

An Analytical Perspective on Iraq's Influence on Islamic-Iranian Arts (Case study: Abbasid era)

Abstract

The Abbasids ruled the Islamic world from ١٣٢ AH to ٦٥٦ AH. The city of Baghdad, the center of the Abbasid caliphate, became one of the most celebrated capitals of the Islamic world during this historical period. One of the salient features of this city was its distinctive architecture. Considering the proximity of this region with Iran and the extensive relations between the two, the issue of the influence of Iranian art can be considered and researched. The present research is accomplished via descriptive and analytical methods and by relying on the data of library resources. The research findings indicate that this exclusive art particularly in the fields of pottery, glassware, textiles, musical instruments, metalwork and decorative arts in many cases have been influenced and inspired by Iranian ornamental arts. The most significant reason for the evolution and progress of art and architecture in the Abbasid period was the existence of Iranians in the Abbasid court. Most mosques, houses and palaces were created by Iranian designers and architects. During this period, Parthian and Sassanid Iranian architectural elements such as the tradition of archery, dome construction, glassmaking and minarets were adapted.

Research aims:

١. To scrutinize architectural and decorative arts in the Abbasid era and the extent of the impact of Iranian-Islamic art.
٢. To study the components of Iranian-Islamic art in the art of the Abbasid period.

Research questions:

١. What factors influenced the impact of Iranian-Islamic art on the art of the Abbasid period?
٢. What are the components of Iranian art in the art of the Abbasid period?

Keywords: Abbasid era, architecture, Islamic-Iranian arts, Iraq.

Introduction

Iraq has constantly been considered by Muslims since the beginning of the conquests, and the first Islamic cities such as Kufa and Basra are in this land. The existence of two Islamic capitals, one in Kufa (during the time of Hazrat-e Ali ibn Abi Talib (PBUH)) and the other in Baghdad (during the reign of the Abbasids) provided the grounds for the cultural prosperity of this land. The Umayyad caliphs from all the conquered provinces attracted materials and masters and used their knowledge in building new cities, palaces and mosques. Byzantine and Syrian mosaicists were employed to decorate the mosques of Damascus and worked under the direction of an Iranian master. Artisans from Egypt, Jerusalem, and Damascus were brought to the buildings in Mecca, and this use of materials and method of work sustained until the Abbasid era. Although in the past a number of scholars had comprehended the influence of Sassanid art on Islamic art, the importance of this matter has been revealed more recently by recent archaeological excavations at Ctesiphon near Baghdad, Kish in Mesopotamia, and Damghan in Iran. Historical studies in any case can add to the human epistemological system while opening the borders of historical knowledge. It is obvious that different ethnic groups, in contact with each other, affect each other's artistic and cultural process. Regarding the interactions and cultural influences of other nations on Iran, there is always discourse about the influence of Iranian civilization, especially its art, on Arab culture and art, nevertheless, a closer look at the sources reveals that Iran, in turn, with the Arabs, especially in the Abbasid era, reveals many influences on art and religion of China and the Far East.

Many research studies regarding the topic of Islamic architecture in Iraq exist including the following studies: Parmoradian and Karimi (۲۰۱۳) in an article entitled "An Introduction to the Art and Architecture of Umayyads Mosques" have addressed this issue. Neyestani (۲۰۰۶) in an article entitled "History of Mapping and Application of Geometry and Arithmetic in Islamic Architecture (from the first centuries of Islam to the middle of the ۹th century AH" has studied the course of Islamic architecture in the first centuries of Islam. However, none of the above research have mentioned the impact of Iranian-Islamic art on art in Iraq independently. Therefore, in the present study, this issue is investigated in a descriptive and analytical manner by relying on library resources.

Conclusion

Iraq is an ancient land considered by Muslims in the early days of the conquests, and the first Islamic cities such as Kufa and Basra were built there. In the fourth to sixth centuries AH, coinciding with the rule of the Abbasids, Iraq, especially Baghdad, as the capital of the caliphate, enjoyed great prosperity and remained at its peak for several centuries and became the beacon of a large part of the world and due to the attention of rulers and various cultural and social developments took place in the field of Muslim social life, including attitudes and beliefs, social lifestyle, language, religion and customs. In other words, the Abbasid rule in this period has presented the most brilliant scientific and civilizational achievements to humanity. Iranian art in the Abbasid era had a significant impact on the branches of Islamic art, and it can even be said that ancient Iranian art, which itself inherited the ancient nations and civilizations of the Orient, fully entered the art of the Abbasid Caliphate. In addition, in the following centuries, this Iranian art developed into the source of the creation of important works in Islamic countries. It is the first and most important work of art of the Abbasid period in Baghdad, which began to be built in ۱۳۳ and finished in ۱۴۱ AH (approximately eight years). Strange to the builders, even its novice workers were Iranians. Inspired by the original Iranian architecture, the Abbasid architectural and decorative arts introduced themselves to the world, where the Abbasid Caliphate was influenced by Iranian architecture due to its proximity to the center of the Sassanid capital (the city of Ctesiphon); in this sense, mirror arts, glassware, silk weaving, woolen garments, calligraphy, pottery, and other arts insinuated Iraqi art and led to its development and growth, which is reflected in most of the surviving works of that period. The most important features of Abbasid architecture are: proper design, precise proportions, correct form of covering, observance of scientific and technical issues in the building, tall columns and porches, various decorations despite its simplicity and avoiding futility. With the formation of the Abbasid Caliphate with the center of Baghdad, which was very close to the Iranian artistic traditions, Islamic art and architecture was experiencing its strongest period. The center of this art in Iraq was Qairwan and Bukhara. Calligraphy, for example, can be considered the most prominent art in the Islamic lands, and it can be deliberated as a common artistic language for all Muslims. The art of calligraphy has constantly been of superior significance to Muslims, since it was originally considered the art of embodying the word of revelation. In Islamic lands, stunning calligraphy was used not only in inscribing the Holy Qur'an, but also in ornamenting other arts.

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