

The Effect of Late Qajar Architectural Developments on the Decorations of Houses in Mashhad

Abstract

The Qajar period is known as the period of the beginning of extensive relations with the Western world. This relationship affected various aspects of Iranian society. Iranian art and architecture in the Qajar period, influenced by the currents of modernity and modernization, initiated a dissimilar manifestation. During this period, the achievements of the Western modernity era entered the body and spirit of the architecture of this period especially within cities, buildings and mansions. Consequently, the architectural decorations were also affected specifically in the facades, entrances, interiors and other architectural elements and components. The present study is a descriptive-analytical method and data is collected via a comparative study on the decorative features of Qajar buildings in Mashhad in the form of documentary and field studies. The general findings of the research show that despite the influences of Western architecture on the architecture of the buildings, the main decorative features applied are brickwork, tiling and plastering. Of course, Western decorative elements such as decorative columns and capitals, sloping ceilings, wooden roof decorations, murals, metal heaters can be observed that emphasize the influence of Western architecture and decorations in the buildings of this period.

Research aims:

1. Investigating the effects of late Qajar architecture on Mashhad houses with emphasis on decorative elements.
2. Recognition of imported and traditional decorations in the houses of the late Qajar period.

Research questions:

1. What decorative aspects of Qajar architecture have been institutionalized in residential areas (Mashhad city)?

۲. Which Qajar decorative features continued from the preceding epoch and influenced the residential buildings of this period?

Introduction

The clash of Iranian civilization with the developed western civilization in the Qajar period can be considered as the beginning of the conflict between tradition and modernity in Iran. Hence, the zero point of modernity in Iran is considered to coincide with the Qajar rule. In the meantime, the actions of modernists to harmonize Western and Iranian culture instigated the buildings of the Qajar period to be designed greatly influenced by Western architecture along with some remaining Iranian traditions. Thus, the frequent travels of kings to Europe and the West, in the field of architecture, had several results and significant effects remained. The kings and princes wanted to implement the western architectural plan in their land and asked the architects to establish such buildings. This process continued until the architectural design of the palace of the kings was directed to the urban houses and the western architectural design was seen in the city and the riddle of the kings or the western came out of its specificity and became somewhat public. One of the architectural sections that was affected was the decorations. Architectural decorations, which are seen in different forms in facades, entrances, interior spaces, and as an indicator of architectural elements and components, find their identity and value, like architecture itself, in the path of its aesthetic evolution. During the Qajar period, Iranian art developed significantly due to its connection with the West, and many artists traveled to Europe and Western countries during this period. In fact, following the innovations and changes resulting from the modernization, the local architects also accepted the new taste to some extent and included it in their works. During this period, the architecture of residential buildings reached a certain level of design and execution. The houses were designed according to the principles and norms that governed the society of the time, and in the construction, discretion, which was one of the most important principles in Iranian culture, was observed. During this period, the design of the house was such that the home spaces met the inherent and natural needs of the family and the communication and layout was designed in accordance with the culture of the Iranian family. During the Qajar period, the construction of residential buildings varied according to the class status of the people. It should also be added that several factors shaped the body of the house, among which the culture, life and structure of families

can be mentioned. In the architecture of the Qajar period, as in preceding periods, decorations were considered as one of the main components and all houses, especially those of nobles and aristocrats, were decorated and ornamented significantly. Hence, this is the main debate of this paper as the Qajar period can be considered as the era of innovation and developments in the field of art and architecture.

Regarding the background of the present study, it should be said that no independent work with this title has been written so far, however, some works have been written about the architecture of the Qajar period. Dealing with housing in Iran beholds a long history. In this way, Kourosh Momeni et al. (۱۳۹۰) labels the Qajar period as the period of “house-building architecture” or the “architecture of residential houses”, so that in his research entitled: "Study of the decoration of Qajar houses in Qom (house Shakeri) " he attempts to study the components and features of Qajar period house decorations in one of the landmarks of Qom." Sichani and Memarian (۱۳۹۰), in a study entitled "Typology of Qajar houses in Isfahan" state that because the largest number of historical houses in Isfahan are related to the Qajar era, he focuses on the city of Isfahan as a case study by using the combined research method; in his research, the results were obtained in a way that Isfahan houses with semi-warm and dry climate architectural characteristics, are mainly introverted and based on the characteristics of architectural space, structures and decorations into three groups and in each classification, the specific characteristics of that classification are mentioned. Also in another study entitled "Typology of historical houses of the old texture of Mashhad, from the early Qajar to the late Pahlavi I" written by Morteza Farahbakhsh et al. (۱۳۹۷). After the introduction of Mashhad, the history and typology of the building with the use of combined research method refer to the introduction of houses in this period and evaluates the effective and significant factors in this building. In the article Nazila Nazarboland (۱۳۹۷), entitled "Modernity in the decoration of Qajar houses in Shiraz", the author examines and compares the decorative aspects of Shiraz houses in the form of tables regarding the traditional Iranian architectural aspects from imported funds and concludes that buildings follow a combined style of decoration as they apply both Iranian and Western decorations.

This research is a practical-case study in terms of purpose and follows a descriptive-analytical methodology; moreover, it is a comparative study between the characteristics of the Qajar period with the buildings of the late Qajar period in Mashhad. In other words, the identified features of

the Qajar period with the field intuitive aspects of the late Qajar buildings are compared and analyzed. The method of data collection and information is in the form of two main methods of documentary studies (library) and field studies, including objective observation and photography.

Conclusion

Numerous factors shape the body of the house; among which we can mention the decorations. In the architecture of Qajar period, alike pre-decoration periods, it was considered as one of the main components of houses and all the houses, especially those of nobles and aristocrats, were decorated. Decoration has been of great importance to the architect. The Qajar period can be considered as the era of innovation and alternations in the field of art and architecture. During this period, important and fundamental events took place that had an effective and special role on the content of the decorations of Qajar period buildings. Although traditional materials were still applied in the decorations of the building, European ornamental features can also be observed. Of course, according to the location of Mashhad and the study of houses, it can be acknowledged that Qajar architecture including decoration of tiles, bricks, plastering and wooden arrays continued the earlier period, nonetheless, in the late period, the influence of some architectural elements in its decorations is evident, so that with a case study of several Qajar houses, it can be pointed out that in addition to seven-color tiles and mosaics, brickwork and plastering, which is a continuation of the Safavid era, wooden and metal decorative elements on the roof and body of the building, sometimes sculpture, stained glass, plaster with richly decorated patterns, brick columns with decorative capitals, a centaur above the window and occasionally a pool house, a long porch and the stairs as a decorative element on both sides of the main axis and the windbreak and painting on the wall of the building, manifested in the Qajar era.

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