

An Analysis on the Background and Visual Characteristics of the Wooden Ornamentations of Hamzeh Dehdasht Imamzadeh from the Buvid Period (Preserved at the National Museum of Iran)

Abstract

Most museums worldwide behold valuable artifacts that despite their magnificence, do not have a specific identity, in this regard, The National Museum of Iran is no exception. Many of the works preserved at the museum have little or no recorded information. One of the exquisite and artistic works of the Islamic section of the National Museum of Iran is a wooden door numbered as 3292; this magnificent door is ornamented with a variety of inscriptions and plant adornments. According to the Museum's information, the door is attributed to the city of Behbahan and dates from the fifth century AH. By first studying the inscriptions and door decorations and comparing them with the specimens of the wooden doors with the initial dating information and the text of the inscriptions beholding Shi'ah concepts, it appears that the above door is related to the late fourth or early fifth century AH and is related to the Buyid period. In regard to Islamic ornamentations, wooden door inscriptions partake a vast array of decorations; hence, many decorations have religious contents. The names of the five figures of Al-e Aba, the Divine names of Allah neatly settled in frames of circle and rhombus shapes, sections of "Tobeh" prayer of Sahifah of Sajadiyyah, verse 1 to 52 of Surah Yasin, the prayer of Imam Zaman (pbuh) and inscriptions relating to the ruler of the time are the inscriptions engraved on the mentioned door appearing in four rectangular frames. The present article follows a descriptive and analytical approach and the goals of the research include classifying, identifying and completing the door's historical identity. After interpreting and reading all the inscriptions of the door including all four historical inscriptions by the authors of the article, it can be concluded that the ancient door was built between 440 and 448 AH at the Fars province of Iran by the order of the last Buyid ruler. Regarding the original location of the mentioned door, by studying the documents regarding the missing door of Imamzadeh Hamza of Dehdasht in the 1920s by the trustee of the Imamzadeh to the Minister of Culture and Art of the time, provided an effective factor in specifying the identity of the main door location. Examination of the letters and documents found that the stated door belongs to Imamzadeh Hamzah of Dehdasht locating 60 kilometers from Behbahan. The present study, by clarifying the historical and spatial status of the ancient door, presents this unique wooden artwork as a valuable artifact of Buyid Shi'ah art of the fifth century AH.

Research aims:

- 1- A study on the historical background and identity of the wooden door in the National Museum of Iran.
2. An analysis of the features of visual decorations in the wooden shrine of Imamzadeh Dehdasht.

Questions:

1. What are the temporal and spatial identity of the wooden door preserved at the National Museum of Iran?

2- What are the features of the wooden door preserved at the National Museum of Iran in regard to visual decorations?

Keywords: Buyid Art, Shi'ah art, Behbahan, Dehdasht, Imamzadeh Hamzeh

Introduction

The southern and southeastern region of Iran home to many Shi'ah rulers consumes valuable works with Shi'ah concepts that are considered as authentic sources in Shiite history and art. However, such artworks, despite their artistic value and prominence in the history of Islamic art in Iran, have not been accurately studied and relatively few resources are available in their regard.

One of these valuable monuments is the wooden door of the National Museum of Iran (Museum classified as Number: 3292) discovered in Behbahan. This double door is decorated with floral designs, Kufic writings and inlaid Naskh inscriptions. Each door is divided into three sections with square and rectangular borders and within the rectangular surround, five circular and rhombus frames are used. Inside the frames and margins there are inscriptions in Kufic and Naskh script. By examining the decorative and inlaid features, the door is attributed to the fifth century AH (eleventh century AD).

Due to the destruction of parts of the door, prior to this research, many inscriptions were not interpreted and no comprehensive research was carried out. According to the documents and observations, the hypothesis of the present study is that the mentioned door belongs to the Buyid period and the main location is a place other than the city of Behbahan. Furthermore, the objectives of this research include recognizing, identifying and completing the door's historical identity. In addition, data is gathered via library research and close observation.

In regard to background research studies in the stated field, the following can be mentioned: Seyed Ali Mousavinejad Souq (2006) In his book "The Scattered Stars of Islam of the Earth", in the introduction of Imamzadeh Hamza of Dehdasht presents documents and evidence regarding the missing door of the Imamzadeh. Mehrangiz Karami Mehrban (2014) in her MA thesis entitled "Research on Architectural and Usage Properties of Safavid Textures of Dehdasht (Belad Shapur) of the Kohgiluyeh and Boyer Ahmad Province" Introduces the monuments of Dehdasht and their architecture which can provide useful information in regard to the exact location of the door. Abdollah Ghuchani (1987) refers to this door in an article entitled "A Study on the Wooden Inscriptions of Iran" and has read parts of the inscriptions but not the historical sections. Ghobad Kianmehr (2004), in his doctoral dissertation entitled "The Aesthetic Values of the Safavid Inlaid Arts" makes a brief reference to this door according to the type of the inscriptional technique applied refers it to the fifth century AH. Other resources also refer to the door but fail to provide any dependable information.

In this study, initially the historical background of the door is introduced via studying the engraved inscriptions and finally the actual of the door is presented according to reliable documentations and observations.

Conclusion

The Shi'ah religion has had a profound influence on art and cultural heritage throughout history. The Buyid period bestows valuable Shi'ah artifacts because of its Shi'ah ascendancy and its introduction as the official religion of its monarchy. The inscriptions on the wooden door under study including the names of the five holy figures of the Al-e-Aba and the repentance (Tobe) prayer from the Sahifieh of Sajadieh of Imam Sajjad (pbuh) all specify the creator's belief in ordering such a door with Shi'ah artistic features. Furthermore, the inscriptions applied on this elegant door are among the dominant themes used in the Shiite art of the Buyid period; similarly, on a wooden tablet from the Rabno collection from the year 363 AH, a prayer from the Sahifieh of Sajadieh is observable. Another sample is the 5th century AH Buyid wooden tablet preserved at the Freer Gallery which has applied the holy names of the five figures of Shi'ah Islam. Among the inscriptions used on the ancient door is the prayer of Imam Zaman (pbuh); the use of this prayer is rarely seen in Shi'ah art and architecture. After reading the inscriptions in the historical section of the door, it was discovered that this door and another Buyid wooden artwork are related to the monarchy of Abu Mansour Fulad Suton son of Abokalinjar, the last king of Buyid dynasty in Fars and the Arjan region between 440 and 448 AH.

After studying the documentations and resources in hand, it was determined that the door belonged to the Imamzadeh Hamzeh of the Dehdasht city. The descriptions presented by the guardian of the Imamzadeh is in line with the specifications mentioned at the National Museum of Iran. Furthermore, available documents indicate that the door of Imamzadeh Hamzeh was seen at the National Museum of Iran. The structure of the Imamzadeh and the door under study were both built during the same historical period; moreover, since the door was handed over to the National Museum of Iran by the former Head of Cultural Bureau of Behbahan around 1950 AD, the city of Behbahan is used in museum records.

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