

An Explanation on the Manufacture System of Safavid Textiles (Artists, Craftsmen, Production Centers)

Abstract

One of the most significant artistic activities in Iran is the production of textiles, which flourished during the Safavid period. This art, like other arts, was influenced by many factors including the policies of the rulers and monarchs. Innovation and development in the production of textiles is one of the characteristics of this period that the course of its production and prosperity in Iranian society and art should be examined. Studying and inspecting the different angles of the Safavid textile production system has an important role in recognizing the status of this industry in rejecting this historical period. The present research is accomplished qualitatively (descriptive-analytical). The theoretical framework of the research is based on the approach of Howard Becker's art worlds. The research findings show that the social formation of Safavid Iran was based on providing services (political, social) and prominent designers and weavers worked in workshops that were directly supported by courtiers. Economic and political stability and the constant support of courtiers aided the textile production system to introduce a new generation of artists and textile designers to create eye-catching textiles at this time due to incentive systems and financial rewards.

Research aims:

1. Recognition of the artistic image and the guild system of designers and weavers in creating textile productions in Safavid art.
2. Examining the factors of production in introducing Safavid court textiles as works of art.

Research questions:

1. Were the textiles of the Safavid era considered as a work of art?
2. What are the factors that contribute to the Safavid textile production system?

Keywords: Safavid era, textiles, production system, Howard Becker

Introduction

Various arts in each period are affected by the conditions of society. The art of textiles is one of the arts that is directly related to the daily lives of people in society. This applied art or industry experienced a stage of prosperity during the Safavid period (1135-907 AH). Explaining the nature of this art through the application of sociological theories can be considered. One of these theories is Howard Becker's theory, a pristine contemporary sociologist, that in his book: "Worlds of Art" argues that the arts are of within of what he calls "art worlds" which can be either small or large. The system of production in Howard Becker's art world has influenced sociologists' attitudes toward the sociology of art over the past century, as well as the modified cultural diamond of Victoria de Alexander. "Works of art are shaped not merely by the people we know as artists, but by the whole system that produces them." "Every pattern of access is a reflection of the functions of a kind of social system and becomes part of the pattern of constraints and possibilities that shape the art produced" (Becker, 1982: 95). According to the pristine theory; rulers, courtiers, merchants, artists, and weavers in the Safavid rule, as part of the process of creating art, flourished in most branches of the textile art. The political, economic, and social security created during this period led to the expansion and prosperity of many artistic disciplines, including weaving. To better understand the creation of art, we need to think about all the activities that take place so that each work of art emerges in its final form. One has to come up with the idea of producing textiles and the patterns used in it, the other has to implement the idea and execute the design and role on the textiles by making a knitting machine for the desired fabric with the help of people who specialize in this field. The process of conceiving an idea, such as the production of quality textiles in the Safavid period and its scoring, is called the production of textiles in that period, as many tourists have stated. In this research, the process of formation and prosperity of textiles in Safavid society has been explored in order to obtain a proper answer in order to understand and receive art in that society.

It is worth mentioning that in the process of sociological studies of Iranian art in the Safavid period, no research has been done on the art and quality of textiles of that period from the perspective of the production system, which was highly admired by tourists, foreign ambassadors and merchants.

In the field of art, there are articles and dissertations on the subject of textiles of the Safavid period; Among them is a book published by Mecca (2015), an expert in textiles and Islamic arts at the Cleveland Museum. This book has more than 500 pictures, mostly in color, which provides unique information about the history and culture of Iran. In a part of his book, he has dealt with the textiles of the Safavid era. Miniva and Vikowski (2009) in an article entitled "State promotion of consumerism in Safavid Iran: Shah Abbas I and royal silk textiles" states that Shah Abbas I encouraged the government to produce silk and market it by building infrastructure. Strengthened by international relations. Talebpour (1397) in an article entitled "Fabric weaving in the Safavid era: from a historical perspective, styles and functions" has examined the most important artistic characteristics of Safavid textiles and while expressing the status of textile weaving in different periods of the kings of this dynasty, the author has stated that textile weaving had a significant growth under the support of kings such as Shah Abbas. Fazl Vaziri (1397) in his doctoral dissertation entitled "Symbolic patterns of ritual textiles of the Safavid period" deals with ritual textiles that are part of the historical fabrics of the Safavid period, and believes that these textiles due to their use in mirrors, culturally, they are economically, politically and, above all, from the point of view of religion. Yazdi (1397) in his doctoral dissertation "Manifestation of Safavid authority in the art of carpet weaving" believes that authority as a co-meaning parallel with power has a direct relationship with the court arts of the Safavid era. The Safavids by creating organizations as court arts, by supporting artists and craftsmen, also created benefited from its reimbursements and profited from it in enhancing their authority. The art of carpet-weaving similar to textile arts in the Safavid court beheld a parallel characteristic and royal authority in the art of carpets in the fields of management created the necessary infrastructures in the flourishing of this art. The results of this paper, which deals with the beauty of various weaving methods, the use of various patterns and designs, and the variety of products are significant for enhancing prosperity and opulence. Gholamrezaei (2017) in his article "Research on the best weavings of the Safavid era" examines the textiles of Safavid Iran and introduces the textiles of that period. Due to the novelty of social studies of art in Western societies as well as the study of Iranian art from the perspective of sociologists of art, no research has been done on the system of production of Safavid textiles (1135-907 AH / 1502-1723 AD) in the worlds of Howard Becker. The present study seeks to investigate this issue in a descriptive and analytical manner and based on library data.

Conclusion

Art is a social phenomenon and art products have a social basis based on collective action. Becker believes that in order to create a work of art, work must be done, which requires the efforts and cooperation of many people. In this study, based on Howard Becker's theory in the study of Safavid textile production system, it can analyze that the production of Safavid textiles, as a commodity according to tourists and businessmen showed its aesthetic aspect and took beautiful designs and lasting quality. These textiles were used both as cover and as one of the household items (curtains, walls, pendants, rugs, etc.). They were a valuable commodity for land and sea trade. The production of textiles played an economic role in the lives of the artist people. With the arrival of tourists and representatives of different countries to the Safavid court and seeing the clothing of Iranian rulers, courtiers and merchants who had spectacular quality and beauty and their use was a sign of higher social status of their owners, silk and fine textiles gradually replaced local products and gained their functional importance over time. Due to the efforts of Safavid kings in using exquisite fabrics produced in royal workshops and giving these textiles as gifts to other courtiers, guests and ambassadors of other countries, increasing demand and production led to the prosperity of this art (if the court and the king himself did not intervene, perhaps to this day these works in museums and private collections around the world were being forgotten). The social history of Iran in the Safavid period as a relatively long period is very important. This importance is due to the fact that that period can reflect the production systems formed in the heart of the Iranian artistic community. The social formation of Safavid Iran was based on a fundamental structure and that was the provision of service (political and social). According to tourists who came to Iran, in the second century of the Safavid rule, the most social and political support for artists and weavers was in the field of textiles and a movement to create a class of artists as weavers and designers is seen. The variety of colors and technical techniques emerging in that period show that the textile production system, according to travel information, was associated with technical selection methods and the support of public and private institutions. The head of the textile class was one of the oldest masters in the profession, with a secretary and assistant. All matters related to the production of textiles were carried out under the supervision of an overseer who was a minister in the royal court. The division of labor was such that individuals selected in private institutions for production affairs had to be approved by the king after the approval of the supervisor. Due to the limited production facilities in some cities due to their geographical location, production

institutions were managed in a semi-centralized and decentralized manner and the best cities for centralized production were Isfahan, Yazd, Tabriz and Qom. Contracts for wages with novice weavers in private institutions, such as workshops, were paid individually and after one year were paid by the supervisor as a general remittance. Due to the economic and political stability in the powerful Safavid government and the support of the court and the Shah himself for the textile art, the production system introduced to the society a new generation of artists and textile designers. The system of production of Safavid textiles based on Howard Becker's model includes three areas of production that include both decorative art and fine or high-quality textile art.

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