Reviewing Qajar Era Architectural Decoration with an Emphasis on European Designs in the Works of Shiraz

Morteza ELMI JAAFARLOO

MSc in Architecture, Shiraz branch, Islamic Azad University, Shiraz, Iran

Received: 22.03.2015; Accepted: 29.05.2015

Abstract. Decorative motifs always are one of the inseparable Iranian architecture. Iranian architect has used a visual perspective. Iranian architecture has always had a genuine spirit. After Naser-al Din Shah’s visited Europe the relationship with the Western world made extensive changes in society whether on sociology or cultural features that had an influence on architecture and other things. In this period, there was a wave of Iranian westernism and the traditional architecture.

In this era, Persian architectures were all looking for western styles in the form of imitation. In the meantime, some archaism in architecture era in decoration and reclamion of Islamic motifs with the order of governments became popular.

Although, some architectural techniques such as plastering, tile, carving and so on. were used, the method was basically Iranian. The new techniques come from the western world. There are different varieties in motifs. Some of them are Iranian but others are from the west. Some of the building’s design has the same designs as traditional before Islam. In Qajar motifs abstraction and inspiration of environment widely are seen and the artist is trying to resuscitate environment and ornament images around him in building decoration. Excessive use of motifs made the building boring and busy. In this article, we are going to take a look at the common principles in Qajar Era.

Keywords: Architectural Decoration, Qajar architecture, European motifs, Shiraz monuments

INTRODUCTION

Without considering to starting point of subjective and objective condition of historical period, it is not possible to analyze Iran's contemporary architecture. Architects are facing with different questions for interpreting the current situation.

What type of conceptual image and model does our contemporary architecture follow? How is Iran's position and relationship with international architecture specially west architecture? For answering these questions, we studied Qajar era to survey the amount of European motifs that affect Shiraz architecture.

Review of literature

There is less written source on architectural decoration survey and most of studied books have never studied Shiraz monuments. The purpose of this research is to get a glimpse to this subject.

* Corresponding author. Morteza Elmi JAAFARLOO

Special Issue: Technological Advances of Engineering Sciences

http://dergi.cumhuriyet.edu.tr/ojs/index.php/fenbilimleri ©2015 Faculty of Science, Cumhuriyet University
Method
Descriptive- Analytical method, liberal and also field studies in direct observations were used in this research. The effects of the events on Qajar buildings decoration were studied. Based on reviewing studies the most parts of decorations and motifs of tiles in Qajar era such as pictures, stamps, postal cards of that era were immolated. The pictures of historical works, natural scenery, architecture, birds, grapes, crown, man, winged angels, person with European clothes, flower, vase painting, and bowl-plate maker with different bunches of flowers specially rose and lily are seen in these motifs, tile decorations and building carvings.

Decorative Tendencies in Qajar Era
Generally, Qajar architecture can be divided into two periods.

First period
It starts from the reign of Agha Muhammad Khan to the end of Muhammad Shah’s reign. In this era also the dominant look on architecture is as endogenous look and it is based on Isfahan style. The excellent samples of this era are shrines of holy Masque and Soltanian mosque.

Second period
It starts from the reign of Naser -al Din Shah to the end of Qajar dynasties' reign. Because of Naser-al Din Shah travelling to Europe and his descendents and also sending Iranian students to Europe, affecting the governing body and elites, new style of architecture came which was eclectic of vernacular architecture and western architecture. Architectural art of this era in comparison with Safavic era (especially about building) is poor. Only during the long reign of Naser-al Din Shah Qajar because of the influence of western art, industries were also thrived as well as delicate crafts, mirror and tile. The more communication of Iran with west combined Iranian architectures to west architecture and created exquisite artwork.

One of the obvious features of Qajar architect is naturalism and ignoring abstraction. At the end of Qajar era this feature was highlighted and it was used in religious buildings. Socio-cultural movement took place after Naser – al Din Shah era and during constitutional period its power increased. Qajar kings revived the glorious pre- Islamic culture in Iran and their architectural monuments in order to show themselves as Achaemend and Sasanid civilization such as motifs of Persepolis, Sassanid motifs.

Technical implementation of Qajar architectural decoration

Qajar plaster
Qajar plaster techniques due to its performance method and motifs include sugar milk (maximum bumps are 3-2 millimeters), bump (about one centimeter), it is known cumin because of lack of drawing, Bahashte ( the most significant kind of plaster), colors ( the layers of colors laminate based on artist’s choice), mosaic, and Netted plaster which is a kind of plaster used in wall exterior as net that artist at the back of this plaster indicated another motifs such as Alter of Urmia Jame mosque.

In this period we see two different types of plasterwork. Iranian elements were used in design of some of these motifs for example, Forugh Al Molk house. Plaster has a high quality. Most of these motifs have flowers, leaves, Shah Abas flower, combined flower , hen and flowers show Iranian concept. Image 1 shows plaster of Forugh Al Molk house. Image 2 indicates Qavam’s Narenjestan. The mentioned plasters with energetic motifs have high symmetry. Qajar plasters
Reviewing Qajar Era Architectural Decoration with an Emphasis on European Designs in the Works of Shiraz

are dense and busy and full of different pictures which have made the space more boring and complex. Around its walls there are decorated with arabesque, bergamot, flowers, and leaves or mirror indicated vase and grapes.

![Image 1. plaster of Forugh Al Mulk house.](image1.jpg)

Plaster decoration at image 3 besides prolific and symmetry is superfine and it has completely elegant and aristocratic spirit which is mostly exist in Baruch’s artworks. The conflicts of empty and full areas of these motifs as well as a variety of the decoration level are important. Its performance is very precise and variation is collected well. The aspects of these designs are strength of lines and energetic, powerful arch.

![Image 3. Qavam Narenjestan plaster and its similarity to Rukoko’s works (source: .)](image3.jpg)

**The variety of lines and their emphasis on excessive varieties**

The remarkable thing is that Qajar architectural decoration artists used their creative mind without considering to Khatai and Arabesque and traditional combination. However, symmetry of motifs which was explained before was emphasized, these symmetries were not calculated precisely and maximum sensitivity is based on artist’s experience.
Qajar Inscription Era
Safavieh inscription as before became more common. Dominant handwriting of that time was Sols. Most Safavieh buildings like Shah Mosque and Sheikh Lotfollah, Inscription tradition adhered to the old principles but the line of inscription was changed from Sols to Nastaliq.

Architectural Landscape
Architectural landscapes are part of projects which have been used mostly in Qajar era. Architectural landscape was seen in tile motif of Qavam Narjestan Nasir mosque, etc. Some examples exactly like landscapes are seen on stamps, pictures and postal cards.


Brickwork
Qajar brickwork art is as same as Seljuk’s period but they are not as significant as Safavieh’s era. Although, in Qajar, brickwork with other designs and its role in building facade was common, brickwork text widely was in contrast of the tile motif or other items. The simple and skien combination was used in the margin and capital frames and tile.

Studying samples
In this study, we try to use descriptive – analytical and library studies in Qajar architecture. Field studies as well as direct observation and designs of building are evaluated. In this context, a Statistical sample of Qajar decoration was chosen based on some criteria such as being important and full and safe and available.

Forough Al Mulk house
One of the historical house located in Shiraz related to Forough Al Mulk of Qavam dynasty which refers to Qajar era (one hundred year ago). The total area of this building is about 1100 meters which includes first floor and basement. The house has interior and exterior with two separate yards. It has also an Iranian plan. Predominantly mansion, pool, bathroom, kitchen are other part of this house. This house is located in the old district of Shiraz at Sang Siyah district behind Bibi Dokhtaran Shrine at the end of closed alley. There are two platforms in front of the house. At first, entering the doorway you step into entrance lobby (Hashti) which has simple brickwork. Then you reach to yard. There are a lot of rooms around the yard. Engraving of all rooms has gone because of restoration of the building motifs. Only one of these decorations in interior section of this house has remained that is called mirror room and there is also a fireplace.
Reviewing Qajar Era Architectural Decoration with an Emphasis on European Designs in the Works of Shiraz

Image 5. Column and European design are used in designing of this fireplace (source: Author).

Image 6. In mirror room drawing of European buildings and flower and brush with natural color are used (source: Author).

Image 7. The drawing of this room is natural and European (source: Author).

Qavam’s Narenjestan Garden

The construction of the building has been completed by Muhammad Reza Qavam’s order by Shiraz artisans in 1966. It was dedicated to Shiraz University then it is rehabilitated by university. It is now preserved as a great museum.

This elegance and traditional house consists of two parts: interior and exterior. It is decorated with different art of that time such as mirror work, tile work, carving, plasterwork, brickwork, wood carving and drawing. This house has a beautiful and significant door and with stepping into entrance lobby we reach to the yard from left and right (It is said this house and Zinat Al Mulk house are exterior and interior of each other). The harmony of elements of the yard is different from other buildings. It can be said this yard is as a garden which is in front of mansion. There is a fountain in the middle of garden which is drawn through the garden and orange trees have
planted symmetrically from left to right. In the southern part of the yard the series of rainbow color tile have the same motifs as European buildings. The hall which is placed in front of the rooms is worked with natural elements like bush and flowers – bunch of Rose flowers. The pictures of ceiling yellow, green and red colors are excessively used. It is made up of series of natural plants and European women images. The entrance door of mansion is in the form of mosaic work and its handle is made up of marble. The hall overlooks the garden that has the most beautiful mirror work. Using of Rose flowers and also ships have been common in European buildings. Sun flowers and other flowers in real form are used in the series of drawings. Frame of images of buildings and European people Gravures are from Narenjestan mirror works. Decoration of this house is in realism style. Plants have been changed from abstraction to bush-flower images and rosette leaves – bird. The plaster of the house is from real elements. Carving which has been done on stones is in realistic form of bush and flower.

Image 8. Rainbow color tile which shows European images (Source: Author).

Image 9. The drawing which has been done in southern side (Source: Author).

Image 10. Gravures of European images (Source: Author).

Zinat Al Mulk

This significant and beautiful mansion is remaining works of Qajar Era. It is also related to Qavam Al Mulk which is known as Zinat Al Mulk. Instruction of this building began in 1870 and its completion was in 1880. There is a way from house doorway to the yard, namely, yard doorway, as well as carving stone plinth like mesh windows for ventilation and lighting of the basement, two gardens, one big fountain which is made of integrated stone and also a small fountain. The rainbow color tile crescent which is in front of the building is very beautiful. This building has
more than 20 rooms besides beautiful and exquisite stucco and mirrorwork which have way to each other. The wooden ceiling has been adorned with various images of animals, birds, bush and flower. Crannies, walls, room have been worked with mirror. The whole large basement of the house has been bricked beautifully. European drawing has been used in Narenjestan building much more than other buildings. The walls and ceiling of these buildings have been painted with portraits of European women. This building like Narenjestan building has been used green, red, yellow and white color and cranny color so less in bush- flower painting. The materials of the ceiling are timbers. All the timbers have been painted with natural bush-flower. The all shape of timbers has been taken of European architecture.

Image 11. Mirror work and painted ceiling (Source: Author).

Image 12. Gravures have been framed of European images and people on ceiling (Source: Author).

Image 13. Columns are as same as Kerentin columns (Source: Author).
Image 14. The walls which have been filled with bush-flower plaster (Source: Author).

Image 15. Gravures of European women through mirror work (Source: Author).

Image 16. The fireplace like European one (Source: Author).

Saadat House

This house is located in Sang Siyah district. This house changed to house of inlaid and carving. It seems because of restoration motifs have been gone. The only thing has been remained is rainbow color tile work in frontage of the building. In the corner of it foreign buildings are seen. In these motifs red, blue, and yellow colors have been used.

Image 17. Saadat House frontage (Source: Author).
Reviewing Qajar Era Architectural Decoration with an Emphasis on European Designs in the Works of Shiraz

*Image 18.* Motifs of foreign buildings (Source: Author).

**Hosseini’s House**

This house is in Goade Araban. Now, it is used as a residential and there is no control on its maintenance. Most of the tiles of this building are green, yellow and red colors and its bush-flower pictures are real.

*Image 19.* Rainbow color tile motifs.

**Nasir Al Mulk mosque**

This mosque is in Goade Araban district. The most adoration of this building like other parts of the building displays Iranian traditional architecture.

Different levels of the building had been covered with materials such as tile, brick, stone or plaster which were common in Iranian mosque building of that time. Although, the influence of western decorations is visible alongside of Iranian decoration, Iran after Islamic religious buildings had been used three types of designs including abstraction, geometric and calligraphy designs. Abstract designs had been carried out by inspiration of nature which they were basically depicted symbolic and abstract plant form. They were called Arabesque. The picture of this building was inspired by abstract form of flower, plant and sun. On this building have been written verses of the Holy Quran or Hadith in Kofi, Sols, Banaian rarely Nastaliq lines on the walls of religious building such as mosques, Hosseinieh and holy shrines. Three types of those designs have been seen in this mosque. These designs are on the walls and arches of the building. The mosque altar also has rainbow color tiles or plasterworks and brickwork. Under the arches and on top of the walls and stokeholds have been adorned with other traditional architecture such as Resmes bandi, Mogharnas, and Qatar Bandi. Another influence of European adoration has been seen in carving on the plinth stone. In rainbow color tile works of this building natural flower and bushes in true form have been used. Some of the designs of this mosque come from European buildings and churches. In this mosque unlike other mosques turquoise color have been used more than green, red, and yellow colors.
CONCLUSION
The European conquest with the use of modern science and technology not only caused their military and political domination on other countries but also changed their social and cultural norms and practices. In many areas, modern European patterns are replaced by tradition in non-European communities. Our traditional society excludes from this. Developments, changes and modernization began during the war between Iran and Russia and conflict of Iran and Britain and later in military, political establishment and thoughts. In Qajar era because of blind imitation of western modernity some major changes has bred in our architecture. So that if we review the use of pure colors such as yellow, white, red, blue in drawings and they are away from their abstraction. Since we have used less drawings in Qajar era but in this era it has been found in the house of lords in abundance.

REFERENCES