

The Position of Religious Calligraphy in the Carpet Weaving and Metalwork of the Safavid Period

Abstract

Traditional works of art in different periods, especially after the emergence of the rich culture of Islam in Iran, due to the emphasis of this religion on science and literacy and its positive approach in using the art of calligraphy, have greatly benefited from written decoration. Of course, the use of calligraphy is not only decorative, but it is used more to convey a message and show the position of an issue. The Safavid period is also one of the flourishing periods of traditional Iranian arts. The two arts of carpet weaving and metalwork are important arts in this period. In this article, which is organized with the aim of identifying the position of calligraphy in the metalwork works of the Safavid period, examples of metal objects and carpets that have calligraphy with Quranic content, including ۴ items of carpet and ۴ items of metal, have been examined in terms of theme and position. The line drawing has been studied in the composition of the work and the relationship between the two with the type and application of the sample. The content of the verses used in both types (carpet and metal) is mostly determined by the volume and practical importance of the verse. For this reason, the artist has used more small chapters of the ۳۰th Qur'an, Ayah al-Kursi and short verses that contain a message. The method of collecting the contents of this article is the library method and its organization is done by relying on documents and in a descriptive-analytical and comparative way.

Research aim-s:

۱. Understanding the type of Quranic subjects used in Safavid carpet weaving and metalwork.
۲. Achieving the distinction and similarity of Quranic calligraphy used in Safavid carpet weaving and metalwork.

Research questions:

۱. What are the Quranic themes hidden in the carpet and metal calligraphy of the Safavid era?
۲. Have the applied Qur'anic themes on Safavid carpet and metalwork effected its use?

Keywords: Calligraphy, carpet, metal objects, Quranic themes, Safavid period

Introduction

After the Iranian Safavid family took power, it changed the official religion of Iran to Shi'ah. Until then, a number of Turk-Mongol dynasties had ruled over Iran for more than four centuries. The Safavid dynasty lasted for more than a century and while re-establishing the tradition of kingship, it established a historically stable territory and a new political and military formation called Qezelbash. These formations finally reached the highest point in art in their special cultural development.

During the Safavid era, religion plays an imperative role in the process of studying culture and art. Shiite elements did not appear suddenly and without artistic hierarchy. During the Safavid rule, the relationship between art and religious laws was well established. In this era, the illustrated calligraphy texts, architectural buildings and artefacts all tell the Shiite elements, which are considered to be the characteristics of this era. The Safavid government changed the artistic structure of Iran from ۱۰۴۰/۹۷۴. This movement started under the supervision of Shah Tahmasab and was completed by Shah Abbas during a radical and fundamental transformation.

Iranian artists achieved many new skills and quality categories. The decorative inscriptions in the historical buildings of that time were made and elaborated in such a way that they never had a history before and until today nothing has been created in the country that can be compared to it. The art of painting and design under the careful supervision of Behzad, Agha Mirek, Sultan Mohammad and Reza Abbasi reached the desired perfection in color, beauty and line balance. In this period, Iranian-Islamic architecture spread its fame even beyond the borders of Iran. Calligraphy entered one of the most prosperous periods of its prosperity. Also, handicrafts in various branches grew significantly and left noteworthy examples in the history of Iranian art. One of the main factors of this flourishing and blossoming of the arts is the love of art and more importantly the artistry of Safavid sultans. Also, the positive attitude of religious scholars and Shi'ah elders towards the category of art has had an important effect on the tendency of artists towards religious subjects.

In this article, we intend to investigate the status and position of the two arts of metalwork and carpet weaving in the Safavid era and to examine examples of such arts in this era in which

religious calligraphy is used. The current research was carried out using descriptive and analytical method and relying on data from library sources.

Conclusion

In the investigation of the position of Quranic verses in the carpets and metal objects of the Safavid period, firstly, the position of calligraphy in traditional arts, especially the art of carpet weaving and metalwork was investigated, and after referring to the art of carpet weaving in this Safavid era, examples of carpets and metal objects with calligraphy were found. The illustration was with Quranic theme and were examined. There are four samples of carpet and metalwork under study. In general, the number of carpets with calligraphy in the Safavid era are limited compared to all existing carpets from this period, and among the carpets with religious calligraphy, there are much more narrow examples in which Quranic verses are applied. It is the same in the case of metalwork and even the examples are much less. One of the reasons for this issue can be the sanctity and prohibition that exists regarding any touching of Quranic verses, whether sitting or standing on the carpet or using metal objects with Quranic calligraphy. Therefore, most of the carpets in which Quranic verses are woven are either endowment carpets or decorative carpets that are less likely to be touched by people without Wudo. In metal objects, Quranic verses are mostly used that have a special use and are generally used for ritual and religious purposes. The content of the verses used in both types (carpet and metal) has been changed more by the size and practical importance of the verse than in each sample, therefore the artist has used more of the small chapters of the ٣٠th part of the Qur'an, the Qur'an verse, and short verses that have a message in them. In carpet-weaving, this message often includes ordering prayer and fulfilling duties such as giving Zakat and Khums. In metal works, the spatial limitation is even more, for this reason, sections of the verses are sometimes used. In terms of the type of script used in the samples, no specific conclusion can be drawn, but what is certain is that the use of lines such as Kufi and Nastaliq in Safavid era rugs and metal objects to inscribe Quranic verses is very rare and this is probably due to the difficulty of its texture of the carpet and it is more practical to be engraved on metal.

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