

# **The Study of the Iconographic Features in Lithographic Version One Thousand and One Nights of the Qajar Period**

## **Abstract**

The art of the Qajar period, by using the previous traditions and looking at Western naturalism and the literature of the rulers of this period, has introduced new features into the field of assembly ornamentations. These features include courtship, landscaping and perspective, and court iconography. This method became a new style in painting with these components. Its approaches were based on the understanding of Qajar aesthetics. After the arrival of the printing industry, lithographic illustrations continued in line with court iconography. One of the works that was copied in lithography during this period is the book *One Thousand and One Nights*; containing a collection of lyrical, epic, and folk themes, the book is closely related to the culture and worldview of mythology and lyrical literature. The issue raised here is the extent to which the re-creation of this printed version and its iconography of painting and art common in the Qajar period. This research has been done by descriptive and analytical method and relying on library data. The findings of the research indicate that the lithographic version of *One Thousand and One Nights* by Mirza Aligholi Khoei, with the revelation between traditional experiences and new approaches, has presented a new method in the Qajar Assembly.

## **Research aims:**

1. A study of the role and influence of court paintings in the lithographic version of the *Thousand and One Nights* of the Qajar period
1. Analysis of iconographic features in the lithographic version of *One Thousand and One Nights*

## **Research questions:**

1. To what extent has Aliqoli Khoei, the author of the *Thousand and One Nights* of the Qajar period, been influenced by court paintings?
2. What are the characteristics of the iconography in the lithographic version of the *One Thousand and One Nights* of the Qajar Period by Mirza Aligholi Khoei?

**Keywords:** lithographic version of *One Thousand and One Nights*, Mirza Aligholi Khoei, Qajar Period, Iconography

## Introduction

The history of art and consideration to art in the history of Iran dates back to ancient times. However, throughout the history of Iran and due to political, economic and cultural developments, art has gone through ups and downs and has appeared in a new form and color in each period. Art in Iran is in fact the art of artists' thinking and insight to instill literary, religious and historical meanings. The art of painting flourished in the Qajar court with the support of the king and courtiers, and artists illustrated literary genres such as epic and lyrical, religious stories with new approaches. One of these methods was the tendency towards the art of lithography, which was introduced to Iran by the Crown Prince Fath Ali Shah, Abbas Mirza, due to the Qajar government's relations with the western countries, and was quickly welcomed by the public since its style is close to Iranian calligraphy and painting. Inspired by the environment and society, court painters depicted scenes and events and depicted the traditional habits of the people of their time. Lithographic paintings spanned a wide range; in addition to representing the shape and manner of men's and women's clothing and parties, these works recount the daily life of courtiers with the common customs and traditions of government officials. At times, the paintings include myths and legends such as the occurrence of wars and religious themes, and in others the lives of the Imams and the description of their sufferings and manners are depicted. Thus, the art of the Qajar period was the middle of the traditional and modern world because on the one hand it was in harmony with traditional culture and on the other hand it looked at modern foreign achievements. Qajar lithography, alike other branches of art, has not been unaffected by these developments. Mirza Aligholi Khoei, an artist of the Qajar period, was able to adapt his skills to the changes of the industrial society by using the new approaches of this era.

No comprehensive research has been done on this subject, but articles on the subject of court iconography in the Qajar period have been written so far. A study entitled "A Comparative Study of the Representation of Women in the School of Isfahan in the Safavid Period with the Qajar Period Court Painting" has been written by Neda Toolai and Mah Monir Shirazi and has been published in the Quarterly Journal of Visual Arts (Naqshmayeh) (2014). The authors of this study believe that in the court iconography of the Qajar period, images of women have gradually distanced themselves from features such as diffidence and modesty and has become a decoration or tool for men's pleasure (Tulaei, Shirazi, 2014: 55). Another article entitled "The Impact of Politics on the Art of Court Sculpture in the Qajar Period" by Amir Hossein Chitsazan and Mohammad Rahimi has been written and published in 2012 in the Journal of Iranian Studies. The authors of this study on the iconography of the Qajar period believe that various social and political developments of the Qajar period have created a new context in the field of Iranian art. They believe that the Qajar kings had an innovative role in using illustration to spread court beliefs and rituals. The attempt of Qajar kings to prove the legitimacy of their rule and justify the religious aspect is one of the reasons for the emergence of Qajar iconography (Chitsazazan, Rahimi, 2012: 86). There is no mention of Mirza Aligholi Khoi in these works. This research is a descriptive and analytical method and relying on library data in order to provide an analysis of the social and political situation of the Qajar era, to determine the structural commonalities between court icons and lithographs of the Thousand and One Nights. In this regard, to identify and analyze the images of the book One Thousand and One Nights, the information of the article is in the form of a library and the collection of materials and analysis and interpretation of visual elements is based on the equivalent of images. The sources used in this study are based on information provided by foreign researchers. Ulrich Marzef in the book of fiction illustration in Persian lithography books (2013) has explained in detail about the artists of this style and Javad Alim Mohammadi Ardakani in the book Synchronization of Qajar literature and painting (2015) described the desirable literary methods of the Qajar era and examines the effects of literary components and industries on the period of literary return in the style of court iconography.

## **Conclusion**

One Thousand and One Nights is closely related to the social conditions of the Qajar period due to the continuity of the cultural and lyrical spirit and court characteristics. The political and social situation in Iran during the Qajar period led to the growth and taste of court art. The artistic system of the Qajar kings, in line with their Western taste, led to the growth and development of new techniques in the field of book decoration. The court iconography style due to its aesthetic, semantic and formal features of the Qajar period became a suitable basis for the art of Qajar artists. The connection between literature and art, which has long been common in Iranian culture and art, appears in an innovative means in the book *Arai*. Mirza Aligholi Khoei, the artist of the book *One Thousand and One Nights*, inspired by the style and context of court iconography, used the principles of composition of this style in his works and in addition to observing visual criteria, emotional states and exploration in the human psyche expressed the personality of this characters in the book. The decorative arrays of the court iconography are in accordance with the artist's taste in the book of lithography of *One Thousand and One Nights* in black and white and with intersecting and balanced hatches. Thus, the book *One Thousand and One Nights* of the Qajar Period can be considered as one of the finest examples of lithography in Iran, which was inspired by the style of Qajar period court iconography in accordance with the common sensitivities in society and the court of that era. Mirza Aligholi Khoei introduces the lifestyle of the man of that time in a simpler way, and the more court art is out of the reach of the people, the more his works express the spirit of his time. The features of the iconography are evident in the representation of court spaces, and Khoi compensates the elements and color well with the element of cargo line, and hatching, intersecting lines and cut lines created the grounds for design tendency in later years, thus technical difficulty and lack of weakness. Color orthodoxy was removed in Khoi's works. Conversely, the works of Mirza Aligholi Khoei paved the way for the creation of a new visual tendency in the second half of the Qajar rule and became popular in Miami. Also, from a thematic point of view, changes according to the social and political conditions of Qajar in the art of this period were evident. Although in the early stages of printing, *Satgi* was influenced by the old tradition of Iranian painting and painting, but with the introduction of folk themes and the emergence of everyday themes was noticed by people.

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