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The Emergence of the Horseman Sculpture in Tehran's Urban Arts

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Abstract

The study tries to consider the procedure of construction and legitimization of a new kind of art and aesthetic. In Islamic period, we cannot trace the construction of three-dimensional (in European way) sculpture in Iran. It was in the Qajar era that Qoorkhaneh minister ordered some artists to sculpt Naser al-Din Shah's sculpture (horseman). This model was followed in the next epochs such as Pahlavi and Islamic Republic. The research revolves around the question of how the horseman sculpture, in contrast to the previous aesthetic, emerged as a new aesthetic; and how it was accepted as a new kind of art. The article is purposely a fundamental-theoretical study and it is a descriptive-analytical study in term of nature. Methodologically, it is a qualitative study in which the researcher applies Foucauldian concept of power/knowledge to answer the above questions. Additionally, it tries to consider how a work becomes a branch of urban arts in Iran. The study comes to the conclusion that the effect of knowledge which exerted by power in the Qajar era as well as establishment of the institutions and diplomacies in national level produced a kind of discipline and training aesthetic sense. This training gradually persuades some artists to accept the aesthetic and sculpture style and consequently they design and perform some works based on this pattern.

Keywords: Aesthetic, Discipline, Foucault, Horseman sculpture, Power/knowledge.

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Introduction

The role of horse and its rider has a long history in the pictorial tradition of Iran. For the first time, it was in the Qajar era that sculpture of Naser al-Din Shah (horseman) was made based on European criterion. It is taken into account as the first Iranian urban sculpture ordered by Eqbal ol Saltane, minister of Qoorkhaneh and realistically constructed and molded by Aliakbar Hajar who was an eminent artist in this field. Emergence of a full three-dimensional and realistic work was in conflict with both the past aesthetic and religion which prevented Muslims from composition of human's face. Although this work encountered with opposition of religious scholars (so Naser al-Din Shah could not put it in the public places), it became a prototype sculpture followed in the next periods such as Pahlavi and Republic. As the main question, why this new aesthetic could be replaced with the previous one; and why the horseman was accepted and gradually became a part of Iranian urban art, especially in a record culture.

Michel Foucault, French sociologist, in his works deals with some concepts such as power, science, truth, policy and strategies of power. He explains how, in equal conditions, one statement is rejected, discarded and excluded to legitimize another one. This study tries to use the above concepts to explain how the Horseman Sculpture, despite its contradiction and opposition with the dominant aesthetic and religion, could be legitimized, accepted and became a kind of artistic expression.

The present study implies that some concepts such as power, construction of power and truth cause a kind of discipline and aesthetic training. Consequently the artists themselves accept such a rendition and exert it in the works of the next periods. Applying Foucauldian thoughts, the research tries to deal with the rejecting or excluding system, aesthetic development of an artistic form and construction of a new kind of art. Thus the background of the research, method and research question will be followed by explaining four main parameters by Foucault; while explaining these concepts, it deals with the horseman as the central issue. Finally it tries to explore a suitable answer for the proposed question.

Literature Review

R. Darakhshani (2002) deals with the role of horse in the ancient civilization, pre-Islamic and Islamic period (by the end of Tamerlane era). Zahra Alizade Birjandi and Akram Naseri (2016) deal with the connection between art and policy in the Qajar epoch and its consequences. They consider the protective role of policy in this period. Although they establish their theoretical framework based on Foucauldian perspective, they do not deal with the Horseman and its aesthetic development. Abdol Majid Hosseini Rad (2013) considers rendition (since ancient Stone-grapy to Homayoni-King-sculpture) in Qajar period. He considers some works including stellar figure and sculpture. He also considers the works of this period, classifies and categorizes them and deals with their approaches.

None of the mentioned studies deal with the horseman sculpture, its trend of becoming an expression of art in Iranian urban art, its acceptance and creation of a new kind of aesthetic, rejection discipline and development of a new of aesthetic.

Research Methodology

The article is purposely a fundamental-theoretical study and it is essentially a descriptive- analytical study. Methodologically, it is a qualitative study and its data collection is based on library-field; that is a syncretic method. It focuses on the horseman sculptures in Tehran since the Qajar epoch to now. It uses all data including text, document, picture, and art work. The analysis of the data is based on logical and rational reflection.

Theoretical Basis

In Foucault's thoughts, connection between power and knowledge is the most important point which makes power reflective. He believes that power is never exerted without knowledge; meanwhile, the power itself is the source of knowledge (1980). He claims that it is the power which determines the truth; so, power, knowledge and truth make a triangle resulting in generation of power. Although Foucault's works are replete with the concept of power, he does not mean suppressive power. Foucault does not believe in power as a suppressive phenomenon; therefore, he says "if power was never anything but repressive, if it never did anything but say no, do you really believe that we should manage to obey it?" (1978: 36). He also says: "I am not referring to Power – with a capital P – dominating and imposing its rationality upon the totality of the social body. In fact, there are power relations. They are multiple; they have different forms, they can be in play in family relations, or within an institution, or an administration..." (1988: 38). Foucault continues "Power is employed and exercised through a netlike organization... Individuals are the vehicles of power, not its points of application" (1980: 98). In his writing, we perceive that he sees power as a network existing in all conditions. So Foucault does not believe that power exists only for and controlled by particular individual or among a specific class; but he takes it as a set of relations which exists within various and different forms of lives and always reproduced. Power is exerted through organizations, institutions and relations and this kind of exertion is not repressive but it is generative; because it changes policies, approaches and behaviors and this change in behavior or approaches provides a background for emergence of new relations and conditions. Instead of being the agents of power, according to Foucault, individuals are the vehicles through which the power gets emergence and eruption.

Discipline is one of the concepts which signal of the generative trait of power. Discipline is a phenomenon which represents via the power exerting through organizations and institutions. In his book, *Discipline and Punishment*, Foucault deals with the account of prisons and various ways of exerting punishment. He points out that physical punishment gradually becomes a phenomenon to control. This control represents itself in the form of a personal discipline (Mills, 2009:75). Discipline is a concern for surveillance which is internalized within each individual, namely each person supervises itself and punish and correct its own self. Discipline, according to Foucault, marries into institutions and organizations, exerts itself and then penetrates into everything. This event is performed through policies, trends and guidelines existing within each institution to develop individuals thinking or perception. It even penetrates the style of individuals thinking (Mills, 2009: 75-77). Consequently, we can talk of discipline technology which is a set of guidelines for self-punishment and correction. Among these guidelines and institutions, we can mention the forms and methods of education as an instrument to construct knowledge and power. As it was discussed, it is impossible to exert power without knowledge and the power is certainly the source of knowledge (Foucault, 1980: 52). According to Sara Mills, we can conclude that knowledge is not a neutral phenomenon but it is an important element in struggle to achieve power; therefore, everyone who is pretender of knowledge, consequently s/he is pretender of power. Hence it is adequate to use power/knowledge: the syncretic term which coined by Foucault. So knowledge production, instead of being a suppressive task, is a generative affair. Generative trait of power is represented in specific forms including the way of knowing and the changes in this knowing. How we know something? Which systems and procedures permit manifestation of something as reality? In response, we should recourse to power/knowledge by Foucault: "the subject who knows, the objects to be known and the modalities of knowledge must be regarded as so many effects of [the] fundamental implications of power-knowledge and their historical transformations" (1991: 27-8). If power determines the subject of knowing and the way of knowing; so it is possible to talk about engagement with or ignorance of something in the power system.

Therefore, this is the power which constructs a system of exclusion and extension; this is the power which determines the source of knowing and what can be known. This is the power/knowledge which produces the truth and determines what is true or false. In general, the exclusion/extension system and the

awareness, consciousness or knowing subject become possible within the power relations and through knowledge. The significant question here is that how can the knowledge itself be resulted in this knowing? Instead of focusing on the history of ideas and individuals, Foucault deals with the apparatus of knowledge formation; so, individuals, for Foucault, are the vehicles for knowledge formation (Mills, 2009: 114-118). Hence knowledge is the instrument of power to construct truth and a vast spectrum of guidelines is made to put this truth in its context and verify it.

The so called disciplinary technology, which is exerted within institutions and organizations, is taken into account as a state strategy. The state strategies are operated through establishing institutions or organizations or issue of instructions and directions to exert power. The strategies designed for support, ignorance, exclusion and rejection of a subject are taken into account as the specific kinds of exerting power which establish an exclusion/extension system. As a guideline of disciplinary power, these strategies are connected to knowledge and educational institutions. This complicity of knowledge and power not only causes exclusion/extension of knowing but it also trains the way of knowing. This process results in training and disciplinization of individuals, namely determining how to think and how to perceive a phenomenon.

Horseman Sculpture-Qajar Period

Mirza Ali Akbar Khan Hajarbashi was ordered by Eghbal ol Seltene, minister of Qoorkhaneh to make Naser al-Din Shah Sculpture (Tanavoli, 2015). It was completed in 1887.



Picture 1. Naser al-Din Shah's Sculpture as horseman (Tanavoli, 2015: 150).

In Ashraf Newspaper, No. 50, Afzal ol Malek writes; “on Mr. Eghbal ol Seltene’s order (Qoorkhaneh Minister); a sculpture of icon...sacred bondmen... blessed mounted and in formal dress is constructed: it is almost as large as body and form. In term of craftsmanship, painting science, proportion and exactness, this sculpture is incomparable. It is like the works by professional European masters although it is by Iranian sculptors”. Through the text we perceive a glorious, honorable and triumphant description. The main point is: to be like European work and to be the product of Iranian sculptors. In fact, it is the imitation of Europeans sculptures which puts a work in the position of admiration and praise. In other words, being like professional Europeans sculptures is the criterion of praise. This criterion implies the realistic rendition and construction of a work. It begs a kind of aesthetic which is in conflict with the previous aesthetic. Julian Roby in his book (1999: Preface) deals with the influence of Europeans’ works on Qajar’s artists. For example he compares the pictures of Qajarian Shah and Napoleon. Roby and similar researches show that how this “resemblance” is represented as a system in all the works of that period; how it forms them and establishes

a new kind of art. In the above quotation, Afzal ol Molk uses “painting science” instead of painting art: “...in term of craftsperson, painting science, proportion and mastery exactness in the sculpture technique.” In Islamic art, there are many definitions for art. Each definition depends on the period and its dominant style. The words “technique and figures” equate for *Techne* (Bolkhari 2014: 63).



Picture 2. Comparison the effect of European Art on Qajarian’s artists (Roby, 1999: Preface).

Lexicology of ‘art’ and seeking the Avesta and Pehlevi roots of the word show that the concept of art has an extensive meaning which contains all virtues, in particular the moral virtues (Bolkhari 2014: 63). Scholar and artist, however, do not use the word. In other words, they dismantle the virtual content of artistic works to consider them as science. This is a new perspective on art and consequently a dissociation of aesthetic perception. The word not only expresses a dissociation of aesthetic perception but it also shows Iranian scientific confrontation to the western art. This is a scientific confrontation to art that gives importance to instruction. Moreover, the criterion of “good European master” persuades the court to send some students abroad. Additionally, it establishes Darol Fonoon School for art instruction. This school established because of Naser al-Din Shah’s concern for education of students and his supervision on its trend (Eshraghi, 2006: 134). It was for the first time that a school for art instruction was established. Education institution facilitated training and extension of new aesthetic in Iranian art.

Many European teachers and masters were invited from Europe. Also, many Iranian teachers graduated from European universities and dealt with instruction in this school based on the new educational system and criterion (Eshraghi, 2006: 103).

Aliakbar Hajar was the first rank student of Darol Fonoon. He was the first one who constructed the Bronze Sculpture in European concept. There is a marble sculpture, which is a naked woman with long hairs, by Hajar. Under of this sculpture there is a signature entitled “the least work by Aliakbar Hajar, a blessed student from Darol Fonoon, one of Conestan’s Students.” Conestan was a teacher in Darol Fonoon. Parviz Tanavoli traces Aliakbar Hajar’s biography since beginning to his studies in France and Italy (Tanavoli, 2015: 155-156).

Establishment of Darol Fonoon and sending students to abroad are the first support of aesthetic by the court. It implied the rejection of the previous aesthetic system and substitution of a new one. In fact, it was a kind of rejection or exclusion/extension as consequence of the court supports.

In fact, the education itself is a level of power strategies which could produce a new kind of art under the people’s consciousness. This education taught a new aesthetic perception and apprehension which got legitimization through education. Therefore, the state strategies, in one side, was calling educational level for making and developing a new kind of art and aesthetic and education and, in other side, was producing a new aesthetic and artistic perception under Iranian consciousness. Moreover, the education and curt support of art and new confrontation to art resulted in decline of previous aesthetic and development of a new aesthetic. Aliakbar Hajar and his work, in fact, are product of such a reading and education of art.

Constitutional revolution and consequent civil disputes obligated security. The contemporary nationalism was a struggle to replace national interests with religious and tribal dependencies. It was Reza Shah's strongest arrow (Katem, 1991). The so-called nationalism is taken into account as national operations which include the entire national enterprises by Reza Shah. He established some disciplines, regulations and obligations which constructed various scopes. He did not exclude prosperity enterprises and urban aesthetic. In other words, they were constructed by these disciplines and regulations. For example, we can mention the passage of municipality law in June, 1921 (including 108 articles) which approved by national council assembly. In this way, many disciplines, regulations and ground rules about urban affairs informed and performed through municipality. In fact, municipality became a route for exertion of such rules and ground rules (Mokhtari et al., 2000). Design, construction and equipment of squares and installation of sculptures in different cities were among the duties of municipality (Shahri, 2004, quoted in Kiyani, 2005: 204).

There are two sculptures belonging to Pahlavi period: The two Horsemen (Reza Shah) respectively in Rah Ahan (Picture 3) and Topkhane. The first one constructed by Auguste Maillard, European sculptor in Paris. Tehran's municipality introduced Gholamreza Rahimzade Arzhan-painter and sculptor-as supervisor. In a letter to Gholamreza Rahimzade Arzhan, Tehran municipality writes so: the horse must be moving, namely one foot of the horse must not be on land; the horse must be, as much as possible, strong. The sculpture must be similar to the European ones. For so doing, they must do their best (Mohajer & Tajedini, 2016: 296/ Center of Documents; Tehran; No. 6124/340). Through the letter one can explore many notes such as those which suggested for construction of this sculpture. That was this notes which caused construction of the sculptures based on a specific model. The sculpture in the Sepah Square is the best example. Decoration of cites by installation of these sculptures, implies the connection between power and knowledge. The two mentioned sculptures are very similar; they are almost different in the form of leg, movement of hand and Shah's figure (Picture 4).



Picture 3. Reza Shah's Sculpture as a horseman (Mayard, 1940: <https://pin.it/r7iyv6fp75hfpb>).



Picture 4. Reza Shah's Sculpture in Sepah square (Anonymous artist, n.d.) <https://goo.gl/images/cvto4g>

In the period of Pahlavi (II), some offices and commissions were established to produce, install, and preserve sculptures. For example, we can mention "The Commission of installing Sculptures and Monuments in the Minister of Guidance." Before installing or providing sculptures, according to this Commission, the state organizations has to inform their suggestion to The Commission of Installing Sculptures and Monuments; after considering their approved map of the target square or installation place, the commission determines the specification of the sculpture and announces it for construction (The Collection of Rules and Regulations of Art and Guidance Ministry, 1978: 307-310).

Establishment of Institutions and homogenized execution and issue of rules in the Sculpture of Horseman Shah gradually produced a kind of prototype model in art. Therefore, the Sculpture of the Horseman Shah which emerged in the Qajar period, become a national prototype for Shah because some national rules and ground rules were exerted. Therefore, it not only defines the urban sculpture but also becomes the criterion to select, order and develop a new kind of art. For example, Shah Abbas Sculpture by Iraj Mohammadi, which imitates this model, was selected as a suitable work for installation in urban dimensions in a festival (Picture 5).

Constancy and homogenizer rules enter the Sculpture of the Horseman Shah, as a type or genre of power demonstration in urban arts, into the Iranian representational world. Some years later, once Abol Hassan Khan Sedighi, the famous sculptures, was ordered to construct the sculpture of Nader Shah (Picture 6) or Yaghub Leith Safari (installed in Zabol), the artist itself imitates this prototype to design and perform it:

"You are missioned to provide the sculpture of Nader and his Horsemen. You fell again in the chasm of regulations and wandering. Remember the days and nights that you were busy by designing different plans. You drew and tore. It was your permanent habit. To construct a sculpture, you continued and finally became tiered. In the inevitable tiredness, you accepted a plan" (Narrated by Abol Hassan Sedighi, Seif, 1978: 84).

The narrative implies that the artist himself has imitated the Horseman Sculpture to design a new sculpture. The discipline and aesthetic training is the most important point of this narrative. It is a kind of discipline and punishment which underlies the institutions for designing and constructing urban sculptures. The discipline that Foucault discusses is observed in training aesthetic and accepting this kind of art. Selection of the works in the festivals, namely becoming the aesthetic criterion, and continuation of this prototype in the next sculptures gradually provided its emergence as an implicit expression of power in the Iranian aesthetic sense.

In the period of Islamic Republic Revolution, Shah's sculptures are called Taghut (defiance); therefore, they were destructed in the process of revolution (Farzaneh, 2006: 8), (Picture, 8). However, the aesthetic perception remained stable and unshakable. After revolution, some sculptors imitated the Horseman prototype to demonstrate the power of a Bassij (Picture 9) in Iranian cities.

The use of the Horseman prototype to represent power becomes a part of language and expression of Iranian representational arts in the contemporary period. In fact, the homogenizer rules and regulations legitimized a representationally process which resulted in training the representational mentality. It was a kind of discipline which resulted in training aesthetic sense and accepting a particular kind of urban art in a realistic way.



Picture 5. Shah Abbas Sculpture- Isfahan (Mohammadi, 1972) <https://goo.gl/images/f7sUw>



Picture 6. Nader Shah Afshar's Sculpture as a horseman (Abol Hassan Khan Sedighi, 1959) <https://images.app.goo.gl/6eggv86J1AxFLt4u6>



Picture 7. Example of the horseman Sculpture in Pahlavi period (Anonymous artist, n.d.) <https://images.app.goo.gl/EtCi2ySQH4Ld6Rpw5>



Picture 8. Ayatollah Taleghani, Beheshti, Rafsanjani and Banisadr in front of the overthrown sculpture of Shah (Anonymous artist, n.d.) <https://goo.gl/images/hMQNMy>



Picture 9. A Basiji riding horse. Zibasazi Archive (Fahimi, n.d., 237).

Conclusion

Being like “European good masters” was the criterion to evaluate an artistic work in the Qajar period. This new criterion called a new kind of art and aesthetic which was in conflict with previous aesthetic tradition in Iran. Moreover, the art was treated and judged scientifically. This criterion and treatment obligated sending students to abroad and establishing Darol Fonoon School. It was the court which provided fulfillment of both enterprises. As a level of power strategies, education helped power to legitimize the new aesthetic system. Through producing knowledge and getting services from it, the power could create a new kind of knowing and aesthetic perception in arts. In fact, education institution was a level of state strategies which caused development and legitimization of the new aesthetic system. This legitimization rejected the previous aesthetic because the court did not support it. Actually, a system of rejection or exclusion/extension was established. In this system, a form of art got legitimization and development by knowledge. By national operations in Pahlavi (II) period, this development and legitimization moved into a new phase. The state institutions, such as municipality, were established. They were the routes for exerting disciplines and guidelines at a national level. Such instrumental places for exerting power, developed a new art and its reading at a national level. In this way, the art was treated like the rules and guidelines. Generalization of this new reading of art made the Horseman Sculpture as a prototype to express power. Both knowledge and power strategies caused not only acceptance of this new kind of aesthetic and sculpture but also its emergence as an expression of power in Iranian urban arts. Behind the knowledge/power and its strategies, a kind of discipline was getting emergence. This discipline can be

traced and explored in the works by the sculptor who imitated this prototype and presented their works in festivals. Even in the next period, the Horseman Sculpture was used as an expression of power to demonstrate powers and abilities. In spite of religious oppositions and absence of naturalistic background, the Horseman Sculpture was accepted in Islamic Republic period. By application of the two significant instruments, the power could achieve training, institutionalization, internalization and acceptance of naturalistic expression of a work as a current and dominant art. Nowadays, each artist thinks and acts in this framework.

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