

Stylistics of Qur'anic Illumination in Shiraz School with Emphasis on the Decorative Forms Factor

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Abstract

Illumination is one of the most important Islamic arts and Qur'an decoration, which displays a wide range of talents of Muslim artists. From the early days of Islam, Muslim illuminators have always used talent, creativity, and innovation to form various styles of illumination. Among the important book designing centers in the Islamic lands, Shiraz is always known as one of the most important schools of book designing in which various styles of Illumination, Ta'shir and Calligraphy have been created over the course of the years. Among the important styles of book designing of Shiraz school, there are decorated Qur'ans of eight to thirteen centuries (AH) which have formed three important styles of Qur'an decoration of Shiraz School. Recognition and study of stylistics based on form components and achievement of the main features of the important Qur'an decoration of Shiraz School are the main aims of this study. Therefore, in order to achieve this aim, among the Qur'ans of these three eras, a Qur'an of from the Ilkhanate era, a Qur'an from the Timurid era and two Qur'ans from the Qajar era have been selected purposively. The present study is descriptive-analytical with formalistic stylistics approach. One of the most important results of this study is the introduction of the form structure and stylistic features of these three eras. The eras can be named as *Yeganeh*, *Pardis* and *Farshineh* on the basis of the form structures. The reason for naming these three eras is characteristics of the significant forms used in these three eras or styles.

Aims of the Study

1-Study of characteristics of styles of Qur'an decoration during the Ilkhanate to the Qajar eras.

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2-Extracting deviation, de-familiarization and foregrounding of form elements in the Ilkhanate, Timurid, and Qajar eras.

Study Questions

1-What are the significant Qur'ans of the Ilkhanate, Timurid, and Qajar in Koran decoration of Shiraz School?

2-What are the most important components of deviation, de-familiarization, and foregrounding of form elements in Tashi Khatun, Ibrahim Sultan, Wisal Shirazi, and Mohammad Shafi Arsanjani Qur'ans?

Key Words: Form, Formalist stylistics, Qur'an decoration of Shiraz school, Illumination of Qur'an.

Introduction

Revelation is one of the most important manifestations of Islam which despite the strong memory of the Arabs, the need to record such words in a written form was certain. According to Rajabi (2003), in line with the lettering and writing of the Qur'an, disciplines such as "Qar'at", "Rasim al-Masih" or "Marsom-al Khat" were formed in order to preserve the authenticity and immortality of the Quran and its virtues. In the early Islamic centuries, the Qur'anic literature and illumination in the Islamic nations gained a great deal of power, and in this respect Iran was one of the pioneers of the decoration or illumination of the Holy Quran. Most of the motifs used to decorate the verses of the Qur'an were stylized forms of floral and animal motifs, and in particular geometric structures and knots, which were due to artists being prohibited from using natural motifs.

Dani (1996) acknowledges that the foundations of Iranian art are a court-religious art because the monarchy was able to support artists financially. One of the geographical areas that have played a significant role in the cultural development of Iran is the southern region of the country. In stylistic treatment of a work of art, such as illumination, it is necessary for the viewer to know in what categories and subcategories this work falls into and what similarities and differences exist. In the field of style recognition, one should first examine how each work is executed and secondly present an initial general categorization; furthermore, the particular artistic features existing in each period should be analyzed; such features are recognized as stylistic elements.

In order to strengthen the theoretical literature of Qur'anic studies, this study seeks to raise the issue of stylistics and to emphasize the main stage of stylistics, namely the description of artistic expression, that may be the basis for further studies in this regard. In order to

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study the theoretical literature of this research, two levels of research areas and research problem can be mentioned. At the research level, studies related to historical, geographical and cultural contexts is the subject of study. Regarding the geographical descriptions of Sami (1985), Shiraz is considered as the honor of Iran and Khoobnazar (2002) describes the climate of this region and believes that the balanced climate has affected the morale of its inhabitants and the residents of Shiraz have a balance of temperament and are pleasurable and consistent people.

About the historical background, Ajand (2009) attributes the beginning of the founding of Shiraz to Hamadullah Ben Tahmours, according to Hamdollah Mostofi, and clarifies it from the Achaemenes to the Qajar period.

At the background level related to the research problem, studies of illumination and art of the book can be mentioned. Motaghedi (2009), in an article entitled "Writing and Art of the Book in Shiraz School: The Glory of Calligraphy and Illumination in Shiraz School (6th and 7th Centuries)" presents studies in regard to art of book of Shiraz. Wright (2013) in a research study investigated the manuscripts and production of manuscripts in Shiraz between 1303 to 1452 AD. Wright's focus is on the Shiraz area, but with a comparative approach that provides a general view of the art of Iranian book-making in the Timurid era. Lingz (1999) introduces the art of Quranic art of calligraphy and illumination from the early period of the emergence of this art up to the 10th century AH. He attempts to study the field by examining the best examples of scripture and illumination of the Qur'an throughout the Islamic world. In association with numerous illustrative examples of the art of illumination, the four-volume collection of Khalili (2000) in the field of Qur'anic illuminations can be stated.

It is important to note that in the accomplished research studies, none have approached the historical evolution of the style of painting in the three periods studied by stylistics. According to the aforementioned, the present study focuses on the views and opinions of scholars on the Qur'anic illuminations of various eras, and deals with the structural style and classification of these paintings.

In the present study, data is not numerical or provable. This research is based on a descriptive-analytical paradigm and is intended to help conduct fundamental study for other researchers. The present study is done by comparative and descriptive method and each period is compared with the before and after schools.

Regarding data collection that is achieved historically, an examination of the terms, vocabulary as well as a direct link with the unit of analysis (the Qur'an studied) which by observation and imaging causes the completion of the findings. Moreover, the current study is carried out via library and field research methods and analysis is of rational inference.

Conclusion

Based on what has been said at the outset of this research, the artwork of illumination in the Shiraz School is reviewed and categorized. In such a view, the early style is known as a period that only applied arabesque designs. This style can be called the "unique" style and the artists who have used only Islamic arabesque designs in their work can be referred to as "uniquers".

During a stage, the use of Khatai patterns initiated in decorating the holy Qur'an. These motifs are natural but completely abstract in nature. The use of Khatai patterns along with the light azure color reminds us of the incarnation of Paradise alongside the verses of the Qur'an; arabesque and khatai pattern exists alongside each other but do not blend and mix; hence, it appears they are resembling the various stages of heaven in which each have their own glorious status. This period can be called "Pardis" because of the remembrance of Paradise and the artists of this period can be called "Pardisans". The representation of the "Pardis" style is mostly in the hands of Timurid artists.

The next period is the third school of Shiraz, which continues till today. This art course has a special feature from the Safavid period onwards. In this period there is a kind of crowded freedom in all other arts and structures; in such as school, the erection of forty columns for a building and detailed muqarnas patterns with colored tiles are created. The illuminated designs, too, are finely painted, and the Qur'an's page, though small or large is lined with hue and color. At this time, the arabesque and khatai designs were used and the color variations were much greater than the previous period, but the art of the book in regard to the Shiraz geographical level used the crown and border designs, often only in the form of fonts. In this period, when the designs are mixed and has many colors, it is a reminiscent of the role of the peacock and the color of its designs. The peacock that opens its wings and glorifies itself as the soul is locked up in the viewer's chest and blesses this beautiful creation. To the sense that breath is locked within the chest and this magnificent creation should be admired. Therefore, this era can be named after the peacock. In Dari Farsi, the

peacock is named as the Farsh-e-Morgh; hence, those who follow this style are known as “Farashan”. This period is continued to the present age. There are two different types of illumination in Shiraz. One is that the crown and inscription design is full-color and layered and in the margin section less color is applied; khatai patterns are larger and gold in color and is used more than other decorative features. These pattern remind us of the columns of Nasir-al Molk and Vakil Mosques; that have beauty despite their simplicity. The author calls this style "Farshineh Shiraz" because it has the characteristics of simplicity, beauty and specialness of the art of Shiraz. Another type of illumination of this time bestows a crown and colored inscription, but the marginal role is also full of decorative features; hence, this style can be named as “Farshineh Par Tavosi”.

Certainly, such trilogy naming of Shiraz school styles is very primitive, but it is a way for other scholars to find better words with the help of linguists. What has been said so far only includes Qur'anic illuminations. It appears that the illumination of the Qur'an seems to have reached its “peacock” perfection. Since diverse colors, elements and designs have been used in order to reach perfection, it should be taken into account that illumination was not only applied for decorating the holy pages of the Qur'an but also they were used for ornamenting poetry and paintings despite the fact that it was first applied for decorating the Qur'an without compromising the spirituality and sanctity of the verses.

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