

The History of Themes, Subjects and Visual Structure of Imaginary Paintings (Khiali-negari) in Iranian Art of the Qajar era (According to Written Documents)

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Abstract

Khialinegari is an expression for describing a kind of narrative painting which has religious, heroic, epic, lyrical and popular content. It spread in Qajar era according to folk art and religious art while was impressed by the tradition of conventional painting of that period. Some of the researchers believe that this kind of painting has created According to necessity and the willing of the people, whilst conserving all the religious and traditional values of the art of Iran. These paintings are full of presentive, thematic bases and visual structures. Although many valuable studies have been done during the years about it, there are lots of undetected aspects of Khialinegari. This article is looking for the answer of this question that "have contents, subjects and visual structures suddenly formed in Qajar`s Khabouialinegari or have they history in Iranian painting?" To answer this question and achieve the background of Khialinegari we try to study the features of a period of visual art of Iran, from the Ancient to Qajar era, for finding the common aspects of it in contents, subjects and visual structures with Khialinegari. It is a fundamental and theoretical research. This study has been executed using descriptive and comparative analysis methods. The results of this research has shown that Qahvekhane`e`s painting or Khialinegari is a particular style of painting art. It is one of the pop arts with a history in the Iranian society which has emerged from the Iranian traditions. What is known these days as a Qahvekhane`e painting is Qajar`s version of it that is different in terms of

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figurative features, contents, material and the slangy subjects belonging to Qajars era, but this kind of painting is very older than Qajar period.

Objectives

Find the answer of this question that "have contents, subjects and visual structures suddenly formed in Qajar`s Khabouialinegari or have they history in Iranian painting?"

Try to study the features of a period of visual art of Iran, from the Ancient to Qajar era, for finding the common aspects of it in contents, subjects and visual structures with Khialinegari.

Questions

Have contents, subjects and visual structures suddenly formed in Qajar`s Khabouialinegari or have they history in Iranian painting?

What are the common aspects of visual art of Iran, from the Ancient to Qajar era in contents, subjects and visual structures with Khialinegari?

Keywords: Khialinegari , Iranian painting, Qajar art, themes, subjects, visual structur

Introduction

Iranian visual art has evolved dramatically throughout the historical period. This art, which was formed by combining Iranian art with Central Asian and Chinese civilizations on the one hand and Byzantine western civilization on the other, was different in its kind from all other civilizations. Alternatively, Iranian painting has been depicted using fictional, lyrical, mystical and ethical themes in the form of fictional narratives. Imagination is one of the visual arts created by uneducated artists during the Qajar period and has become a gathering place for people in cafes, mourning places, shops, zurkhanehs and bathrooms. The themes embodied in them "reflected the national aspirations, religious beliefs and spirit of the particular culture of the middle layers of urban society" (Pakbaz, 2001: 201).

The concepts, themes, and visual structure of the Qajar period are rooted in the historical past of this region. Events like the stories of Shāhnāmeḥ Ferdowsi, Khamseh Nezami, events in Karbala, the story of the Quran and so on. On this basis, one can ask the question, what is the relation between Iran's past imaginary views and visual arts?

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Since little research has been done on the origins of the formation of this type of painting as well as its themes and visual structure, further research is necessary in the mentioned field. In the first glance, the effects of western painting may be seen behind the religious and epic concepts, but in spite of a number of influences of imaginative features and the insights dominating them, the roots of such painting can be traced back to Iran's historical past and the extent that how these roots are related to the cultural identity of this nation; hence, this is amongst the necessities of research in this field. In this regard, by utilizing researches on imagery and examining the works of imagination and achieving its frameworks and reviewing written sources about a number of Iran's visual artworks including: wall-paintings, art of the book, patterns on potteries, metalwork and tileworks from pre-Islamic ages to the Qajar period, it is endeavored to achieve a commonality between the imagination and the above-mentioned works. Hence, firstly, by presenting a brief overview of the imagery works and then reviewing the thematic, conceptual and structural development of the motifs in part of Iranian art, in the form of comparative tables formed by the study of the written sources of Iranian art, a comparative study of the mentioned parameters between imagery thoughts and Iranian patterns is carried out in order to reach the desired results.

Since every scientific research is based on research and earlier studies, the authors have made great efforts to collect and study the most relevant findings of previous researchers, in three areas: books, articles, and theses. In regard to books, the following can be mentioned: Mirmoussafi, (2009), *Paintings of coffee-houses/* Khalili, (2008), *Painting of coffee-houses /* Ardalan, (2008), *Curtain Readers /* Ismailzadeh, (2007), *Hassan Esmaeilzadeh Coffee School painter /* Saif (1991), *Coffee Painting /* whose achievements include introducing some of the most renowned painters in the field, presenting illustrations of imaginary works, introducing curtain painters. It is a brief introduction to the themes, concepts, and visual structure of the imaginations. Articles include: Chalipa, Goodarzi, and Shirazi, (2012) *Reflections on National and Religious Issues in Coffee-house paintings*, have briefly introduced the themes of the mentioned works.

Ismaelzadeh (2009) paper on a comparative study on the Ashoura paintings of Hassan Ismaelzadeh with the Murder letter of Rouzah-al Shohada text, seeks to compare the painting themes's of Hassan Esmaeilzadeh's paintings and Rouzah al-Shohada's text. Chavari (2009), *Structural Comparison of Mohammad Modbar's Curtain "Day of Judgment" and Fresco's "Last Judgment"*. Shayestafar and Khamseh, (2010), comparative thematic and technical study of Qajar court and coffee painting, has compared the

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comparative themes and techniques of Qajar court and coffee painting. Modaresi, (2008), *Coffee Painting, A Paradoxical Study (Parallel Reading of Coffee Painting, and The Book "Iranian Hangouts and Modernity")* / Khavari, (2008), *Coffee Painting, Imaginary Structural Overview* / Kheiri, (2008), *Investigating the Texts in Coffee-house paintings; a study on coffee-house painting, examining and introducing expressive signs in such paintings.* Seif, (2008), *Another Look at the Coffee and Yaran Painting Movement, introduces the concept of this type of painting and its painters.* / Shayestefar, (2008), *The presence of the Ashura event in Qajar painting.* Hosseini, (2004), *The Concept of Space in Religious Folk Painting.* Finally, in regard to theses: Bazerloo, (2014), *The Semiotics of Iranian Painting - A Case Study of Space and Narrative Studies in Coffee Painting and the Saqa-houses art movement and attention to the reading of such artworks.* Furthermore, in terms of semiotic studies, attention is focused on space and narration. Karigi Moghaddam, (2012), *A Look at the Symbols of Coffee-house Paintings; in this study, we attempted to re-examine the school of coffee painting through symbolism in order to examine the implied features of this art.* Kashani, (2012), *A Semiotic Study of Coffee-house Paintings with Emphasis on the Influences of Iranian Painting and European Painting - The Practical Achievement Project of Ashofte Delan.* In this dissertation, first, the relationship and impact of Iranian and European painting on the school of coffee-house art is examined, and next, a general analysis of the works and signs of the coffee-house school of art is considered in order to discover the known and hidden meanings.

Ramozzi, (2012), *Analyzing Mythical Symbols in Coffee-house Paintings*, this paper analyzes the place of mythical symbols in coffee-house paintings with epic themes and attempts to analyze the symbols based on narrative and visual features and investigate them based on the perspective of mythological criticism. Jamshidi, (2012) *A Study of Personalization in Coffee-house paintings* / Ghafourian, (2011), *Translational Semiotics and Discourse of Coffee-house Painting with Emphasis on the Woman's Image; this Study investigates the artworks of coffee-house paintings in various forms of art with the presence of women.* Vallipour, (2012), *Examining the Relationship between the Imaginary Structure of Cartoon Painting and Comic-strip Stories; in this study, it is aimed to study the structural similarities in visual expression of this art style with the art-industry of storytelling.* Comic visuals have emerged as a new and emerging branch of the contemporary world.

Chalipa, (2012), *Investigating the Impact of National and Religious Art and Literature on Fictional Painting (Coffee-house art)*, this thesis aims to identify instances of the influence of national and religious art and literature on fictional painting, and it has dealt with

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national and religious literature and the themes and narratives of fiction. Chavari, (2011), A Comparative Comparison and Analysis of Coffee-House Paintings (Imagination) and Tileworks of the Tekye Moaven-al Molk of Shiraz; in this research, it is sought to investigate the motifs of two works of art in terms of figurative and conceptual perspectives. Honardoost (2011), A Comparative Comparison of Shahnameh Davari and Coffee House Paintings; in this study, the paintings of coffee-house art and those of the Shahnameh of Davari are studied based on form/ Bashiri, (2010), Epic Encounters in the Works of Coffee School Painters (Imaginary) from the Qajar Period to the Present Times, in this study by providing samples of epic coffee-house paintings; it is sought to analyze the epic heroes, their visual perspectives and subjects applied. Hekmat, (2006), A Study of Imagination in Qalamkar Textiles, which deals with the technological and a brief history of this type of paintings. By analyzing all of the mentioned research studies, it is concluded that up to now most of the research in the field of Qajar imagination has generally focused on stylistics, figurative structure (form and color), the introduction of artists and semiotic studies; moreover, study on an artwork or a specific period of Iranian art and its comparison with imaginary art has also been dwelled upon. Therefore, it can be mentioned that there has been no independent research study in terms of the background of the concepts, subjects and visual structure of such artworks in Iranian visual arts and the comparison between them; hence, the mentioned point in the main concern of this study.

The present study is a theoretical fundamental research in terms of purpose and in terms of nature and method it is a descriptive-comparative research (based on the comparison of concepts, themes, and the structure of imaginary with other Iranian decorative artworks), The contents of the paper is gathered from libraries and extracted from books, articles of compilation, edited and translated, and arranged in tables, which are presented in the list of sources. The works studied in this study fall into two categories: a) Imaginary and (b) examples of Iranian decorative artworks including: wall-paintings, potteries, art of the book, tileworks and other features and are divided from the pre-Islamic period to the Qajar period (in the motif tables some examples of these images are presented, the information mentioned in this section being based on the items cited in the written sources) which have been studied by researchers using a qualitative analysis method.

Conclusion

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Generally, in painting, and in particular in imaginaries, the system of lines, colors, surfaces, and so on, make up the image (i.e., the form of expression and content). What constitutes the face of expression and content in painting, including imaginaries, is the public and individual culture of a society that has always been influenced by its political, cultural, economic and social conditions along with political, cultural, and economic interactions with other societies. Thus, based on studies of the trends of the subjects, themes and visual structure of Iranian painting in different eras and the many facets that existed in the works of this period, it can be said that Iranian painting has had constant and common aspects from time to time. These aspects have been repeated or marginalized in various works, each period being based on the religion, politics and culture of that period, and new concepts and themes have replaced the earlier works in the same context. Like the good and evil themes that were in Ahuramazda's ancient Iran or the king of the good and evil forces and the political enemies of the evil force, in the Islamic era the Prophets and the Imams are the good forces and their enemies and the evil force. Subsequently, it can be supposed that the concepts, themes and visual characteristics that emerged in different periods of Iranian painting have roots in the principles of painting of earlier periods. The rulers of each genre have promoted their personal tastes and power, promoting or abolishing a particular art. As for the narrative in the works of artists, it is limited to altering the forms in the paintings to create a new form, as well as to engage the audience with a sophisticated way of presenting the culture, occasionally in their concepts and themes. The themes have been repeated in paintings of different eras based on religion, faith and culture of that period in dissimilar means. On this basis, it can be alleged that the imagination of the Qajar period is not a repetition or negation of past and present works of the period, but rather a different presentation of the Iranian painting tradition that has appeared in diverse forms during various periods. The Qajar period developed in a new way based on the practice of traditional painting including oil paint, canvas and other tools, as well as the culture and religion of the general public of the mentioned period.

On this basis, it may be assumed that the paintings that are now called coffee-house or imaginary paintings are a distinctive way of painting and one of the most popular and well-known artworks in the Iranian society that is deeply rooted in Iranian traditions and is much older than what is today known as coffee-house art which in terms of figurative features and materials used is very unlike to those applied during the Qajar period.

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