

ANALYTICAL AND STRUCTURAL STUDY OF THE TEA HOUSE PAINTING STYLE

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Introduction

The factor maintaining the link between art and the past throughout Iranian history even though via a vague and invisible interaction and not only in poetry, literature, and music but also could preserve it in visual arts is nothing but the spirit of theosophy and existence of the permanent essence of justice and spiritualism in Iranian mentality and in particular Iranian artists. Presumably, the continuous presence of such inclination within Iranian art from the old times can be easily sensed throughout the unharmonious paintings on walls of caves as well as the mass masterpieces remaining from various civilization eras, taking it from over a thousand years of calligraphy to the emergence of unpredictable creativities in addition to appearance and procreation of different doctrines of calligraphy from the Safavid period leading to a revolution in painting and architecture until the period of Qajar which undoubtedly, offered unquestionable figures in tiling and painting to the history of Iran¹. (**Col. Fig. 18**)

Amongst all the arts of Qajar dynasty, tea house style of painting has been the reflection of the genuine culture and tradition of Iran which relies on the spontaneous techniques and approaches and generally speaking, even in other styles of painting in the beginning of Qajar era, the tendency towards pre-Islamic and genuine Iranian art² (**Col. Fig. 18**). This style of painting has been recognized with various names, taking from tea house painting, imaginative painting, and folksy painting. Since the time of Safavid, a place known as tea house was used for promoting religious viewpoints and legendary anecdote performances; however, during Qajar period, these anecdotes either religious or legendary were all painted and those ordering this kind of painting used to perform upon them and as the application of this style of painting was most typically used in tea houses, it was named after ‘tea house painting’³.

¹ Lavasani Amir: “Modernism, a Planar of Existence in Present”, Eighth Biennial of Art in Bangladesh, 1997

² Sarikhani Majid: “Tea House Style of Painting throughout Qajar Era”, Miras-Javdan Publication, no. 50, p. 117

³ Ibid., p. 115

A Look at the Normative Principles of Painting in Qajar Era

In painting left from Qajar period, particularly in tea house paintings, various norms can be referred to which include but are not limited to the following.

Liberation of painting from courtier painters and prosperity of folk painters is one of the most significant norms of Qajar painting school. Before this school, not only the painters were under the direct supervision and control of the head painter and were under the subjugation of royal personnel and even created their pieces upon their direction, but also few painters were working independently from the royal as the financial and governmental or in many cases folk's support did not accompany these painters. The release of painting pieces from the hands of royal personnel and handing it to the mass of society and under the rugs of the society. Many of these miniature pieces are currently supposed as Indian art and highly regarded whereas were devoted to flatter the prince and the royal family in its time and not only the society but also the artists are completely uninformed of their existence. The underlying critical viewpoint of folk is one of the consequences of the existence of painting amongst themselves which indeed, was a reason for the criticism regarding their structural and recitative qualities. As a matter of fact, criticizing the work of painters in Iran has been one of the most prominent outcomes of Qajar paintings⁴.

Studying the Characteristics of Tea House Paintings

Tea house style of painting from the structural point of view, possesses its own specific and unique properties, amongst which many have specific signatures and dances based on Qajar doctrines such as 'The Minimal Action by Mirza Mehdi, the Painter' that is the distinctive point of Qajar paintings from previous eras⁵.

In tea house style of painting, the main character is drawn quite larger than the rest of the characters which was unprecedented previously throughout Iranian history. Before this, the main characters as well as the minor ones were drawn proportionally at the same size that is one of the main characteristics of Qajar paintings. These paintings are also called imaginative painting as this originated from painter's sense of imagination. The other features include empty spaces and their closed and tangled mixture of them that eliminates any possibility for presenting the scheme as real. The prevalent paintings of Qajar period, and particularly tea house style of painting, are fundamentals for religious and legendary scenes and each and

⁴ Mohammadzadeh Mehdi: "Norms of Qajar Doctrine", Dariche-Honar (Special Edition), pp. 2-3

⁵ Sarikhani Majid: "Tea House Style...", p. 117

every color is used regarding the subject and the quality of various individual states, and the conception stating that the colors are used by random is rooted in unawareness. The red, for instance, implies martyrdom in the religious types of tea house paintings. Red implies anger and rage over hostiles; whereas, the dark and opaque colors stand for shields and laces of atheists such as in the painting entitled 'Karbala Tragedy' by Aqasi. Green in legendary tea house paintings outlines the position of beloved and respected heroes in Shahname (a masterpiece epopee by Ferdowsi) such as the one about the battle between Rostam and Ashboos (Seven-corps battle) by Aqasi (**Col. Fig. 19**).

The other feature is that before this style, humiliation of human beings has not been addressed throughout the evolution of painting; however, this was considered for the first time in tea house painting. In order to humiliate characters, they are usually presented with smaller body frames such as the painting entitled 'Keykhosrow's Departure to Iran with His Mother' by Aqasi⁶.

In tea house style of painting, depth-orientation principles are little used and penumbra and light effects on surfaces for intensifying the three-dimensional substantiality is observed feebly. Penumbra does not have any particular shape in these pieces. Faces are normally bright and shadowless. The source of light radiation on things, people, and landscapes is not even clear; hence, it is also possible that elements existing in the painting have light and consequently, possess penumbras directed from various angles on them⁷. Aqasi always used to tell his pupils that if we want to imitate those painters, who have been abroad, and thereafter pay attention to gap in our pieces, half of our art is lost and we need to sacrifice fifty live faces for four and to me, this is wrong⁸.

The main principle for tea house painting is having generosity and agonistic; fiction painting possesses a masculine look, whereas, royal painting during Qajar era which has found a feminine look. Therefore, few women are drawn and painting profiles is not common.

The few profile paintings were also requested by narrators. Even the renowned artists of that period namely Aqasi couldn't handle painting profiles in 'Joseph & Zulaykha's Shrine' (**Col. Fig. 20**).

⁶ Sarikhani Majid: "Tea House Style...", p. 117

⁷ Rezaei Alireza: "Tea House Painting, non-technical, full of deficiencies, but sincere and genuine", Rastakhzi Press, no. 723, 1977, p. 12

⁸ Seyf Hadi: "Tea House Painting", Tehran Museums Bureau, Tehran, 1990, p.80

People ordering paintings included folk from lanes and markets and tea houses. Another feature of this school would be haloes as the symbol of holiness which is mostly found around the Prophet's and Imams' heads⁹ (Col. Fig. 21). For example, in the painting entitled 'Throwing Joseph into the Well by His Brothers', Aqasi believed that Joseph needs to be drawn like the Moon to have him shine in the painting¹⁰ and amongst the other features of religious pieces, one can refer to the fact that women's face are covered.

Conclusion

Teahouse painting was a new emerging phenomenon in history of Persian painting that along with all its logical, religious, and traditional values was born for the purpose of meeting the needs of people and to respect people's beliefs. The structure of this painting was oil and color on the plaster walls or curtains and the themes of it included martial, lyrical, and religious that took shape based on religious traditions and folkloric art. The most striking results of the period of Qajar Paintings was breaking the monopoly of the court and expanding the arts among the popular folk artists and this led to the path for criticism of painting in Iran which was one of the most important results of getting popular in period of Qajar.

Other features of this style were the emergence of a unique signature in the paintings that made it possible to distinguish the works of the Qajar with the period before.

Important principle of tea house painting was the spirit of generosity and athletic; and providing all of the structural principles, this type of painting is in order to present the concept and the notion of painting that which emphasizes on negativity or positivity of individuals by the help of enlarging or zooming out and in addition to all these, methods and making them down points to being negative or positive and distinguishes the religious characters via drawing a halo around their head where the halo states their holiness.

⁹ Sarikhani Majid: "Tea House Style...", p. 118

¹⁰ Rezaei Alireza: "Tea House Painting...", p. 12

Ամփոփում

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Ֆաթեմե Դորջվար

ԵԳՊԱ ասպիրանտ

Սույն աշխատանքում, որ նկարագրական-պատմական մեթոդաբանության վրա հիմնված հետազոտության արդյունք է, փորձ է արված ուսումնասիրել Իրանում Ղաջարների դինաստիայի օրոք թեյարանային նկարչության առանձնահատկությունները: Այդ նկարները պատկերված էին յուղաներկով, գիպսե պատերի կամ վարագույրների վրա, իսկ դրանց թեմատիկան ռազմական, քնարական և կրոնական էր, որը ձևավորվել էր կրոնական ավանդույթների և բանահյուսական արվեստի հիման վրա: Թեյարանային նկարչության ոճը կառուցվածքային տեսանկյունից ունի աչքի ընկնող առանձնահատկություններ: Այս ոճում հիմնական գիծը բավականին երկար է տարվում քան մնացած գծերը, որոնք նախկինում եղել են Իրանի ողջ պատմության ընթացքում: Այս ոճի նկարներում մեկ այլ բնորոշ գիծը յուրահատուկ ստորագրության ի հայտ գալն է, որը հնարավոր է դարձրել տարբերակել ղաջարների և նրանց նախորդող ժամանակաշրջանի աշխատանքները:

Թեյարանային նկարչության կարևոր սկզբունքը մեծահոգության ու հզորության հոգին էր: Նմանօրինակ ստեղծագործություններում, ներկայացնելու համար նկարչության հիմնական գաղափարը, որն ընդգծում է անհատների բացասական կամ դրական կողմերը, հատուկ ընդգծում էին կրոնական սիմվոլները. օրինակ՝ նշելու համար սուրբ մարդկանց՝ նրանց գլխի շուրջ պատկերում էին լուսապսակներ: