

The Manifestation of the Political Tendencies of the Mamluk Sovereigns on Fabric Designs

Abstract

Textiles are one of the first necessities of human life that mankind has sought to meet since the day of creation. The study of the history of textiles shows that this man-made product has gradually undergone a developmental process and has experienced changes in gender and role in each appropriate period. Egypt is the origin of one of the most ancient human civilizations, so the study of textiles in this geography can answer many questions. One of the kingdoms that ruled Egypt for some time was the Mamluks (١٢٥٠-١٥١٧ AD). Egyptian society in the Mamluk era was full of various textiles; Each of which in some way indicated the amount of wealth and status of its owners. The present study is a descriptive and analytical method based on archaeological and library data. The findings of the study indicate that the clothing of the Mamluk kings was much more than a luxurious garment. These rulers used art and technology as a tool to propagate their power and rule. Paying attention to clothes with colorful silk fabrics decorated with motifs and symbols of power and colors specific to each ruler in the Mamluk court cannot be considered without political goals. The use of clothing and disguise as political gifts, as well as the position of these works in the installation and dismemberment of the rulers, is a confirmation of the Mamluk strategy in its acceptance and identification as the only Islamic rulers accepted by the caliph. In accordance with this type of need, in this period, a style and method in fabric design was formed, which meets the political and social needs of the court. In this category of textiles, not only the titles and designations of kings have been used as an identity-making tool, but in many examples, these titles have been used alongside designs such as dragons, Simorghs, medallions, and lotuses, which were also used in China and are all related to the concept of power. In fact, the style of Mamluk textiles has met their political and identity needs.

Research goals:

١. Examining the situation of textiles during the reign of the Mamluks over Egypt.

٢. Examining the role of the political goals of the Egyptian countries in the fabric designs.

Research questions:

١. What was the situation of textiles during the Mamluk rule over Egypt?

٢. What was the reflection of the political goals and tendencies of the Egyptian countries in the fabric designs in this historical period?

Keywords: Textiles, Fabric designs, political legitimacy, Mamluk, Egypt

Introduction

The Mamluks ruled Egypt from ٦٤٨ to ٩٢٣ AH / ١٢٥٠ to ١٥١٧ AD ruled Egypt. The Mamluk rulers had an slavery origin The Ayyubid army consisted of many classes, and one of those groups consisted of five hundred bodyguards in yellow uniforms called Mamluks. They succeeded in forming a government after a long period in the Ayyubid army. The Mamluk rulers soon realized that in order for their rule to continue, it was necessary for them to prove their power and legitimacy as the undisputed rulers of Islam over the powerful rulers of other lands. The political problems caused by the unacceptability of the Mamluks due to their slavery identity caused the Mamluks to think of measures as a survival strategy and implement them at different levels of society. Part of this process was in literature and literary culture, and the other portion was created by art in Egypt and Syria. In other words, since the Mamluks were Turkish slaves, the people of Egypt and the Levant acknowledged them only merely for their admirable confrontation with the Crusaders and the Mongols, as well as the support of the Abbasid Caliph for Cairo; otherwise, they would not have been accepted. In this regard, art and other applied industries of society became tools for expressing power. In addition to literature, the princes and rulers of the country found industries suitable for means of identifying themselves as they found their way to other countries through trade and commerce. In particular, the metal and textile industries provided the background for this issue, as so that each king bestowed a unique and exclusive personal emblem to indicate his power and authority engraved on such artworks.

Regarding the research background, it should be said that no independent work with this title has been written so far. An article entitled "Comparative study of the design of Ilkhanids and Egyptian textiles in the seventh and eighth centuries AH" written by Farboud and Dehmalayan (٢٠١٦); in

this article, the authors, while conducting a comparative study of the textiles of these two governments, acknowledge their influence on each other in their design and role. This work has been limited to the extent to which the Mamluk textiles were influenced by the Ilkhanids through political and economic relations, and does not refer to the internal philosophical foundations of the fabric designs and motifs in the Mamluk realm. Mahnaz Shayestehfar (۲۰۰۶) has introduced Islamic textiles in her book “Islamic Art” written by Patricia Baker. However, the study of the luxurious textiles of the Mamluk court and their designs has not been done professionally so far. Therefore, the present study can be the initiator of this path. This descriptive and analytical study, based on archaeological data and library sources, seeks to investigate the nature of textiles and textile patterns during the Mamluk rule in Egypt.

Conclusion

The study of case studies of cloth designs related to the Mamluk period indicates that the need to create acceptance among the people of Egypt and Syria, as well as the rulers of other Islamic lands such as Iran (the Mongols) by the Mamluk rulers led to the industry of fabrics to take on a political role. The need to use luxurious fibers such as silk and gold led to a transformation of the textile industry in Egypt. During this period, the z-twined yarns used in Iran more or less replaced the traditional Egyptian s-yarns. The use of fine weaving machine in the production of z-yarn helped the textile industry to produce fabrics with a predominance of silk (with more silk). This change in the use of production technology made the introduction of rich patterns in linear form and mirror symmetry possible. Therefore, the Mamluk Emirs, without any restrictions, ordered designs that corresponded to their political and social goals to the producers. Based on this, it can be seen that although the Mamluks did not devote a specific royal workshop to the production of textiles throughout their reign at the court, their social need for legitimacy gave part of their new identity as rulers of Islamic lands versus slavery and oppression. The past has played a significant role in the luxury textiles of this period. If the Mamluk name has been immortalized along with other textiles throughout history; today, we can speak of the Mamluk style as an exclusive technique in the independent textile industry.

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