

A Comparative Comparison of Iranian and Greek Pottery in Terms of Shape and Motif

Abstract

Iran and Greece are two ancient cradles of civilization. For this reason, they behold cultural and artistic richness. The art of pottery is one of the common arts between these two civilizations; however, differences and similarities regarding the general shape of pottery is present in Iranian and Greek pottery. The issue that this research pursues is the possibility of the single origin of Iranian and Greek pottery and their comparative comparison via a descriptive and analytical method and relying on data from library sources. The research findings indicate that Iranian pottery is older than Greek pottery. There is no narrative aspect in Iranian pottery. The patterns are abstract and symbolic, and more creativity and freedom can be seen in the design of dishes and patterns on the body, which displays the freedom that the artist experienced and his relation with society. The ruling order in Greek pottery in the geometric period is not realized in Iranian pottery. The designs are free, fluid and abstract and tailored to the body of the vessels, which may be due to the world view of the artist who did not adhere to strict principles. The motifs of animals are repeated in Iranian pottery, such as cows and mountain goats; on the other hand, in Greek pottery, motifs of octopuses and sea creatures are mostly visible due to the difference in climatic conditions and prominence. Furthermore, in Iranian pottery, shapes representing the moon and the sun are engraved that signify the importance of such features in the everyday lives of people.

Research aims:

۱. To identify the coordinates of Iranian and Greek pottery.
۲. To compare the elements of shape and motif in Iranian and Greek pottery.

Research questions:

۱. What are the coordinates of Iranian and Greek pottery in general?
۲. What are the similarities or differences between Iranian and Greek pottery in terms of shape and motif?

Keywords: pottery, Iranian art, Greek art, motif, shape

Introduction

Recognizing the two great civilizations of Iran and Greece and their artistic effects play an imperative role in introducing these two cultures more precisely. The art of pottery is one of the oldest arts in Iran and Greece. In terms of time, this research has considered ancient Greece until the end of the geometric period and Iranian pottery from the beginning to the Islamic period. The importance of this article is to understand the differences and commonalities of pottery art between ancient Iranians and Greeks, consequently, the differences and commonalities in their culture can be perceived. The research method of this article is descriptive-historical with a comparative approach, and the first issue raised in this research is to find the similarities and differences of Greek and Iranian pottery in terms of shape and motif, and to distinguish which civilization had the greatest variety of pottery ware. The second issue under study, is which potteries were used for ritual practices and which were applied for every use? The third issue is how earthenware changed people's lives with its inclusive shape and usage and what effect did it have on people's lives?

Research history shows that so far no independent work with this title has been published, nonetheless, several works have investigated the details of Iranian and Greek pottery. Taheri et al. (۲۰۱۹) have discussed in an article entitled "Comparative study of zoographic method in Iranian art and Greek pottery art". In this review, they have pointed out in detail the differences in zoology and its cultural and climatic causes. However, in this work, no mention of the general shape of Iranian and Greek pottery and other motifs is recognized. Therefore, the current research aims to investigate this issue in detail.

The pottery art of Iran and Greece have many similarities. It is factual that the shape of the vessels had a slight alternation; however, in terms of everyday usage, they were the same. Iranian pottery seems to be more advanced than its Greek counterpart in terms of pottery technology and this is due to the antiquity and variety of Iranian pottery. Many vessels made for ritual and everyday usages with a variety a shapes are distinguished in Iranian pottery art. Clay dishes made people's lives easier and were designed to meet different needs, furthermore, with their precise and clever design, potteries reduced the amount of energy to accomplish everyday tasks.

In this paper, the method of collecting information and data is library and internet sources with high reliability, also, the method of data analysis is qualitative.

Conclusion

The art pottery of Iran and Greece have similarities and commonalities. For instance, the use of large pots can be seen in both Greece and Iran. Undeniably, the use of such pots as pot graves initially took place during the Parthian period in Iran. As we know, Iran was dominated by Parthian rulers during this period. The Amphora used in Greece with a hole in the bottom of the vessel with the ability of pouring wine or oil that were placed on top of the graves for the use of the dead, are quite similar to the Iranian covenant jars that were used in marriage ceremonies. Containers that are for daily use should help to satisfy human needs easily, such as drinking water from different watering cans or containers with long pipes that were used to pour water and liquids with more ease. Depending on the type of culture and climatic conditions and the religion ruling the society, differences can be perceived in the dishes. For example, in Iran, ewers in the shape of animals are seen that have no parallel in Greek civilization; ewers that were perhaps used instead of decanters and pitchers. In the art of Iranian pottery, animal figures are applied abundantly, in rhytons, jugs or containers whose handles are in the shape of animals such as cows, goats and lions. Animals were of importance for Iranians as the cow is related to Mithraism and thus Iranians created rhytons in the shape of cows. Also, such pitchers and vessels were used in rituals and magic. Extraterrestrial beliefs and ideas can be distinguished from the overall shape of the dishes and the patterns of Iranian pottery ware as magical beliefs are every so often manifested in the overall shape of the vessel, such as pacifier dishes, and sometimes in the patterns on the body.

In Greece, unique pottery ware can be perceived, nevertheless, many have a daily practical aspect and patterns on are worked in a naturalistic manner and rarely behold symbolic patterns; moreover, among them, the octopus is observed profusely. The importance of the octopus motif is not yet fully understood. In the art of Greek pottery, erotic scenes, especially inside the colics, are observed, however, such features are not seen in Iranian pottery. An important issue is the presence of narration in Greek pottery such as in Francois's vase, nonetheless, no narration exists in Iranian pottery works as elements were abstractly and symbolically engraved on the pottery.

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