

Investigating the Commonalities and Variances Between the Themes Applied in the Safavid and Ottoman Paintings

Abstract

The art of painting is the manifestation of national and religious ideas. Muslim artists in diverse lands have reflected many common moral and religious themes; in the interim, due to cultural, religious ties and wars between nations that led to the conquest of lands, the paintings and illustrations of the Safavid and Ottoman illustrated manuscripts of the fifteenth to seventeenth /ninth to eleventh centuries highly influenced each other and many common concepts including religious, literary, mystical and historical themes are found in their illustrated versions. Therefore, considering the characteristics of the paintings of the Safavid and Ottoman periods, the hypothesis of this research is that despite the relationship between cultures and the common political and social changes of both empires, significant effects are considered. The present research is a qualitative content analysis and the method of data collection is accomplished via the library method.

The findings of this research display that the paintings of the Safavid and Ottoman empires are similar in a number of features, however they are diverse in terms of method, style and context. In addition, the prominent visual features in the paintings of each era were influenced by the culture and religion of the society of that time and reflect the cultural and religious situation of that period despite their variances.

Research aims:

1. A study on the characteristics of the paintings in the Safavid and Ottoman periods.
2. An analysis of the paintings with similar themes in Safavid and Ottoman paintings.

Research questions:

1. What themes and stories have been used in Safavid and Ottoman paintings?
2. How are common themes and stories depicted in Safavid and Ottoman paintings?

Keywords: Safavid painting, Ottoman painting, religious themes, mystical and literary themes, historical themes.

Introduction

The existing civilizations and cultures in the world are related to each other in different ways and in the meantime, they influence each other. In the tenth and eleventh centuries AH, two powerful governments in the Islamic world in Iran and the Ottoman Empire held power. During this period, the two regions went through a period of prosperity in terms of political and cultural conditions. The proximity of these two countries was influential in the cultural trade between them. The Ottoman rule in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries AD / ninth and tenth centuries AH continued the great legacy of the Byzantine Empire (Rome) and a significant power in the Islamic world. Iran. During this historical period, Iranian artists entered the Ottoman borders for various reasons and in addition to showing their abilities and experiences, they also transferred samples of manuscripts to that country. In the Safavid era, Iran and the Ottoman Empire, due to religious differences and political rivalries, as well as European influence, a new state of affairs emerged in the relations between the two countries. On the other hand, the contest against looters and extortionists, as well as peace, created close cultural and artistic effects by offering artistic goods and sending artists. Perhaps the main reason why the Ottomans paid attention to Iranian art was that, as a Muslim community, in order to promote the art of their homeland with other Islamic countries, they needed to emulate their art, and that is why in the fifteenth / ninth century after each victory, the heads of government took the craftsmen of several defeated countries, such as Egypt, Iran and Istanbul. This trend caused the painter, who was very popular in Tabriz and Central Asia, to enter the Ottoman lands from the beginning of the fifteenth / ninth century onwards and was very well received. During the years 1477-1457 AD. / 885-865 AH., a turning point emerged in the decorative arts of the Ottoman era. Therefore, with the establishment of the first painting workshops in Istanbul during the reign of Sultan Bayazid II, the art of the book design and illustration of manuscripts began. With the aim of promoting the cultural and artistic status of the Istanbul court, these workshops followed the example of Iran, which was a leading country in the field of culture, literature and art of the time and set an example by imitating Iranian literary texts.

Regarding the background of the present study, it should be said that no independent work with this title has been written so far. However, several works have examined the relationship between Safavid and Ottoman painting. An article entitled "Ottoman Painting with an Approach to Iranian Artistic Achievements" has been written by Farzaneh Farrokhnia et al. (2012). The authors of this study believe that not only the Iranian illustrated manuscripts available in Topkapi Sarai were used as a model in the production of illustrated manuscripts of the Istanbul court, but also the activities of Iranian immigrant artists in Topgapi Sarai workshops and the guidance of a number experts on the production of Istanbul school works has had significant influences on Iranian painting in the Safavid era. Another article entitled "Safavid painters and the transfer of Iranian painting to the Ottoman Empire" by Vali Dinparast (2011) has been written. The author of this work believes that the cultural relations between Iran and the Ottoman Empire have caused the formation of Ottoman painting under the influence of Iranian painting style. Despite the existence of these research works, no detailed study has been done so far in order to match the painting details of the two regions, so the author intends to examine all illustrated copies in Safavid and Ottoman court workshops and the type of application and processing of various subjects. Examine, analyze and compare religious, literary, mystical and historical in these paintings. Thus, in this research, information has been collected using the library method and research sources include drawings in museums and picture and written books. Also, the documents related to the statistical community are surviving drawings from Safavid and Ottoman historical centuries. The number of samples studied is 24 images. In this study, first, the characteristics of Safavid and Ottoman painting have been studied, then, the commonalities and alterations between painting of these two periods have been analyzed.

Conclusion

The artists of the two lands of Iran and the Ottoman Empire (Anatolia region) have had a close and complex relationship with each other due to the closeness of the cultures and religion of their society. In periods and times due to migration or conquest of parts of Iran and the Ottoman Empire by each other, artists had the opportunity to express their achievements in their works along with other artists and art workshops of another court. In addition, at the same time created common examples of special distinctive points. The themes used in the art workshops of both courts are directly related to how the kings of that court were supported, accompanied and interested, and at times, illustrated manuscripts and stories are depicted, which is the most prominent share and the paintings of both periods are considered. The themes used in these works are also very close and common and are influenced by each other and this is particularly seen in Ottoman painting, in which many influences of Iranian painting and the way of depiction of Iranian artists can be perceived. These themes include religious stories such as the stories of the prophets, especially stories from the life of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), literary themes such as epic and to some extent historical stories in literary books, mystical themes such as stories from the life of Rumi and other Sufi mystics and historical themes such as stories of wars, travels and the reception of ambassadors from other lands. The point of variance between such paintings is how they are depicted and the characteristic visual features in the works of each of the Safavid and Ottoman paintings, which are influenced and reflected by the type of culture and religion of the society of that time.

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