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Revising the Influence of Persian, Indian and Chinese motifs on the architectural decorations of Kerman from the Safavid time to present

Fatemeh Khozaei^{1*}, Mina Safizadeh², Reza Afhami³, Ahmad Sanusi Hassan⁴

1. Department of Architecture, Kerman Branch, Islamic Azad University, Kerman, Iran.

2. Department of Architecture, Kerman Branch, Islamic Azad University, Kerman, Iran.

3. Faculty of Art, Tarbiat Modares University, Tehran, Iran.

4. Building and Planning, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Penang, Malaysia.

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Abstract

Statement of the problem: Kerman has long established its historical position in Iran, and it seems at some points the importance of its position has been highlighted. Since Bandar Abbas turned into an important commercial port, Kerman has been an important trade point in the country on the Silk Road. Due to many trade exchanges with India and China in Kerman, this second-class city turned into a first-class city during the Safavid. However, less exists on how its interactions with other culture and geographical proximity to other countries have influenced the architecture and adornments of buildings in Kerman during the Safavid and since then.

Purpose of the study : The purpose of this research is to examine the adornments of buildings in Kerman since the Safavid era to see how they have been influenced by other countries, especially India and China. To this purpose, the relics of the monuments in this period in Kerman were selected as the sample and their decorations were examined in terms of originality and type of decoration.

Research Methodology: This study used research library method for data collection. Data were analyzed using a deductive approach. In order to analyze and classify the architectural decoration of buildings in terms of originality, using a criterion sampling, a number of available buildings were selected and their architectural features were analyzed. The selection criteria included the construction time and features of architectural decorations such as tile work, brickwork, color type, and volumes. The hypothesis of this research is that the architectural decoration of Kerman from the Safavid era reflects a combination of original Iranian, Indian and Chinese decorations.

Conclusion: The results of the study approve the research hypothesis. The buildings under study reflected traditional Iranian architectural elements, the architectural features of India and China and West. The result of this study adds a new dimension to Iranian architecture research overshadowed by common traditional views.

Keywords: *Architectural decorations, influence of India and china, Safavid era up to now, Kerman buildings.*

 *. Corresponding Author: Fkhozaei2013@gmail.com
+989133978214

Introduction and Statement of the problem

Analyzing the situation of Kerman during the Safavid period shows that this city has gained its position in Iran since the Safavid era. Kerman, one of the provinces in the South of Iran, is located near the coastal cities of the Persian Gulf. Throughout history, the name of trading centers in the Persian Gulf has been constantly changed. Syraf port used to be the most important Persian Gulf trading centers in Iran. The importance of this port has never been rivaled by any other ports in the Persian Gulf. This port is 240 kilometers away from Bushehr and 300 kilometers away from Bandar Abbas. In a study by Mousavi (2001) Syraf was introduced as an international port through which some Iranian goods used to be exported to China and India while some used to be imported from these countries. Trade relations through this port provided opportunities for Chinese and Indian people to travel to this city. Over time the booming trade practices declined and eventually were damaged by a terrible earthquake in 2008 (Bohranipour & Zarei, 2008). Selecting Hormuz strait as an important commercial destination in Kerman during its heyday turned it to the center of commerce and transactions through which many of the products were exported to India (Avaz Nezhad, 2000).

During Shah Abbas, some significant development occurred in Bandar Abbas. At that time Sirjan, one of the most famous cities in Kerman, was on the northern part of Hormuz and Bandar Abbas and Lara were on their southern part. In other words, Bandar Abbas was an entrance to the Iranian plateau passing through Kerman and Makran (Naseri Liravi & Hajianpour, 2011). After booming Bandar Abbas, Kerman served as a customs and turned into a commercial bottleneck through which the goods from India and China used to be taken to other places. The ships first unloaded in Bandar Abbas. When Bandar Abbas became a major commercial port in the Persian Gulf, the Silk Road, which used to pass through the northern parts of Iran, stretched to Yazd, Kerman and Bandar Abbas to facilitate the trade of goods from China. Therefore, the goods used to be brought to Bandar Abbas and then Kerman, and eventually, they were sent to Tehran and

the northern cities.

One of the most influential rulers in Kerman was Aqa Khan Mahalati who ruled Kerman during Fath Ali Shah Qajar. In addition to Iran, Aqa Khan had many disciples in India and every year, many Indian followers traveled to Iran to give him great gifts. Moreover, trading with India flourished economy in Kerman. The industry of weaving and knitting wool scarf sprang up in Kerman and became popular. Kermani wool scarf flourished in the Qajar dynasty and Kerman turned into the main pillar of the wool industry in Iran. According to Sehatmanesh (2013), in addition to India, Kerman promoted trade with Western countries, in particular, Britain, Russia, and France during the Qajar period because Kerman was a very important center for supplying raw materials to European countries. It also turned into the market for the goods from these countries, and the knitting industry in Kerman, also played a major role in the businesses and encouraged the western to travel to Kerman. Such travels and relations also had a modest impact on the economy, art and culture of Kerman. During the Qajar period, a large part of the wool of Kerman, the fast -growing industry, was exported to India (Isavi, 1983). Additionally, the city of Kerman was important to the British. After the establishment of the British Consulate in Kerman, Indian businessmen and merchants came to Kerman through Bandar Abbas port, rented caravansaries and started a business. Based on the literature, the question of the present research is as follows:

Have the architectural adornments of buildings in Kerman from the Safavid period onwards, in addition to Iranian features, been influenced by other cultures with which it had interactions?

Literature review

• The effect of the extraterritorial changes on Iranian Architecture during the Safavid Period and Qajar and Pahlavi

The Safavid era in Iran was the period of a flourishing economy, art, and architecture. Iran was as developed as west in culture and art. Political unity in the country brought unity in art and architecture to the country.

For example, in the Safavid period, the images drawn in the east part of the country were not distinguishable from the ones depicted in the west and center. The effects of European art on the art of this era were gradually mirrored by the building. The Safavids were inheriting the Timurid traditions in Herat (Javadi, 2008). In addition to the influence of European art, the architectural trace of Chinese and Indian art and culture can be also seen in the works of architecture of this era especially in Kerman which turned into the first class city.

Moreover, the competition of the Iranian government with the Ottoman in terms of culture, construction and architecture promoted creativity and novelty in Iranian architecture. In addition to the construction of important spaces such as nursery, orphanages, squares mosques, water storage, schools and caravansaries, Iran turned into an attractive tourist destination for its architectural adornments and tile decorations (Zomrashedi, 2012) Kerman was no exception because it was embracing the prominent masterpieces of the Safavid era or Ganjalikhan's collection.

Factors that influenced architecture and urbanization in the Qajar era were mainly external and universal. Among the factors which played a key role in the developments of Iran were Iranian kings' journeys to Europe, the establishment of consulates in European countries, the absence of a specific organization for the construction of buildings, translations of many foreign books, the war between Iran and Russia, attendance of the Iranian architects in Europe for education, and the presence of European professors of architecture at Darolfnoon of Iran. These factors promoted modernity and the use of European architectures in Tehran and some of the great cities. During the Qajar dynasty, the pattern and foundations of ancient architecture of Persia were prevalent. For this reason, Pirmia considered the architecture of the Qajar period as the second phase of Esfahani style. But during this period, some Iranians were absorbed in Western culture and civilization, and some in Iran also fueled their interest in this issue (Pirmia, 2010).

During the Qajar period, especially during Nasir al-

Din Shah's era, the city of Tehran stretched in different directions and the gates of the city expanded. Fig. 1, shows some of these gates. These images show the presence of Western architectural ideas in the design of these gates. This influence also on other major Iranian cities is evident.

The status of Art in the Qajar era: Analyzing the art of the Qajar in this period reflects three main features: a) the influence of traditional Iranian architecture, especially the architecture of the Safavid period, b) the widespread use of folk and feminine elements and c) the dependence on Western art and its influence. During this period, some innovations occurred in architecture and new principles for buildings construction and palaces were introduced. Architectural decorations in the Qajar period had unique features for instance the designs were large in number and the variety of colors received more importance than the structure of the design, and the use of Western designs and decorations such as Rococo and Baroque with natural elements such as flowers, birds as well as non geometric designs became popular (Kiyani Mehr, Taghvaei Nezhad & Miralahian, 2015). Moreover, some elements such as motifs on the transom and in the entrance, pediments, window frames, and volumetric structures changed in imitation of European architecture (Fig. 1). Therefore, the social changes in Iran intensified the imitation of European architecture (Sajjadi, Rostami & Rostami, 2014). In Iranian traditional architecture, cold colors such as turquoise blue, lazuli and green were extensively used in decorations of buildings and they received much attention in tile works. However, during the Qajar era, warm colors such as red, orange and white began to prevail over cold colors. Decorative designs underwent some radical transformation and included the motif of nature and creatures like flowers and trees (Zaboli Nezhad, 2008). Triangular pediments or top-shaped curves of the facade and capitals in the Greek style and the semicircular arches reflect the impact of Western architecture on the Qajar architecture (Fig. 2).

Though the architecture of the first Pahlavi era lasted only twenty years, it included a variety in architectural styles. Eclecticism in the architectural style of this

period was the results of reviving the authority of ancient times and implementing Western and European artistic phenomena.

Architectural decorations in this period were different from two aspects: first materials, then types of motifs. In the architecture of the Pahlavi era, the use of brick experienced a great boom. The harmony among streets was intensified by one or two-story houses. The decorations on the facades were symmetrical. In fact, most of the buildings looked symmetrical no matter whether their style was traditional-Islamic, Iranian or European neoclassicism. Gradually, during the second Pahlavi era, buildings became less symmetric and rarely were the bricks used in the buildings.

Even though most studies on Iranian architecture in the Qajar period have been on European influence, less

exists on the effects of other countries such as India and China. In relation to Chinese influences on Iranian art, available studies have focused on its effect on pottery, especially during the Safavid period (Hosseini, 2010). Moreover, most research has focused on the effects of other countries on Iranian architecture in Tehran, Isfahan and, Shiraz. Less has been documented on Kerman. This is probably one of the reasons why non-European countries have been less impressed by the Safavid and Qajar architecture.

Methodology

The method of this research is applied and its type is descriptive-analytical. Data were analyzed in a deductive way. This study used library research method. To this purpose, available studies on in Iran and in Kerman



Fig. 1. Tehran Qajar gateways, right: Dowlat Gateway, Middle: Cheragh-e- Gaz Gateway, Left: Arg Gateway.
Source: <https://www.bartarinha.ir/fa/news>

during the Safavid, Qajar, and Pahlavi architecture were reviewed. In addition, factors influencing the architecture of Kerman during the Safavid period were examined. To explore the architectural design elements of each era, we limited the study to monuments in these periods. The features of Western, Indian, and Chinese architectural design in selected buildings were analyzed. Then the architectural characteristics of each sample were examined based on the period and type of originality and then were tabulated.

Data analysis

Since the Safavid era, many buildings have been built in Kerman, some of which still survive. To investigate the architectural decoration pattern in Kerman buildings, we selected the samples from the ones which were

in a good condition and were extensively adorned. The samples were Ganjalikhan collection (1020 AH), Ebrahim Khan collection (123 AH), the shrine of Shah Nemat Ahla Vali (998 AH), the School of Moshtaghieh (1260 AH), the National Library of Kerman (1280 AH) and the Industrial Museum (1327 AH). We analyzed the decorative elements of samples based on the originality of Persianism and the influence of the architecture of the West, China, and India, and then categorized their features to approve or reject the hypothesis based on the type of originality and historical period.

The Safavid era is famous for the innovations in art and architecture, and such innovations have long been reflected by architecture and served as a pattern for artists. One of the prevalent motifs in the decorations of the Safavid buildings is a combination of flowers and



Fig.2 The image on the top is the transom of the Shah Bank, Tehran (Source: Cultural Research Archive in Sultanzadeh, 2005). In down: The building is characterized by Roman semicircular arches, pediments and Corinthian capitals, and the image on the left is a building in Almasia (Source: Soltanzadeh, 2005): It is characterized by a crown pediment.

birds. This motif can be seen in the buildings of Kerman. The use of this motif in Iranian paintings dates back to ancient times and around the 9th century. It has been extensively used from the Safavid era onwards and been employed by the artists in different arts such as tile work, painting, and pottery. This motif is a kind of Persian painting styles in, in which birds such as nightingales and peacocks are sometimes drawn beside insects such as butterflies (Jahanbakhsh & Sheikhi Narandi, 2016). Among mural motifs in the Safavid era, we can refer to a flying human such as Simorgh in the mansion of Shah Nematullah Vali. “A nice hearted man, the knower of unknown, a helper, and a rescuer

who can fly to the spiritual world just like a bird” (Sabaghpour & Shayestefar, 2010: 45). Floral figures include different types of plants and trees coming in different shapes such as symbols, or circles (plan) and sometimes twisted plants. Floral motifs which used to be more abstract during the Safavid looked more realistic in the Qajar period and in the imitation of Europe, the artists used mostly red, blue, yellow, and green in the artworks (Mansoori Jozabadi & Hosseini, 2016). Gradually, floral figures and birds decorations found a way to Iranian architecture such as wall paintings and tile work. Wall paintings became popular in the Qajar period and were used to give a glorious look to buildings. Tile painting as a form of wall painting is common in different cities of Iran such as Tehran, Qazvin, Shiraz, Isfahan and Kerman. The tile work in Ebrahim Khan’s courtyard is full of colorful flowers and birds such as Swan and Peacock, which have been designed and then painted in the arabesque style. The image of cypress tree stands out among the stucco, brick and tile decorations of the monuments of this era. Cypress tree has long been the symbol of immortal life, life after death, and always greenness. This element has been used in many Iranian arts including paintings, crafts and architectural decorations. In the Safavid floral designs, arabesque motifs were used to decorate the skeletons of tile works and Khataei flowers and leaves were in the middle of the arabesque lines. In this period, the visual weight of the arts received much attention. These motifs stayed popular in subsequent periods. However, during the Qajar era, the influence of Western art was much felt and the use of floral figures became much more common but the figures looked more realistic. The images of lion, leopard, and sun were also used in the decorations of the buildings of the Safavid era and the Qajar of Kerman. Lion symbolized different meanings such as the sun and victory, heat and summer in various cultural periods of Iran. Often, the symbol of the lion used to be used together with the sun, and this combination was officially recognized as the symbol of Iran at the time of Nasir al-Din Shah (Afradi, 2015). The images of the lion locked in a battle with other animals or hunting them have been reported in ancient Iranian

stories. The sun itself has been especially important in Iranian mythology. Iranians used to take oaths in the name of the sun and on the top of the tent of the kings, there used to have the icon of the shining sun with the face of a man (Zakrin, 2011). In addition to Iran, in India and even in Europe, the sun or Mehr as a symbol of authority and reign have always been praised. After the Safavid moved the capital from Qazvin to Isfahan, a new style of painting was established and it started being practiced in subsequent periods. The political and social necessities of society brought a slight change in the style of painting, and the human figure received much attention in the paintings, wall paintings as well as tile painting. During the Qajar era, the attention was faded away and the artists were inspired by European paintings and adopted their style in painting and tile work. Even the images of a mother embracing a child on the tiles of the Ganjali Khan's caravanserai complex seems to have come from the Christian art and this image resembles Jesus (AS) and Mary (SA); (Javadi, 2008). Though Christian arts found the way to Iranian tile work and Iranian architecture, they still kept its identity.

Before the Safavid period, painting human figure was not common in religious spaces and places, and even in baths. Moreover, most of the motifs in the baths were geometric, arabesque and Khataei. In the Safavid period, human figures were extensively used in tiles and architectural decorations, especially baths. In the Qajar era, the forms of decorations in the monuments were influenced by the European. In this period, the colors used in tile painting were yellow, orange and pink colors, and human figures were reflecting the epic features or portraying mythological aspects (Mansoori Jozabadi & Hosseini, 2015). In tile painting in the Qajar period, mythological scenes such as a holy man with winged angels can be seen (e.g. Ebrahim Khan School). Human figures such as playful women and musician in a dancing status were the most important motifs in the Safavid period (e.g. tile work of Ganjikhah bathroom). One of the motifs found in the stucco adornments of our sample was fish. The fish is Iranians favorite subject and is a symbol of fluidity and purity. From

ancient times, fish has been used in various arts such as painting, pottery, and carpet weaving as well as tile works, stuccos of buildings (Pashaei, 2014). In Mahran Shotorgalu Mansion, there is a big image of this Iranian noble symbol on the stuccos.

The decorations of the buildings of the Safavid period show the trace of the decorative elements of Persian architecture and reflect the inspirations from western and European arts as well as Indian culture and architecture. Architectural style in Bijapur city and the architecture of new Indian cities like Jaipur reflect the indigenous Indian architecture and its composition with Islamic architecture. According to Batly (2010), the recurring features of this architectural style in India are as follows: Arched beams in the entrance, plurality of onion-like shape pillars around the building for reinforcing the visual focus on the main building, the plurality of domes in the entrance and the main building, domes with sharp arches and scalloped decorations, which are cylindrical and saucer-like inwards.

Analyzing the observed samples in terms of decorations shows that the above-mentioned features can be found in the tile works of Ganjalikhan caravanserai. The tiles portray a man sitting on a knotted knee. He is similar to the Buddha who is a reminder of Indian culture and art. The buildings include the National Library of Kerman and the Museum of Contemporary Arts (Industrial Museum) are featured with the plurality of onion-like shape pillars in the entrance. The buildings mirror the principles of Iranian architecture and inspirations from Western architecture. In terms of the curved skyline, they are similar to the gates of Shemiran and Dooshan hill in Tehran.

In addition to the above mentioned, inspirations from Chinese art and its culture can also be seen. China and Iran have had lots of cultural interactions from the Sassanid time. Since China started importing its goods to Iran, these cultural interactions have been promoted. In the 7th century, such interactions influenced the painting of Iran. These effects are much more observable in Iranian arts and paintings of the Ilkhanites, the Timurids periods. Due to the increase in the interactions of Iran with the west, this effect was

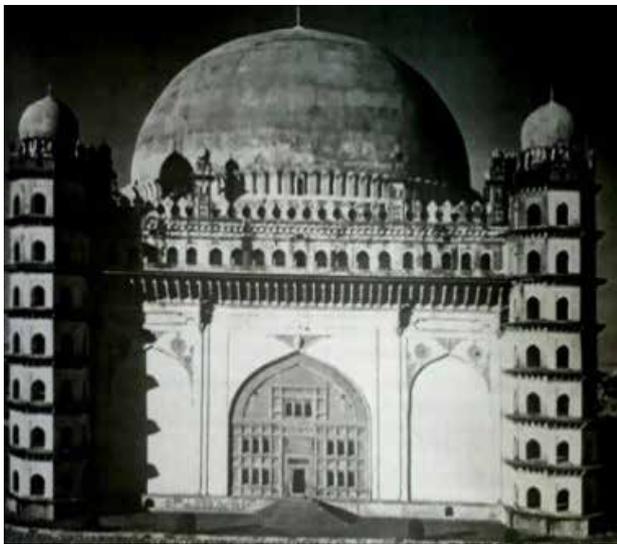


Fig. 3. Some of famous Indian Buildings. Up: Hawa Mahal palace. Source: www.thrillophilia.com / Middle: Gol Gumbad Tomb. Source: Batly, 2010. / Down: Taj mahal Mansion. Source: Batly, 2010.

gradually diminished in the Safavid period (Bakhtiari & Pourmand, 2010).

The effect of Chinese art on the architecture of Kerman can be traced by looking at some legendary animals and dragons in Iranian artworks. For example, in the tile works of Ganjali Khan Caravanserai, some legendary animals like Dragons and Simorgh can be seen on both side of the medallion. The animals are placed beside real animals such as lions and goats and the shoots of twisted plants. The images of twisted clouds, dragons and simorghs are inspired by the arts of China and the Far East. Similarly, the paintings of the transom of the Ganjalikhan bath portray unrealistic and legendary animals. According to Praghoo (2011), Chinese artists were not primarily interested in the simulation of nature, and even nature and animals portrayed in their works were the product of their own minds not what were actually seen, while Iranians were more interested in nature and realism. In this section, Kerman's monuments belonging to the Safavid era and onwards are categorized and analyzed based on the features of decorative elements (Fig. 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12).

Discussion

Kerman province has long established its position among other provinces of Iran during different periods of time. During the Safavid period, Kerman became a commercial bottleneck and developed its relations with different countries of Europe, India, and China. Since the Safavid era, the decorations of the buildings of Kerman have undergone a lot of change in terms of the type and originality. For example, in the entrance of monuments such as the National Library of the Pahlavi era, there are no elaborated gables of the Safavid era. The decorations are not as colorful as the ones in arabesque and Khataei. In her study, Javadi has carefully examined the architectural decorations in the collection of Ganjali Khan, a masterpiece of the art of the Safavid era in Kerman, analyzed the details of their aesthetics. She describes the features of water reservoirs as follows: "The arched entrance of the water storage is in the middle of the opposite



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Fig. 4. Original Iranian elements during Safavid era. A: Human figures without hijab, Ganjali Khan square. B: The image of human figures and heads of men and women, Ganjalikhan bath. C: The image of the sun with human features, Ganjalikhan caravansary. D: Human face image, Ganjalikhan caravansary. E: The image of the sun with a human face on the ceiling of Chaharsoogh, Ganjali Khan Square Qajar era. F: The image of the sun with a human face on the ceiling of Chaharsoogh, Ganjali Khan Square.. Photo: Mina Safizadeh, 2018.

wall. On top of the arches, there are gables with a blue background and the motifs of arabesque flowers, paisleys, and medallions. They are colored white and yellow and black. The big medallion is in the center of the gable and it is different from other medallions; that is to say, it is stretched and includes a small medallion

(Javadi, 2008: 48).

In the Qajar period, the interactions of Iranian statesmen with European leaders and their journeys to Europe were the major reasons explaining how the features of western architecture found a way to traditional Iranian architecture in Tehran, and then the rest of the great



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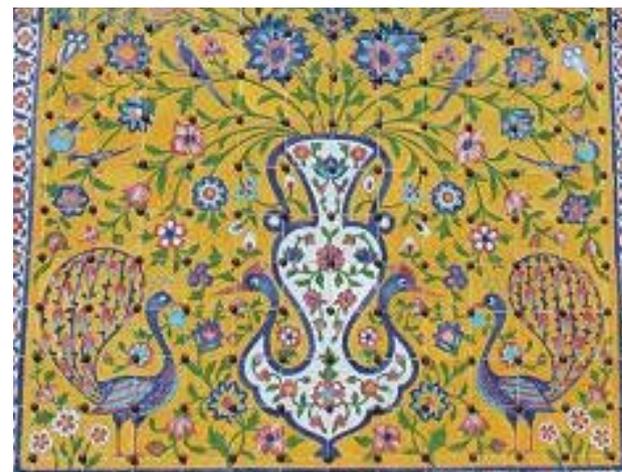
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cities such as Shiraz, Tabriz, Semnan, and Kerman. These features were mainly found in the palaces and monuments and gradually became popular with the people living in normal houses. Interestingly, most

of the books and studies have focused on decorations and architectural features in the Safavid, Qajar, and Pahlavi periods. They have documented either the effect of the West or the Far East on architectural



Fig. 5. Original Iranian elements during Qajar era. A: The image of a leopard, Ebrahim Khan’s collection. B: The image of the lion locked in a battle, Ebrahim Khan’s collection. C: The image of a sun with a woman feature, Ebrahim Khan’s collection. D: Nastaliq’s writings among floral motifs, Haj Agha Ali Bazaar. E: Nastaliq’s writings among floral motifs, Takiyeh at the back of Bagh Allah. F: Twisted floral motif, Takiyeh (mourning hall) of Shah’s Bazaar. G: The image of a peacock, the stuccos of Mansion of Shotor gelu in Mahan. H: Twisted flowers next to the birds, the stuccos of Mansion of Shotor gelu in Mahan. I: Twisted floral motifs, Ebrahim Khan School. J: The image of cypress on the wall of Iwan, Tekiyeh of Shah’s Bazaar (Ghaem). K: The image of eight-petal flowers in a circle, Tekiyeh of Shah’s Bazaar (Ghaem). L: The image of eight petal flowers in circles, Ebrahim Khan School. M: The image of a swan in the flower garden, Ebrahim Khan collection. N: The image of peacocks in a flower garden on the transom of Ebrahim Khan collection. O: The image of a bird with the head, the tomb of Shah Nematollah (his Wife). P: a fish Stucco, Mansion of Shotor gelu, Mahan. Q: The image of a holyman, Ebrahim Khan School. R: The image of an angel on both sides of a holy man, Ebrahim Khan School. Photo: Mina Safizadeh, 2018.

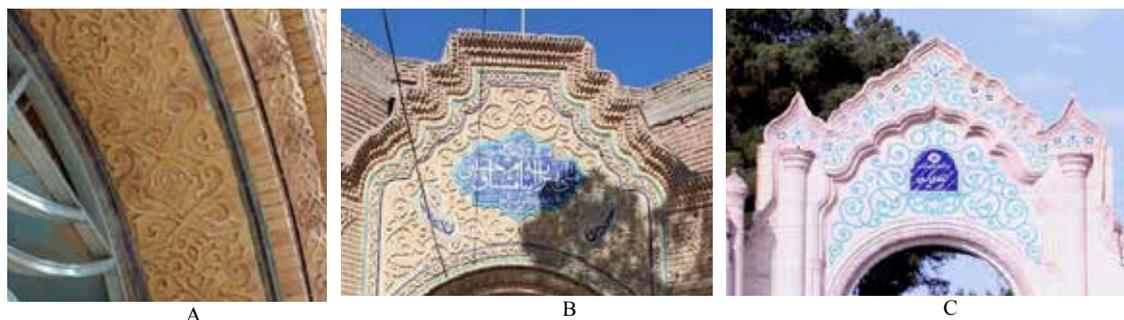


Fig. 6. Original Iranian elements during. A: Twisted plant motifs, Ebrahim Khan School. B: Twisted plants and motifs on the transom of the industrial museum of Kerman. C: Twisted floral motifs on the transom of the National library of Kerman. Photo: Mina Safizadeh, 2018.



A



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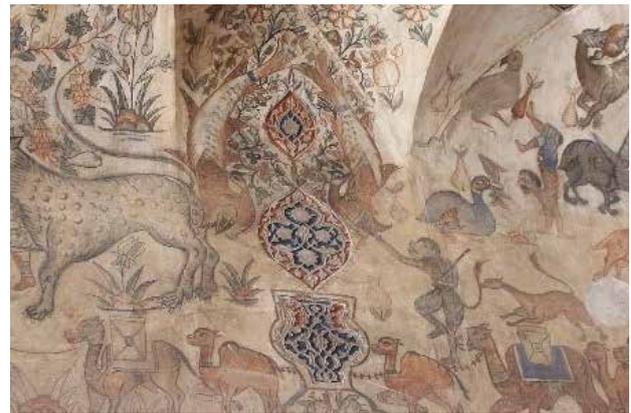
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Fig. 7. Original Iranian elements during Safavi era. A: The image of dragons, Ganjali khan Caravanserai. B: The image of a bird, a wolf and a deer, Ganjali khan Caravanserai. C: The image of a dragon, Ganjali khan Caravanserai. D: The image of a stork, Ganjali khan Caravanserai. E: The image of animals locked in a battle, Ganjali khan Caravanserai. F: The image of an Elephant, paintings on the transom of the bathroom Ganjali khan. G: The image of a dragon is devouring a wolf, the paintings on the transom of Ganjali Khan bath. H: The image of the fish is swallowing the stork, the paintings on the transom of Ganjali Khan bathroom. I: Marble with a carved relief of stork, Ganjali Khan bath. J: The rock fountain in the middle of Ganjali khan bath with a carved relief of stork. Photo: Mina Safizadeh, 2018.



A



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Fig.8. Architectural elements inspired by Indian culture. Safavid era A: Floral ivory carving on the doorpost of Nematullah Vali Shah's mansion B: The image of a monkey on the transom of Ganjali Khan bathroom C: The image of a human sitting like a Buddha, Ganjalikhan. Photo: Mina Safizadeh, 2018.

features. Analyzing the architectural relics in Kerman shows that architectural motifs in these periods have

been inspired by Western, Chinese, Hindi, and Persian architecture.

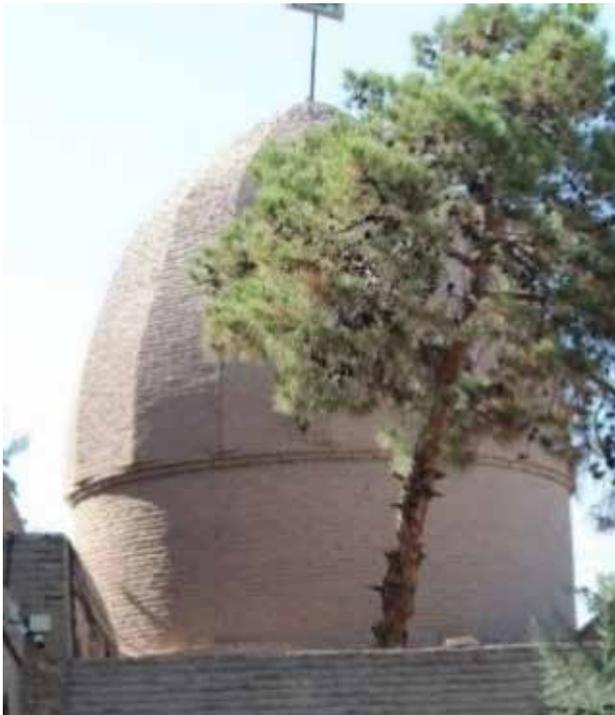
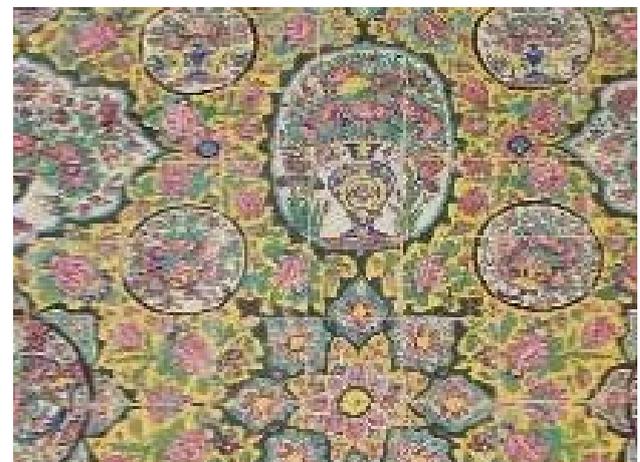


Fig.9. Architectural elements inspired by Indian culture. Qajar era. Brick-made spire, Moshtaghiyeh complex. Photo: Mina Safizadeh, 2018.



Fig. 11. Architectural elements inspired by European and Western culture Safavid era. Image of a mother and a child, in Ganjali khan Photo: Mina Safizadeh, 2018.



A

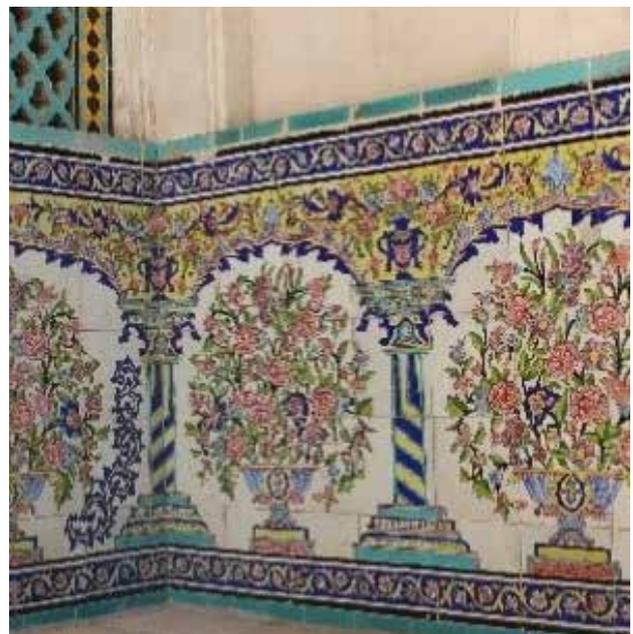


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B

Fig.10. Architectural elements inspired by Indian culture. Qajar era. A: Plurality of Spires (onion-like Capitals) in the entrance of national library of Kerman. B: Onion-like Capitals on both sides of the entrance, Kerman Industrial Museum of Kerman. Photo: Mina Safizadeh, 2018.



B

Fig. 11-1. Architectural elements inspired by European and Western culture. A: Red roses and warm colors in the tile work, Ebrahim Khan School. B: Roses in the tilework in Corinthian columns, Ebrahim Khan School. Photo: Mina Safizadeh, 2018.



C



D



E

Fig. 11-2. Architectural elements inspired by European and Western culture. C: Warm colors in the tile work, Ebrahim Khan School. D: Eclectic capitals with the features of Western Architecture, Kerman Nursing School. E: The image of an angel in the form of a woman on the door of the mosque (Meydan Ghaleh Mosque). Photo: Mina Safizadeh, 2018.

Conclusion

Available studies and analysis of the building decorations in the Safavid era in Kerman show that this city has established its position in art and architecture since the Safavid era. What has made Kerman different from other cities is its unique architectural feature reflecting the inspiration and experience of different ages and regions of the world. Valuable Safavid monuments located in Kerman mirror the skills and experiences of the artists in the past ages. The integration of Iranian authentic motifs with architectural elements of Western, Indian and Chinese has made the decorations of buildings in Kerman more unique than other cities.

Furthermore, the architectural features of these buildings are aligned with a native context. Therefore, they reflect the roots of traditional Iranian architecture and the styles of mega-cities in Iran. Persian colors are also used in the tile work and elements such as cypress are an inseparable part of the architecture. They also reflect western, Indian and Chinese architectural features. That means the decoration of the buildings is an amalgamation of Iranian, European, Indian and Chinese architecture.

Perhaps the future studies on Iranian architecture should focus more on the architecture of smaller Iranian cities such as Kerman in different periods. The focus can be on those areas that have been linked with India and China. The authentication of architectural decorations in different cities can shed light on a new dimension of architectural features as well as interdisciplinary studies.

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