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## **The Importance of Painting in Qajar Dynasty Based on the Sociology Point of View**

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### **Abstract**

The paintings of Qajar dynasty are the most thriving and important artworks in Qajar dynasty. Studying Qajar painting helps importantly to identify and study the art and culture of Qajar dynasty. Existence of lots of paintings, diversity of designs, color and subject, combining tradition and modernism were factors for selecting this dynasty to investigate. As the painting is the visual history of each era, sociology studying of painting in this dynasty will make one to understand common culture and thinking of people in that society. Amount of influence of western culture especially during Naser al-Din Shah Era has been at the same time with the creation of these paintings and combination of these paintings with our past legacy schools lead us to the thinking and willing of Qajar artists. As Qajar art and different kinds of painting art were the foundation of contemporary Iran's painting by a research around this Dynasty, the reasons of excellence, lacks and origins of contemporary painting of Iran can be understood. Research methodology at the beginning was based on library studies while there were little reading resources in books, magazines, internet, documentation, presence in places and photography and then studying of what was seen heard and read.

**Keywords:** Qajar painting, Painting adherents and visitors, Sociology of painting art, Evolutionism, Functionalism.

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## **Introduction**

Sociology is the study of social behavior or society, including its social life and the rules of the government. This new-established knowledge is a branch of sociology using the findings of social knowledge, the interrelationship of art and other aspects of social life. It also emphasizes on the analysis of work and even the social nature.

The art of Qajar dynasty is the art of compromise; art of what ruins, art of what remains and most important of all of what is going to come. The art of Qajar dynasty has to be known as something between traditional miniatures of Iran and modern painting, a transitional period from tradition to modernity. Maybe the artist of this era was brave enough to make a connection between new and old, tradition and modernity. He/she is brave enough in order to create an exclusive art work which is connected with the valuable ancient art. Sometimes these pieces of works are larger than the human-being sizes. This kind of courageous is because of somehow its similarity with the previous schools neither the differences. Qajar painters are called as reformers. They could reform the works which were remained from the European art imports in the late Safavid and Zandieh era. Certainly in order to identify scientific identification of art in connection with the society and social development and breadth of subject, society of art is inevitable that on one hand, deep thinking in art based on beauties and realities inside and outside of art and emotional expression. On the other hand, society of art studies society and different manifestations of social life from society perspective. Most important of all, relations that make this art connect with manifestations of social life, and make it identify to be identified with scientific way.

## **The history of development of painting in Qajar dynasty**

The painting of Zandiyeh dynasty which itself continues to create connection between the Safavid paintings and the western culture, was transferred in Qajar dynasty with slightly changes. It can be said that school of Qajar, actually began from Karim Khan Zandiyehs' government. During Fath ali shah Qajar's government, there were good circumstances for regeneration of artistic life of court. He gathered some of the most prominent artists in capital (Tehran) and he appointed them to draw the big-sized curtains which were used in new built palaces (Pakbaz, 2006, 150). Visual arts of nineteen century of Iran can be divided into two periods: the first period continued until Sani Ol Molk. In this period, from the early of nineteen century to 1840 during second period, Iranian painting was influenced by European painting specially a combination of Renaissance's art, Baroque (art style of nineteen century) and realism. Actually the artists of nineteen century continued to study art in Renaissance's

period and Baroque's period whereas; Artists of Safavid began this study (1736). Later in second half of nineteenth century, the artists led the art to realism with European style. Meanwhile it was based on needs and developments of Iranian society, not just an unaware copy of western art. So some of Iranian artists were trained in Europe and Iranian painting, had a long and brilliant history in Iran, and was influenced more extremely by European style and techniques. So national style destroyed painting distinctions of states which existed before this period (such as Herat, Tabriz, and Isfahan style) (Ajand, 2002).

The art of Qajar dynasty shows three fundamental characteristics and features includes daily increasing separation of Iranian culture from the great Islamic, tradition as result of the victory of Shia and competition with Ottoman Empire, entering elements of Folk art, increasing dependency on effects of western art. Although the art of this period was in more low level than previous periods, it shows completely purified and independent feature and identity (Ajand, 2005). Floor stated in his article that the art of Qajar dynasty shows both continuity of traditions and separate of history. Qajar painter is not just a painter since he works with the variety of art forms. They design patterns for carpets and tiles and they are also graver, light creator, sculptor and architect (Floor, 1999). This flow began in the late of Safavid dynasty and it continued in Qajar and Zandiyeh dynasty with leaps and bounds in a way that it flourished in the middle of 14<sup>th</sup> century with work arts of Kamal ol Molk. Pluralism is completely clear both in selecting subjects of art and in style of painting them, this is features of electric style and leaving traditional miniature (Aydin Aghdashloo, 1992).



Picture1. Hoze khaneh Paintitig of SahebGharaniyeh by Kamal ol Molks

### **Social and economic classification of paintings in Qajar dynasty**

However there isn't any specific art school in Qajar dynasty, the painters have some social-economic classification which is beyond the boundaries. The first level is referred to the painters who were related to the court and politics. Their professions were as the following:

graffiti, oil painting, illuminated manuscript and imagery for the travel literature of Shah. The second level was related to those painters who prepared their works for selling or even they painted some artworks for lithography. The third level has been working in the field of industrial. They designed some pattern for the textiles, architects and tile industry. The painters of curtains in the Ghahvekhaneh are the sub branch of this level. So the graffiti were related to the first level of Qajar paintings and the designs in the material paintings were related to the third level (Azhand, 2002, 16-17).

### **The adherents and visitors of paintings in Qajar dynasty**

In the early of Qajar dynasty, the customers of art works and the adherents of art were related to the high level people in the society because of the feudal structure. The artists also thought that their life is related to the feudal structure in the society, so the most of art works were produced as formal works. According to the economic developments and even the advent of reformism thought, the majorities of customers were related to the government and even became independent. While small merchants gained power as class of society, they could not fill vacuum resulted from vanishing governments' support ad Royal workshops. This caused more limited and cheaper demand of people content to be prepared for artists and made this art clearer shape and folk painting with religious and epic themes flourished dramatically (Shayesteh Far, 2007, 7).

### **The differences between painting of Qajar and European painting**

Since the term of realism in Persian language is not used for that period, artists and their supporters used western naturalism. Actually this term distinguished, its style and new features that originated from European painting, from visual arts in previous period. This term generally was used for the paintings which opposed to tradition of two-dimensional Iranian imagery; they were not flat, brilliant colors, lack of prospect using of Prospective. Vice versa, painted images in European style were darker pallet, prospect technique, Perspective, showing three-dimensional as tradition in Renaissances' period ad Baroque, and in second half of nineteen century they emphasized on registration of realities. This new style shows grace of experiences and interest in diversity of artists. New using of color, shadow, different colors, real space, description of people's life and what can be seen in the world, all these attracted the artists of this period. Most important of all, change the new performance of light from mystically view compared to visual arts. Qajar artist understood part of this beauty by seeing European artworks. This is reason of creating some artworks like their style. This style

became tradition in Iran in Safavid Dynasty and was called Foreignizing (Jafari, 2003). This kind of painting reflected national hopes and interests, religious beliefs and culture of different middle layers of urban community. It is a newer phenomenon of forms of folk painting such as painting curtains, wall painting of blessed monument and painting beyond the glass with religious themes and like these. Ghahveh khaneh painting is created by constitutionalism movement based on tradition of folk and religious art is affected by common nature painting of that period and is created by artists of that school and flourished in Pahlavi dynasty. Researchers believed that history of religious folk painting originated from Safavid Dynasty- when Shia Islam spread (Pakbaz, 2004.)



Figure 2 – screen of Ghahveh Khaneh painting

Religious screen of color and oil which often have been drawn in big size for watching, generally have been called and known by names like, Ghahveh Khaneh painting, image reading, screen reading, minstrelsy, Pardeh-Kkani or sometimes icons reading and curtains goods (Hosseini, 2005, 255). The most important features of these artworks have been beyond of conditions and atmosphere of court and just in painting style and images of clothes that reflection of Safavid courts' atmosphere is felt (Scarcia, 1996, 28).

### **Specification of court paintings in Qajar dynasty**

Actually Qajar painting, especially in Fath – Ali Shahs' period (1797-1834) shows the flourish of essential and immemorial tradition in monumental paintings. This painting is used for decorating the palaces. In the most Islamic countries, painting art is limited to geometric designs without icons in public area and emphatically small-scaled narrative pictures of manuscripts private space. On the other hand, Iran in Qajar dynasty development of icon painting with large scale is found. This absolute difference with Islamic tradition shows - in

places- social and religious beliefs have been described by texts and writing tools. Iran has strong different and distinct culture of picture. Whereas, painting in the past was understood as a branch of European painting (Diba, 2001).Floor believed that painting of Qajar dynasty is continuation of traditional painting. Meanwhile, he stated that there is a developmental delay in which a different kind of art was found (Ajand, 2002).

Generally, the common themes of Qajar dynasty include:

1. Epic and political themes that shows the glory of Shah and his dynasty specially Fath- Ali Shah in Qajar Dynasty who wanted to return to the greatness of ancient Iran.



Figure 3- Graffiti -Golestan Palace

2. emotional-sexual themes that were used for combining emotions and sense of aesthetics and bare bodies that they were so interested in but it was drawn unprofessionally.



Figure 4 – Graffiti – Golestan Palace



3. Religious themes included icons. The flourish of religious themes can be found in Ghahveh Khaneh Painting that had religious and epic approach (Hatem, 2008, 36).



Figure 5 – Graffiti with religious themes

The main purpose of using these political themes in visual arts is showing the glory of the ruler and dynasty. After appearance of Islam, Shahs of Qajar tried much more than other dynasties to show their power and importance inside and outside of Iran. The Qajar, using different kinds of pictures, wanted to declare in the world that they gained monarchy of Iran after 40 bloody war years. In order to show their power and grandiosity between people, they showed their pictures of portrait painting and group pictures with foreign ambassadors (Diba, 1999; 43). In ornaments of Fath-Ali Shahs' period, new colors were found and white and yellow colors in new forms like bunch of grapes, flower pots, pottery wares ornamented by human bodies, were abundantly used (Ajand, 2005). Ornaments in Qajar painting, instead of Eslimi and Khataei ornaments like Lachack and Toranj, Techniquial margin and Shame, Termeh, were replaced by repeated Paisley pattern and small Damask roses. Generally it should be said that Iranian painting in 12 and 13 century, using traditions of painting in 11 centuries, and combination between traditions of European landscaping and house of symmetrical and uniformed and sense and outstanding colorlogy of Iranian, selecting minimalism method in Chiaroscuro and sizing, using perspective in buildings, landscapes and muscles of persons and generally increasing some of ornament forms is a new way which is introduced by Iranian painters in art field (Aghdashlu, 1996). There is a contrast between painting and architecture of Qajar. While painter follows his style and painting master, his personality remains unknown and his fantasy comes into an artwork elegantly and separates artwork from real world and it develops in artists' imagination. If we treat simulation as a one of the features of European classic painting in the early of 13 century, their painting are not

completely similar to their owners except of a face having a specific feature. Not only there is no similarity but also all faces are similar together. Instead of foreign simulation, painter tries to draw the faces with beautiful and real features as much as possible (Gudarzi, 2009). In Qajar painting, natural objects in describing real features imaginatively are less noticeable. Local arts are seen especially in ornaments forms and designs in Qajar architecture. Painting of hunting scenes, Lion and Sun symbols, figurative forms, using yellow and red colors of tiling and ornament forms are examples of effects of state art on Qajar architecture (Dorudgar, 2003). One of the important features of 12 century specially 13 century is development of ornament designs and relatively modernized that have been drawn everywhere and in everything (Gudarzi, 2009). Most of this period's artworks show lazy lethargy, binge and kindness. This is completely against mystically poetic atmosphere in Safavid painting (Aghdashloo, 1996). Aydin Aghdashloo considered this subject that painting of 12 and 13 century is a new style with new conventions, logics, criteria and principles which are completely new and fresh and continues that ; any contrast between these artworks and previous painting or even contemporary paintings of Iran caused completely wrong results and shows limited and quick view (ibid, 45)

### **3-10-6 effective factors on this periods' painting**

In the 13<sup>th</sup> century, on one hand society needed potentially a social and cultural development and Qajar school which originated from traditions of Iranian miniature, was not able to continue to develop in terms of content and form, on the other hand, cultural diffusion which began from Safavid dynasty, in this period had reached the stage that was able to influence thinking and taste of artists (Jafari, 2008). Art in Fath- Ali Shahs' period was influenced intentionally by Safavid dynasty's and changed it in other way. In this period, they returned clearly to use traditions. In order to create united organization, some activities are done in royal palaces, which were relatively are appropriate and it was treated as a reflection of European court style in the late nineteen century (Ajand, 2005).when folk style is combined with suggestions and inspiration, as this is seen in the most of portrait paintings of court persons such as portraits of Fath- Ali shah with Assyrian bread, it caused to create explicit mannerism of foreign leanings. Actually, specific language of western academic as a result of close connections with Europe is combined and mixed with awareness and identification of local tradition. At the same time with monarchy of Naser al-Din Shah and after his monarchy, appearance of painting, influence of realism increased in this period and gradually Qajar painting especially at the same time with Persian Constitutional Revolution was removed from courts' restrictions and extended to social groups (Hatam, 2008). According to André



Godard, the writer of Iranian art history has stated about Iran painting (Qajar Dynasty) that during nineteenth century style of picture and simulation of Portrait and interest in landscapes and appearance of nature appeared clearly in Iranian painting art and Abu'l-Hasan Khan who was famous in the middle of nineteenth century, painted these kinds of painting and pictures. The artworks of that period are known as friendly designs and pen strength.



Figure6. Color and oil painting of Fath-Ali Shah

Gudarzi also stated that the pace of painting and demand of compressing time was added (reducing sensitivity to reach more deliberate and more costly) in above cases and made the designs and artworks seem in real shape. In this regard, it can be stated that regardless limited artworks especially in painting field, folk art of Qajar like folk policies, they are formed by aesthetical nature. Although they didn't change to folk goods, folk culture is the most apparent factor in them. In ornaments of this period while the diversity of color and designs are clear, realm of the artist and his painting are material. So trend of vanity between layers of design and form are manifested. Since diversity of color and design are in material, it reflects more the multiplicity and plurality. On the other hand, at the same time of unity, diversity of ornaments in Iranian architecture is manifested (Gudarzi, 2009).

### **3-10-8 The importance of Qajar Dynasty from sociology point of view**

This is ethic cores that make today nations. According to Smith, there are four components, religious reformation, cultural loaning, people's participation and myths of selected ethics influence importantly the survival of ethics society during the centuries, regardless of combination of population and the themes of their culture (Ghasemi, 2002). David Riesman is a socialist and reviewer like Ferdinand Tonnies, remains loyal to historical and materialism

and tries to have connection with the new situation. Like Márquez, who had emphasized on economic factors, Tonnies tries to study the human beings in terms of their intentions and wishes. Riesman also tries to introduce population balance as Fundamental factor of all social developments. But unlike two others, he reconsiders his theory and in final analysis, instead of population factor, he knows communication devices and new methods of distributing information and knowledge as a determining factor (Razaghi, 2006). Cultural, political, social and economic developments in eastern world are seen four kinds of theories. First category, it is based on western thoughts and ideas. They tried to match Islamic ideas with it. Second category was extremist Westoxified ones who believed that the Islam and eastern culture should be put aside and value system and western culture should be accepted. Third category was leaders of Islamic contemporary Renaissance, they accepted Quran and Islam – reformed from ornaments- as a principle and they also accepted positive aspects of western culture in a way that it was not against the Islam. Fourth category was some traditional ones who refused completely western civil developments (Bashiriye, 1997).

### **3-10-9 the difference between Qajar dynasty and previous dynasties and the importance of this dynasty from Evolutionism perspective**

The basics and principles of this evolutionism are based on principle that the culture of human society, from the beginning until now, has not been the constant changing. In other words, the principle of movement or dynamic is a basic and principle of this theory. So something which is studied in this school is human society and culture (Farbod, 1997).

1. Distinction and expertise: in this pattern, the transition of society to the modernization stage is considered as a entering to the higher level of distinction in different parts of construction. Industrial economic, is an economic that has just high division of labor. Large companies and workshops produce specialized products and different kinds of labors; it extends from hand works to professional fields. In order to train technical experts demanded by this economic system, training organization are built dependent from family. In short, in all fields of organization some smaller distinctions were created. In Qajar dynasty, in cities, the categorization was based on job and profession. Such as tailor, confectioner, tinman, blacksmith and so on. Civil Life conditions are same in some aspects i.e. head of the family in terms of capability, owned personal house and jobs were inheritable. Not only the jobs and professions were determined, but also life style the way of living, decorations of house and cloth of groups and guilds were distinguished (Tajbakhsh, 1998).

2. Functional improvements: Spencer and Durkheim suggested the distinction pattern in 20<sup>th</sup> century. Parsons added that in collection of distinctions in 19<sup>th</sup> century and more abstract definitions of functional fields were being distinguished. Parsons added the theory of functional improvements of systems. Expert soldiers, expert farmers, expert industrialist all improved their activities. so distinction is a reflection of very part of society and generally it improves the functions of system.

3. A need of unity: whatever a system distinguishes more, its need to factors of unity between different parts of society increases. Technical units need to coordinate with comprehensive control system. According to the followers of evolutionism, this is a situation which is needed for unity. This situation, at the same time with increasing the complexity, happens. According to the evolutionist theory, every society has a complex division of labor but has no complex government suitable to it.

4. Gap and pressure: unity is not provided as soon as it is needed. So the evolutionism theory implements the concepts of pressure and gap in order to face with the problems in the society. These problems are because of the social changes in the society. According to the pressure theory each kind of social movement is because of the imbalanced between the expectations and facts. The mentioned imbalanced is because of the irregular patterns of distinction (Mohseni, 2007). The Persian Constitutional Revolution as a minimalistic Revolution was the first manifestation of direct conflict between the traditional Islamic- Iranian culture and western modernity. Although in constitutional movement, there was not an only ruling thinking but the attempts that are done for rebuilding in this period, originated much more than everything from western tradition and communication with western and titles like liberalism, law seeking and constitutionalism. First, the west was considered as a competitively subject. Second, it was known as a Spiritual, religious and political threat compared to the life style of Muslims (Fasihi, 1996).

### **3-10-10 the importance of Qajar dynasty from functionalists' perspective**

Functionalism theory created in response to the evolutionism the same as diffusionism (Fakouhi, 2002). This concept is defined as the investigation of different social acts or even each entity based on its relationship with the whole society. Because of this reason, this is known a collected oriented hypothesis (Farbod, 1997). In other words, act or organizations are known when the occasion, share and efficiency for other acts and organizations of society are determined (Fakouhi, 2002). According to the functionalists, there are four categories for development:

- 1) Foreign valuable resources: global communication devices, revolution in neighboring countries, activities of international organizations and travel to other countries and etc.
- 2) Domestic valuable resources: these resources are included some beliefs and innovations with the domestic originality. They also occur through the unintentional and even gradual process. These resources affect the values directly.
- 3) Foreign environmental resources: changes in trading, foreign market opening, Industrial Revolution, importing new industry and professions, jobs that impose new way of division of labor in society.
- 4) Domestic environmental resources: include industrial inventions and population growth that lead to some environmental changes (Bashiryieh, 2004).

According to the viewpoint of demography schools about Qajar dynasty, it is necessary to state that the creation of changing thought is originated from the objective and subjective development in the society in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. There were some developments and even changes in Iran in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as the following: establishment of the relative security in order to form the central government of Qajar, gradual development of population and even urbanization, relative improvement of transportations and communications, commercial prosperity, increasing the number of the employees in the government, complexity of the government, development of capitalism, increasing the capital and even the production tool which was produced from the businessmen, retailers, guilds and traders, the direct relationship between the domestic markets and global economy, enhancement of the international trade in Iran and the non-efficiency of the Qajar government in order to prepare the new demands. The most viewpoints based on Qajar's art concept indicate that the value of traditional art has been decreased in this period. The complexity of political and social conditions and even the relationship between art process and these conditions make it difficult to analyze the art of this period.

In the Past, if there were any relations between painting and community these relations were limited between Court and art. Decline and richness of painting were related with gaining power or losing power of court and fluctuations in the government power. By the establishment of Qajar dynasty, the concept of art had encountered with a variety of new frameworks. This period is more related to its especial conditions rather than the Qajar government. The Qajar government and the next dynasties were influenced by these conditions. According to these changes, the ancient traditions combined with the modern innovations. The new form of Qajar dynasty created using the civilization features and the characteristics of the Iranian culture. This new form also created by the affectability of

western art. These artists not only didn't copy the European artists but also created some work which had complete coordination with the Iranian society. They painted all the social levels of the society. This period was also the beginning of the painters' inclination to the realism as the new art style in the Qajar dynasty in the second half of 19<sup>th</sup> century. These painters affected the Iranian art history in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

## **Conclusions**

The Iranian painting has been always the representative of the appearance of the society with its painters and artists exclusively. For instance, the faces of people who were living in the specific period are reflected in Shahnamah and Khamsa. Because of this reason the Iranian painting illustrates the traditions, customs and the way of clothing in the society. The above specifications are mostly highlighted in Qajar dynasty. The artists of this school created some exclusive indicators in order to keep their relationship with the culture of that area. Both the government of Qajar and the advent of some transformations such as political, economic and social in Europe were in the same time. The painter not only integrated her/himself with the narration of events, but also implements some allegories, imagination, public culture and people's beliefs in his/her work. The originality of faces is kept in these paintings. The painter tries to transform his/her message by means of faces drawing and their reactions.

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