

The Illustration of the Prophet and the Shiite Imams in the Habib al-Siar Manuscript with the Emphasis on Bahar-al-Anvar

Abstract

The depiction of the image of the Prophet and the Imams (pbuh) and their excellence in iconography is one of the themes of the pictorial decoration of religious narratives that has always been of interest to artists. The manuscript of Habib al-Siar, a historical book written by a Shiite historian, contains images of historical events of the Shiite legitimacy. These paintings contain Shiite themes, maps and symbols, as well as iconography of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) and the Imams of the Infallibles (AS), and depict Shiite historical events based on Shiite narrations. Among these, the religious and Islamic book of Bahar-al-Anvar is one of the most important comprehensive books of Shiite hadith and events that includes a collection of Shiite instructions and teachings; Therefore, this study attempts to depict the clear aspects of their inner appearance by examining the image of the Prophet and the Imams in the manuscript of Habib al-Sir in connection with the narrations mentioned in Bahar-al-Anvar; moreover, the images are analyzed and scrutinized by the use of Shiite concepts and symbol. The research method carried out in this research is descriptive-analytical and the method of data collection is accomplished via library resources. Research shows that until the Safavid period, religious figures depicted the faces of prophets and saints due to a lack of opposition, but later, due to the disagreement from religious scholars, faces were covered and artists tried to show an extraordinary appearance by using religious symbols. Also, by applying the narrations of the Shiite events of Bahar-al-Anvar in the illustrations and iconography of Habib al-Siar's paintings, it is possible to obtain a visual and symbolic image of the artist from the Shiite events.

Research objectives

1. To study the image and iconography of the Prophet and the Shiite Imams in the manuscript of Habib-al-Siar
2. To analyze the application of Shiite concepts and symbols related to the themes of Bahar-al-Anvar in the drawings.

Research questions

1. What are the general themes of Habib al-Siar's paintings?
2. How can the principles governing the visual narration of the Prophet and the Shiite Imams (pbuh) in the painting of Habib al-Siar be scrutinized by examining the the Bahar-al-Anvar?

Introduction

Religious imagery or literary iconography literally means the description of images; it also refers to a research program in the history of art. This program explains the meanings of images for a believer. Words and pictorial forms each have their own logic, and religious iconography defines the relationship between the two; In fact, visual forms present their message simultaneously and simultaneously (Mohammadi and H.J., 1993: 139). In Pierce's view, too, the symbolic sign represents its subject through similarity or similarity, and the relationship between the sign and the interpreted object is mainly of the similarity type. For example, we can refer to portraits, diagrams, sculptures and consonant words (Ahmadi, 1991: 28).

But according to Geertz, religious symbols both express and shape our position in the world. These symbols shape our social world by inducing tendencies in human beings to behave in certain ways and encouraging firm situations (Hamilton, 1998: 275). Hence, any subject, action, phenomenon, or connection that acts as a means of expressing a perception is in fact a symbol. Symbols are objective, systematic, and socially accepted expressions of ideas, thoughts, aspirations, and experiences. In a relatively long process, symbols have been militarily manifested in cultural meanings and practices and act as a suitable platform for the transfer, continuation and development of human knowledge and experiences.

According to scholars such as George Cabler (1962), images and symbols do not float freely, but are usually associated with certain forms and art forms (Kubler, 1962: 109). Accordingly, artistic forms are closely related to images and symbols, and this phenomenon can be explained in iconic types. Images and symbols, like literary and written concepts, take on symbolic and established forms in various forms. Therefore, religious works of art such as holy icons or Islamic paintings are not just works made and paid for colored materials, but these works are a unique medium in the transmission of spiritual forces and an integral part of aesthetic and ritual dimensions in religious worship (Capadona, 2004: 104). Thus, depicting the image of the Prophet (PBUH) and Imams (AS) in Shiite art reflects Shiite ideas, beliefs and symbols, and the study of iconography in the context of Shiite teachings helps to discover symbolic references and mentions in images and visual effects. In the socio-political developments of Iran, illustration and iconography have gone through ups and downs and religion, which originated from the laws and customs of the time, has always played an important role in this regard (Shayestehfar and Abdolkarimi, 2016: 38).

The book "Habiba Al-Siar" is one of the valuable sources that contains paintings with the theme of religious epic. "Habiba al-Siar", the valuable work of "Khandmir", is written in mentioning the condition of the prophets (AS) and expressing the states of the sages. The third part of the first volume, in expressing some of the words of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) and the fourth part in mentioning the events of the time of Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman and the days of the Caliphate of the Amir al-Mo'menin (AS) (Majidi Khameneh, 2008: 49). In the analysis of imagery and iconography in the paintings of "Habib al-Siar", according to the historical events of Islam and narrations narrated from Shiite events that express the concepts and beliefs of the Imams, we can search for Shiite concepts in the form of religious symbols. One of the concepts and dimensions that have been considered by scholars of Islamic history so far is the legitimacy of Shiism. In this regard, many valuable sources and texts such as "Bahar-al-anvar" have a special place in Shiite culture. One of the unique features of this valuable book is that it provides the basis for scientific discussion and research and the possibility of adaptation to other works.

So far, several studies have been conducted on the application of symbolic aspects of the depiction of religious paintings with written sources from religious traditions. Among them, we can mention the research of Mahnaz Shayestehfar (2005) who in her book entitled "Elements of Shiite art in painting and inscriptions of the Timurids and Safavids", examples of the art of Shiite book decoration and representation of the image of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) and the Twelve Imams is studied during the Timurid and Safavid periods. In another study entitled "Visual elements of the life events of the Prophet of Islam (PBUH) in the drawings of the society of histories" by Mahnaz Shayestehfar and Shahin Abdolkarimi (2016), the authors studied the library with 12 drawings depicting scenes from the life events of the Prophet (PBUH) Among the religious paintings, the manuscript of the " Jame-al Tavarikh " kept in the library of the University of Edinburgh and the collection of Nasser Khalili are examined (Shayestehfar and Abdolkarimi, 2016: 37). Attention to the book "Jame-al Tavarikh" can be seen in the article

"Study of religious themes in the manuscripts of the Society of Chronicles", written by Fatemeh Sedaghat and Zahra Khorshidi (2009). In this article, religious drawings and stories of prophets from Adam to the life of the Prophet of Islam (PBUH) in the manuscript of "Jame-al Tavarikh" are examined (Sedaghat va Khorshidi, 2009: 77).

"Study of the influence of Shiite texts on the iconography of Imam Ali (AS) in the paintings of Tahmasebi's fortune-telling" is the title of another article by Zahra Shaqlanipour, Khashayar Ghazizadeh and Parviz Hasili (2015) which examines the influence of Shiite texts on the field of painting and the version of "Tahmasebi fortune-telling". Studies and concludes that Shiite texts have played an important role in symbolic expression in fortune-telling drawings (Shaghlani-pour et al., 2018: 97). The small number of studies in this field shows the need for this research since the study of the imagery of the Prophet (PBUH) and the Shiite Imams (AS) in Shiite painting and its adaptation to the written sources of Shiite events and themes will help us better comprehend Shiite painting and teachings.

Due to the importance of a comprehensive evaluation of the iconography of the Prophet (PBUH) and the Imams (AS), collecting and collecting information related to the drawings of "Habiba Al-Siar" through library studies has been one of the priorities of this research. In this regard, since among the available sources, the great encyclopedia "Bahar-al-anvar" of Majlisi is the most comprehensive collection in collecting historical and hadith data, this book has been the focus of research. Furthermore, it should be acknowledged that due to the dominance of Shiite concepts over the prevailing atmosphere of the Safavid period, the iconography of the Prophet (PBUH) and the Imams (AS) underwent changes in Iranian painting. Religious painting also flourished in the shadow of security and religious rule, and artists became interested in illustrating religious manuscripts (Sedaghat, 2007: 25). Therefore, in this research, it is sufficient to examine the paintings of "Habiba Al-Siar" related to these nobles, which belong to this period. It should also be noted that due to the breadth of the subject, this article refers to three drawings from the book "Habiba al-Siar".

Conclusion

In this article, the characteristics of Shiite symbolism with the focus on "Bahar-al-anvar" in three paintings with the theme of depicting the Prophet (PBUH) and the Imams of the Infallibles (AS) from the book "Habiba Al-Siar" were analyzed. Examining these paintings, it can be seen that the themes presented in the paintings of "Habiba Al-Siar" are a narrative description of religious concepts and narrations related to the prophets and imams of the Infallibles, which has been manifested in the form of transcendental, symbolic and mythical language. Thus, the present discourse shows the influence of Shiite culture and beliefs on Iranian painting.

Since the position of Imam Ali (as) is prodigious among the followers of the province, in these paintings, considering the magnification and symbolic use of signs, the prominence of this figure can be seen. In all the paintings around the head of the Prophet, Imam Ali (AS) and Hossien (AS) a diffused flame is depicted which is a symbolic element to express their status and dignity and the painter by the size of that flame, the position and order of these nobles. On the other hand, an important point to be acknowledged is the avoidance of paying merely decorative to the painting of religious concepts. The artist tries to establish a close relationship with human themes and values in the paintings, and inspired by such events, he has created such an artwork. Therefore, in producing a painting, attention should be paid to the fact that the form of clothing, the face of the person drawn and the space in which the components and elements of

painting should be placed, so that the audience can establish an effective and constructive relationship with the artwork in terms of empathy.

As mentioned, it can be concluded that all these themes are derived from Shiite beliefs and are a way to guide and focus the minds of visitors to the greatness and holiness of the prophets of God, the characteristics of Shiite Imams, the beauties of heaven and the ugliness of hell. These paintings separate the visitors from the material space and purify them in the spiritual and doctrinal space behind the themes. That is why the harmony with the Shiite beliefs of these images is considered as the center of gravity of Shiite thought. In Shiite thought, holy personalities are unique, and their sacred existence is not limited to the same physical quantity and earthly form. In fact, in these images, the symbols used in these paintings are key to understanding Shiite beliefs.

Finally, it should be said that these paintings are valuable narrators who can represent the pure Islamic culture as well as the specific Shiite culture to the people throughout history. The findings of this study show that a collection of significant teachings and events of Islam and Shiism, Quranic and religious stories that somehow express the truth and legitimacy of Shiism, is depicted in the book "Habiba Al-Siar". Another noteworthy point is that in the paintings of this version, signs, symbols and significant visual arrangements have been used to represent the beliefs and narrations of the Shiite discourse, which is in accordance with the narrations of Shiite books such as Bahar-al-anvar. In this study, some of the features of the paintings of "Habiba Al-Siar" in relation to the images of the Prophet (PBUH) and the Shiite Imams (AS) are mentioned.

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