabriz etc., with religious, lyrical, epic, and royal themes.

Art of Zand and Qajar era

Qajar art was not the direct continuation of art of the recent periods, Nader Shah Afshar and Zand dynasty. However, there is also no clear boundaries between painting style of Zand era and the first period of Qajar. Qajar art represents three characteristics: the increasing separation of Persian culture from the great Islamic tradition, as a result of the triumph of Shiism, and competition with Ottoman Empire, the increasing elements of popular art, and growing dependence on the impacts of western art. Although, the art of this era was in a lower level in terms of quality compared to the previous eras, but indicated a complete independent and clear characteristic and identity (Eskarchia, 2005, p 35).

In order to recognize the murals of Qajar era, first it is necessary to examine the paintings characteristics of this period. The composition and arrangement of Qajar art reveals the influences of European art. Perspective has a renaissance resemblance. The fabric motifs in the paintings are often influenced by the 18th century French art. Replication technique with natural texture is seen frequently in these works, representing the objective resemblance. This representation reaches to the maximum level in the portrait paintings (JalaliJafari 2003, p. 44).

The Qajar, and even Zand art can be considered as a major step for passing through the Iranian traditional painting to the new style, and development of an almost Iranian practice with a fusion of western painting traditions and achievements. In the formal approaches, Qajar art is based on illustrating human figures and faces with extreme decorations. The origin of some of these trends might be desire to the ancient Persian grandeur, recreation of Persian great history and culture, and introduction of Qajar power and glory. Adding some decorative elements to the figures, in particular various jewelry, and use of the motifs, western art techniques, dominance of warm colors, landscapes, trees and sky in the background, structural symmetry, and illustrating the majority of figures in the center of the paintings, little use of lighting and perspective, soft shadows in the faces, and unibrows were the characteristics of Qajar art (GoudarziDibaj, 2009 p. 138).

The influence of western art began in Iran since Safavid era and become more prominent In Zand and Qajar periods, affecting various aspects of culture and art, particularly the wall painting. The influence of the west in the court lead the Shah and others to become familiar with a painting style not seen in the Iranian miniatures, and due to their self-love instinct, they were interested that natural images and faces are painted and remembered. Hence, the theme of Persian art is changed, so the imitation of nature become important, and with the influences of western art, the naturalistic characteristics can be seen in Iranian art. The characteristics such as the use of perspective, lighting, portraits, nature painting. The Qajar architecture and art is the influence and continuation of Zand era. The characteristics of murals in Zand era is the use of seven-color tiles painted with flowers and birds, lily flowers, and figures of soldiers, and servants, and the samples can be found abundantly in the buildings of this period. Also, the rooms that were emblazoned on chalk with motifs of gilt flowers and plants. The impact of Zand architecture and the associated arts in the early Qajar period is very noticeable and that was continued in Qajar art, particularly the painting on wood that become common in the ceilings in Qajar era, which is quite different from murals in Zand era, because in Zand era, the ceilings are usually designed with muqarnas and stucco with motifs of flowers and birds and Khitan and arabesque designs, while Qajar art is influenced by the western art. In the wall decorations, in the Qajar period, the mirror work was more common, and various styles of mirror work can be seen (Sharifzadeh, 2002 p. 180).

In contrast to the murals in other countries, where the figures of humans, animals and birds have been drawn on the temples and churches and castles, the Iranian muralists, except for limited cases, have been inspired by nature, flowers, and leaves, and follow the Iranian motifs and designs, and by composing the Khitan and arabesque designs, and flowers, leaves, and bergamot, and decorative lines, the beautiful

paintings have been drawn. This choice along with the perfection of portraits and human figures, tashir, house decorating in the manuscripts by Islamic artists can be an evidence that the artist with arrangement of interior decorations of the building, has attempted to create a spiritual space and inducing the space to the viewer. As can be seen, the mural art along with decorations of the building with stucco and tile-work gradually finds a significant contribution in coverage of interior spaces. These works, until Qajar era, using the spiritual, physical, oil and semi-oil colors "tempera", gold foil or gold plating, have greatly effective in the formation of decoration and geometric lines, Khitan and arabesque designs, flowers, bushes, as well astashir (Inanloo, Sadr Sadat, 1993, p. 79).

Qajar era murals

In contrast to the official court painting of the Qajar era, the murals have other characteristics. These works, in contrast to the miniatures in the books, has large dimensions, with no restrictions for pages and canvases, because they have been used for decorations of interior and outer spaces of homes, gardens, palaces, bath houses, zurkhanehs, saqakhanehs, hussainias, passages, and gates.

The wall painting motifs follow the tradition of miniatures and carpets with the same curvy arabesque designs of flowers, birds, horses, riders, hunts, feasts and wars. The themes are often taken from stories of Shahnameh, romantic poems, stories of the Prophets and Imams. As a result, this art in the form and content follow the previous instructions. In this art, the colors are cheerful, lively, and etchings are free.

The colors in these works, as have been mentioned, are usually the red spectrums, in particular the red-purple, ocher, black, patina and emerald green, and facultative compositions, the mix of brown, red, and jade, and in general, the vibrant and fresh colors, which are more pleasant to the eyes. Among the Qajar wall paintings, the religious murals can be mentioned that are painted in the spiritual locations where the materials are not important. Decorating the religious places such as mosques is the expression of spiritual universe. Thus, the monuments such as holy shrines where each design is originated from the soul of the author, indicating the purpose of the genesis, and eternity of God.

Murals of Shah Zeyd Holyshrine, Isfahan

This monument is located in the Hasht Behesht Street, Isfahan. The tomb is located in the oldest easternmost neighborhood Traveskan, Isfahan, and determines two-year construction period of this monument. The year of 994 AD, engraved on the tomb door, and the year of 1097 AD, engraved on the stone tablet, indicating the repairs of monument in the Soleiman Safavidera. It is concluded that the building is constructed in the Shah Mohammed Khodabandeh period, and based on the inscriptions engraved on the door of tombs as follows: "On the holyshrine of Shah Zayd Ibn Ali ibn Al-Hussein Sahifi Johari, 994" from descendants of Imam Hussein, it is repaired in Shah Solomon period.

There are very beautiful murals inside the tomb, though they have been repaired. The murals represent the entire story of Karbala, so even the incidents, Sham-e-Ghariban, Yazid's court, have also been illustrated. Such comprehensiveness in paintings of Battle of Karbala are rarely found elsewhere. This indicates the art of painters and sympathy of the supporters. Shah Zeyd tomb is located in the monument, and all the surrounding walls are painted. The murals are located in a decent size around the monument, and giving it a new life, enjoying a narrative painting style (Pakbaz, 2000 p. 586).

The murals show the scene of the day of event. A part of the mural shows the scene of Hazrat Ali Akbar, Ghasem, and Hazrat Abolfazl battles with the foes. The beautiful faces with bright eyes and glowing halos around their heads. Metal helmets with or without peacock feathers, most of the clothes are green, the specific color of Imams, while riding their horses with swords in the hands toward the enemies.

Although, illustrating the figures of humans was condemned and prohibited in Islam, but the painters were diligent in drawing the religious issues. The motifs included the religious issues, such as Karbala,

praise of believers, and resurrection, what is noticeable in these motifs was the halos around the heads of figures and the glow of faces covering them as a veil. Those were the figures of Islamic Imams whose the painter was not permitted to illustrate, but at the time of representing the young religious heroes, prior to the divine mission, the halos around the heads and faces were eliminated.

In the Shah Zeyd Holyshrine, the entire scene of Karbala, the war, martyrdom of Imam and companions, victories, various companions of Imam, as many of them are not from his family, such as Hor and HabibbnMadhahir, have been illustrated. Here, the painting has a narrative quality and the viewer would understand the entire event by looking at the painting. Here, Sham-e-Ghariban, captives, Yazid's court have been painted with all details, so the reality is more obvious, the companions of Imam Hussein have been fallen with numerous arrows in the bodies, or dying in the arms of others. The heads of captives on top of the spears, and on the ground in Yazid's court is quite impressive. By looking at these images, a great sorrow dominated the viewer. The name of figures are written next to the bodies that help the viewers for better understanding of images. Shah Zeyd Holyshrine murals elegantly narrated a perfect example of a story, and that is an expressive narrative painting.

Conclusion

In Zand and Qajar periods, the paintings and other visual arts found a specific appearance on the walls and canvases. In the Qajar murals, a success was achieved that is considered as a part of visual tradition. The murals contained various visuals and numerous themes, a movement that began since Safavid era and brought art into the different layers of society, and entered the ordinary people with their own tastes and preferences into the art scene.

The mural art of the holyshrines, in contrast to the palaces and aristocratic houses, was raised from the soul of ordinary people, showing the hidden desires in their hearts that is totally in contrast to the governmental art. It establishes a unique association with ordinary people, and some artists among the people would illustrate the pains, and the paintings are quite appropriate for the use of buildings as the place for praying and honoring the one who is buried there. These themes are raised from the heart of people in the street.

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