Analyses of the Reflection of Painting in the Opuses of Nezami Ganjavi (12th century AD)

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Abstract
Poem is a beautiful narration of history, and the poet takes it from people and their life essence. In Persian literature, “Nezami” is one of the strongest pillars in storytelling and lyrics. His poems are nothing but the social reality of his era.

This research is trying to find the answer to this question that how the art of painting in society of 12th century ad is reflected in the poems of Nezami? The theoretical framework used in this research is the reflection theory in sociology of art. This theory is based on assumption of art as the mirror of society and reflector of its characters.

The research methodology used in this research is library and the technic which is used is content analyses. The aim of this research is reaching to new information in the field of painting in aforementioned century. It is hypothesized that “the concepts of Nezami’s poems was taken from the social attitude of his era and was affected by life issues, and this could indirectly give useful information about various things to the researcher, including art of painting in society of 12th century ad”.

The method of this research is content analysis and the data collection method was through library and included studying Nezami’s works in 12th century. Studying books which are written about stylistics and themes of Nezami’s works and related works to the art history of Iran, publications, etc. has also done. After a short orientation with the life and opuses of the poet, the information attributed to painting in opuses that existed in art history studied and some examples of Nezami’s poems which are a reflection of painting in the society investigated.

The investigations demonstrated that the painting in 12th century’s society has existed in various methods including iconography, drawing portraits on paper, mural, painting on cloth, etc. also the psychological effects of colors was known in this era. The poet has illustrated two types of realistic and conventional painting as two different styles, and has made a difference between a painting that is painted exactly alike the face and a symbolic painting of it.

Keywords
Painting, Poem, Nezami, 12th century ad., Reflection theory.
Introduction
Political, financial, social, cultural and artistic evolutions are effective in creation of literary works and masterpieces of societies. There are so many writers whose works are the reflection of political, financial. Social and artistic situation of poem and writer of these opuses era. Many things like life style, way of thinking, philosophic thoughts, religious and ethical beliefs and opinions, cultural and artistic phenomenon have reflected in literary works and actually, by reading them we can understand the art conditions of that society.

Art in the society is one of the issues reflected by literary works; as painting is a branch of art, it is possible to explore the place of painting and how it is performed in Iranian society through studying these opuses. So with a cultural and social view on literature and history, one could search for cultural and artistic experiences in people’s lives.

The Persian literature is the source of culture, art, civilization, thought, opinions and beliefs of Iranians and its archaism shows the original identity and history of Iran. The country of Iran is full of rich and precious resources like poetry, logbooks, historical texts, etc. Resources that in turn, result in audience’s cognition and more awareness of various historical periods and sections. Precise study of these resources, gives useful information and clues about artworks, technics and different styles of different fields of art, specially painting.

The 12th century AD is one of the important periods in Persian literature and Persian language and literature developed and spread amazingly in this period. This, happened for many reasons including the foundation of Persian literature by poets and writers in previous centuries.

Nezami has mentioned Shapour, Iranian artist and painter, while telling romance stories like the legend of “Khosrow and Shirin”:
The portrayer I am who with art painted this portrait of khosrow any portrait a portrayer paints reserves the shape but not the soul
(Khosrow and Shirin, 168)

There are too many other examples that the poet indirectly has reflected the presence of painting in society. Altogether it seems that the concept of painting in late literature of Iran has a great potential for investigation and perhaps much information buried at the heart of this treasure.

Review of the literature
According to the performed investigations, there has been no literature found for this research.

Research Method:
The research method in this paper is the reflection theory of Victoria Alexander. Alexender believes that the art is the reflection of the society. Through library which consists of studying opuses of Nezami- the famous poet of 12th century AD, also the books written about stylistics and concepts of the mentioned poets opuses and the books in respect of the history of painting in Iran, sociology of the mentioned century, publications, etc.

According to investigations, no background research found for this research (or in case of existence was not available to the researcher).

Theoretical Hypotheses
Hakim Jamal-Al-Din Abu Mohammad Elias the son of Yousef the son of Zaki Bani Moayed known as Nezami is one of the great and capable raconteur poets of 12th century AD in Iran. His date of birth is estimated around 1145 AD and his date of death around 1203 AD. Most of biographers believed he was born in Ganjeh.

In lyrics, Nezami is one of the strongest pillars for Persian poetry; since his creativity began with lyrics. His proficiency in precise, delicate and scrupulous descriptions, far reached his speech to the peaks of Persian poetry. He is the master and follower of the others in storytelling and meantime he has not neglected ethical and wisdom subjects and advises, and one can see morality and chastity in his poems.

The masterpiece of Nezami is Khamseh or PanjGanj (Five Treasures), is a collection of poems with spiritual and ethical contents composed in the event
of purge and cultivation of people. He has reflected the folk culture of his society in addition to advisory and paying attention to ethics in the stories and examples he has used, and also illustrated various issues in the society of his era.

The titles of Khamseh in historical order are: Makhzan- Al- Asrar (The Source of Secrets), Khosrow and Shirin, Leyli and Majnoon, Haft Peykar or BahramNameh (Seven men) and EskandarName (which consists of EghbalNameh and SharafNameh).

There’s also been left some poems in sonnet, ode and few quatrains from him. Nezami’s power in narrating stories and his skill in descriptions and the attention and caution he has used with his words, resulted in imitation of his poetries by next poets and in this way a special style and doctrine born in Persian literature.

The concept of art in opuses of Nezami
It could be realized from Hakim Nezami’s poems that he had a thing for music, painting and other forms of fine art and it’s obvious from the wild information he gives to his audience about arts that he is familiar with different kinds of art.

Hakim Nezami’s used the word “art” in Khamseh about seventy times and in different meanings. Although for art the definitions: tact, skill, technic, industry, craft and valuable work are identified, but in some of Nezami’s poems, there’s a reality beyond the words that are used.

The subject of knowledge and art has always been one of the subjects of adoration for Hakim Nezami. He, as the other famous classics of the world, identifies the knowledge, manner, science and art as the most precious essence of creation, the most stable and productive phenomenon of the universe and the most persistent and useful impressions of men’s mind and reason. The privilege and superiority of men is proportional to the maturity of his knowledge and wisdom. He identifies the scientist and artist as the most perfect production of creation and the most favorite creatures on the earth’.

Nezami believes that everything and every art, technique and knowledge is worth deserving in the light of loyalty to the right and truth,. Although he lives in a society that is in lack of art and wisdom, and the jealous and penurious make fun of every poem and speech, he believes in healthy criticism and encouragement and persuasion of the artists of his era (Movahed, 1988: 165).

Eventually, art has a high and grand place for Nezami and he wishes for a society in which art trained and developed as much to deliver the artist to the highest level of perfection. From his point of view, reaching to perfection and integrity of art would result in the development of society and its erasure of impurities and filth. Nezami gives value to the artist and counts him as one of the most perfect creatures of creation.

Findings
Nezami pays much attention to different kinds of art including the painting in various parts of Khamse and proceeds in his poems expressing the importance and elegance of these arts. Mixing his experiences in the society with hearsays from far away times before his lifetime, beautifully he tells story. According to Bigdeli:

“If the poet makes Shirin to fall in love with Khosrow by seeing his portrait in (Khosrow and Shirin) poem, he also addresses the painting and iconography many times in (EskandarNameh) and hasn’t neglected the role of this art in human’s life. As much that one could say that Nezami mixes the poem with painting and get them stirred up with the music to give them eternity and immorality. He gives life and color to the love and kindness with music and poem, song and painting. Makes the face of love much more beautiful in presence of music and painting” (1990: 211).

In this research, the author with searching for the keywords: figure, painter, drawer, face, form, shape, portrayer, the pattern of brocade, color, picture, gallery, the pattern of wall, the pattern of porch, the pattern of bathhouse and pen, came to some poems of Nezami which are illustrative of different methods of painting in the society of his era. The findings of this research could be investigated in four sections
of: the location of painting, the subject of painting, the painting tools and the painters.

**The location of painting**

The investigations show that, in the time of Nezami, paintings were performed in various places including walls, gallery, fabrics, stone and paper. Apparently, in spite of religious obstacles in the next period after importation of Islam to Iran, the wall paintings were noted and usually the kings encouraged the painters to figure the battlefields, hunting scenes or house parties to show off their luxury and conquests (Ravandi, 2003: 527).

In Nezami’s poems is spoken of pattern of the wall and painting on the wall for several times and it could be deducted as he had seen the wall painting at his time and had some information about it so that he was able to speak of this style of painting in his poems. As an example in section 48 of Khosrow and Shirin Masnavi he writes:

> In that golden gathering there were silent as silent the servants where as wall paintings (Khosrow and Shirin, 241)

Also other items address to the wall painting2. In verses where Nezami has spoken about wall painting, the wall paintings have described inanimate, silent and still. Immobility is obvious in the description of these paintings in these verses. Of course, in the items related to the HaftPeykar in Khovarnagh palace, there’s a different matter and the use of too many decorative elements in performance of the paintings have been important to Nezami.

The gallery is also a place where pictures and patterns are painted. Nezami has used that word several times in his poems. For example in section 13 of HaftPeykar, when Bahram sees the portrait of HaftPeykar at Khovarnagh palace:

> A house like treasury saw the discerning and gold digger eye

Better from hundreds of Chinese galleries the pattern of that handpicked atelier was (HaftPeykar, 644)

In some other verses of the same section, he speaks in describing the gallery that seven figures of beautiful girls of seven countries are painted on its walls. A Muslim poet like Nezami has so much been concerned about art and even connected it to the time before importation of Islam3.

In other parts of his poems4, Nezami has composed beautiful verses about gallery, painter, picture and painting that could speak for a society where painting and miniature performed and the gallery existed as a place for presenting beautiful wall paintings.

Since he comprises the galleries in his stories with Chinese galleries, one can realize that in Nezami’s era china was known for the best galleries and he tells so that the gallery in the story was even more beautiful and worth seeing than the china gallery; and in this way he’s valued the late art and culture of his land. Another point is that, it seems unlikely that Nezami have seen the Chinese gallery. As we know Nezami’s spent almost all of his life at Ganjeh. So the description of Chinese galleries’ beautifulness could have been resulted from his heard.

In the “Noushabeh story- Barda’s king”, Nezami speaks of painting portraits on the silk in a painting technic that is similar to the natural model in a way that the viewer would be able to recognize the face of persons from their painted portraits, even not on the paper, but on the silk5.

Brocade also means a colorful silken cloth, and Nezami’s used it several times and has spoken of pattern and picture and painting on the brocade. On Nezami’s description of painting on the silk Bigdeli has written:

> “When Nezami takes Iskandar as a legate and envoy to Noushabeh in Barda’, the show of Iskandar’s picture on the silk is one of the sweet scenes that Nezami puts as the rubric of next coming events. He writes artistically of that time’s strength of craft and art of painting, and shows that even on the satin and silk cloths they used to paint the figures and portraits of humans perfectly beautiful and at excellent grade” (1990: 211).

Ordered that a bondwoman quickly brings a silk with figures of kings on it
Other verses are also examples of description of specifications of cloth and brocade in Nezami’s era. Nezami addresses to existence of cloths with various colors and with different patterns including face pattern and human figure. Probably the fabrics that the human face and figure painted on them had been of the highest grade.

Also in section 47 of SharafNameh, when Iskandar arrives to the Ghafchagh plain and women there have no hijab, as the kings word on keeping their hijabs doesn’t affect them, eventually they ask a painter to paint the picture of a veiled woman on a rock; and with this done, women in that area looking at that picture, kept their hijabs. So the king told the painter that this people didn’t listen to the king, but this picture affected them.

In some of the analyses of this verses like Ahmadnezhad and Bigdeli’s opinion, it’s presumed that a statue of rock has been made by an artist that put a chador on her head to affect Ghafchaghian women, so that they keep their hijabs; but with words such as pattern and painter one could presume that the intention, has been to paint on the rock. Anyway, both of the painting and sculpture arts could be deducted from aforementioned verses.

Nezami’s attention to being effected by the picture, is obvious in verses above; and that seeing a picture could be much more effective than speaking; especially to the common people, he introduces the use of picture as a proper method for culture-building. The effect of picture and art on the society had been known since a long time ago and rulers had discovered the importance of visual arts in leveraging and affection on people of their lands. Mani also had been recognized the affection of art on the society in promoting his religion and ethic and made a lot of use of art in promotion of Manichaeism ethic.

**Painting tools**

Nezami has mentioned the pen, style, paper, book and color as painting tools; but has not spoken of their kind and material. Probably at Nezami’s time, they also had used of the same paper and tools used in Baghdad international doctrine or before.

In the part of “Khaghan’s thinking on Iskandar’s answer” it has also mentioned the person wants to visit Khaghan is not allowed to see him unless the painter paints a portrait of him/her on a book. It seems that the book is a painting book and probably this was for the security issues and later the photographer with the camera took this responsibility. As today the picture and photo of people is used for identification: Many people are wanting to see me they do not get to see me unless a portrait by a portrayer’s pen they see on a book painting of them.

In Khosrow and Shirin poem, Shapour has a paper in hand and draws KhosrowParviz’s face exactly alike on the paper and repeats it for three times:

A fine paper he held in the hand the face of Khosrow he painted on it exactly alike

Reached to that garden that painter ha began right at the first motive

Since we know that at the time of KhosrowParviz paper hadn’t been invited yet, it could be sensed that Nezami has used the view of his own time to adjust the story with it.

HaftPeykar poem also has a suitable fictional space for proceeding painting. Especially it addresses the wall painting which has been particularly for palaces and pompous buildings. Nezami has spoken of pattern and painter and drawing picture on the walls of Khovarnagh palace by plotter in HaftPeykar with the title “killing the dragon by Bahram and finding the treasure”.

The element of color is also one of the important elements in painting. In Persian literature the colors are limited. Because the colors in late times were invariant and because Appearing new colors was less likely in existing life and materials; so the poets and writers also used less kinds of colors in their works. Years and centuries used to pass for a special
combination or material to create, so in different periods poets have named of a few colors. According to the investigations, the field that less researches has done about, is color symbols in Persian literature which Nezami proceeds masterfully in his poems, especially in HaftPeykar. In HaftPeykar Nezami has contributed every day of week to a planet with a special color.

By having a deep attention to HaftPeykar and care for the colors used in its stories, one could tell that Nezami wants to reveal the beauty of living and truth of life for the reader and link it to a more beautiful world. This is why the colors in HaftPeykar strengthen the main elements of the story and stabilizing them. The storytelling of seven ladies begins on Saturday and continues until the seventh day (Friday). The color of Satur(n)day which is related to the Saturn planet, is black and the color of Friday is white and like the color of Jupiter planet; meaning the stories begin with black color and end with white. And by the end of the seventh story and shining of whiteness and brightness, the second life of Bahram begins. This means as going into a cave and disappearance from sight.

It could be realized from the use of colors in Nezami’s poems that he’s been aware of the psychologic nature of colors while now there is not a lot of time passed since the psychology of colors has mentioned. in his poems11. He has mentioned the colors such as black, yellow, green, red, cyan, sandal12, white, livid, ultramarine, purple, etc. and considered the psychological effects of mentioned colors.

The subjects of painting and the painters Nezami has used the art of painting and pattern several times in Khamseh. It seems unlikely that he wasn’t aware of this art and was not aware of it and composed these poems solely because of imagination. It’s worth investigating that what kind of his presedent painters’ works he has seen.

And of the brocade I was weaving I showed him orphic patterns

As the grand man saw that magical pattern he failed to speak as a stone pattern (Khosrow and Shirin, 45). Nezami has spoken for Shapour about drawing pictures in section 19 of Khosrow and Shirin, the “Shapour going to Arman in demand of Shirin”, and that he is skillfullike Mani painting Arzhang.

It has been told that a copy of Arzhang book has still existed in Ghazneh in late 11th century ad13. Too many writers also has written about Mani and Arzhang book14. This fame was in a way that “Mani” became an idiom for calling every famous and extraordinary talented painter.

Considering that we are aware of existence of a copy of Arzhang in Ghazneh, this question comes up whether Nezami or poets before him like Ferdowsi, Sanai, etc. had seen that copy of Mani’s Arzhang, or they made examples of Arzhang’s pictures just by their heard?

As acclaimed the king that artist answered him that

OH the lord of the world
Just as I stain the pen Mani paints the Arzhang right away
(Khosrow and Shirin, 159)

In Manichaean paintworks15, one could consider allegorical and symbolic elements and implemention of gold and silver for the induction of light as important characters. Also the use of color in the background, linear border cleaning of bright and flat colors, plant designs which tend to ascent and the mixture of text and picture in examples of founded wall painting, manuscripts and silken banners are clear. But the painting that Nezami speaks of, represents realism.

It is percieved from Nezami’s poems that he has not seen any of Mani’s paintings, but he’s used his heard and he has exampled for describing the beauty of the painter’s work in Khosrow and Shirin story(Shapour); although there is a chance that he had seen the work of Manichaean which is in the following of Mani’s art; there is another question in this regard whether Nezami is seen the realistic painting and portrait in the society of his time and used this method to create his poems.

Another notable point in Nezami’s opuses and other Iranian poets as Ferdowsi, Sa’di, Hafez, etc. is paying
attention to Chinese art. Chinese painting had been known to Iranians since ancient times. The Chinese painting works was imported to Iran as painted curtains or decoration on import crafts including ceramic dishes and silken textiles, etc. from China land. Iranian came to know the Chinese painting this way and showed interest in it. Iranian literature after Islam is full of addresses and allusions in praise of Chinese painting. As the Chinese pattern he saw with that Chinese painter the key of his satisfaction he saw in his hand (Khosrow and Shirin, 193) Nezami has used the pattern, painter and designer in example on Leyli and Majnoon poem and it seems the kind of story and atmosphere which this story has developed in, required to not speak of the painting art that much. Nezami also has composed other verses in Leyli and Majnoon using the words pattern and painter\(^{16}\). in Leyli and Majnoon poem, he has also used the word designer:

On that field was a groves which the work of chines designer it was (Leyli and Majnoon, 491)

Senemar, has been the capable Iranian architecture that apart from building Khovarnagh palace, they attribute the built of Madaen Ivan or Kasra arch to him. In addition to masonry, Nezami recognizes Senemar as a master in painting in his poems:

Although openly a masonry he is master of a thousands of painters he is (HaftPeykar, 631)

In many other cases in HaftPeykar Nezami has addressed to the pattern and painter and it comes out from his poets that he both has used these words in their real meanings and indirectly as simile and allegory.

He has spoken of painting the picture of Khosrow on the paper for the first time by Shapour and has used the word “face” for several times. As it is recognizable by his descriptions, this paining is realistic and Shapour has painted it just in order to Show the exact picture of Khosrow to Shirin\(^{17}\). On the other hand, it’s not exactly determined that how the realistic has been from the ancestors’ point of view. That if the painted picture has been photographic and with perspective observation? In next several verses, Shirin sees the painted picture of Khosrow and gets impressed\(^{18}\). In mentioned verses, Nezami brings up the affection of Shirin out of seeing Khosrow’s picture in a delicate expression and again this question pops up in reader’s mind that has Nezami really seen this realistic painting which affects the viewer so much, so that he could compose a story like this?

Most likely the ancestors have not had the perception of the photographic picture that we have today, but the only act that someone holds a paper in the hand and paint the picture of another one in a way that someone else get impressed by seeing it, shows that Nezami could use this art in composing his story by witnessing it. He has talked about the face and portrait painting in Khosrow and Shirin poem\(^{19}\) and has explained about it in a way that it seems he has witnessed this art several times in his life and society.

In SharaNamaeh, Nezami addresses to this point that the face of the person is the guide for the painter and by looking at that person’s face the painter can paint his/her picture; in this verse, the point is notable that someone paints the picture by looking at the model and tries to simulate.

When art and wisdom present every face becomes a guide to portrayer (SharaNamaeh, 843)

As a result, it could be deducted from intended poems that Nezami has had some information about painting portrait and even about someone becoming a model for painting and the painter tries for simulation. It seems this kind of painting in the society of 12th century was done and Nezami has composed his poem seeing these cases.

Nezami has named of Mani, Shapour and Shideh as skillful painters in Khamseh. He has mentioned those names and also Senemar in a mythical way meaning the names has delivered chest to chest to Nezami and the name of these persons has mentioned in the history in the same way; and no example of their works has found yet. There’ve only found some
works from Manichaean who probably had been Mani’s followers in Turfan zone and the traits of their works could be attributed to Mani’s lost works too. Also he has introduced Shideh as Senemar’s disciple which could be conducted that Shideh had been living in Senemar’s time.

Also in section 44 of SharafNameh titled “The debate of Chinese and Roman painters”, the subject of poem is based on the art of painting and a painting contest that has played between Chinese and Roman artists20 and at the end the story that Nezami tells about Mani to show off the superiority of his painting in compare to other painters.

In this story, Nezami has pointed out the mirror and polishing the arch, and beautifully delivers his theosophical expressions to the reader through subtext. Because only by cleaning the rust and polishing the impurity one would be able to see the picture of true beloved in the mirror of personality. He considers Chinese as Sufis who have theosophical views and for expressing this concept he narrates the story of painting debate; but the important point for this research is addressing to painting on the arch which seems Nezami has been aware of such a style or has seen it and then, has used it in his theosophical expressions.

Also after this contest, he narrates a story of Mani to show his superiority to all painters21. The mentioned story is associated to 3D street paintings of our time. Now this question comes up that whether Nezami has been aware of such style of painting or his creative mind is the creator of this technic for the first time? As we know, the 3D painting and even more on the floor only has been considered at current age. The question that how Nezami had been able to speak of this painting such delicately so that he can admire some more Iranian myth of painting - Mani- and prove his excellence to Chinese and Roman painters, is to investigate separately.

In these verses, he describes painting in a super realistic way: a crystalline pool that the water inside is painted in a way that in viewer’s eyes is like the water in a real pool moving by wind blowing and there is also some grass at the edge of the pool and this scene has painted such naturalistic that even Mani the painter doesn’t recognize it from the reality. As we know, the age of Nezami’s life has a long distance with invention of perspective. The other point is that in the art history and analyses attributed to Iranian painting, we see that Iranians had no desire for depth view and 3D painting and still don’t have. But in some cases like this poem we cannot be so sure about that.

According to the subjects discussed in this section, it seems that Nezami has had some information about the art of painting and different methods of it. He has observed the painter and the painting in his society and has succeeded to pay attention to this art and mix it with his imagination to use it in his poems and make a beautiful picture of his stories in the mind of his readers.

Discussion

In above research titled “The reflection of painting in the opuses of Nezami” there’s no discussion since there was no background research.

Conclusion

Investigations showed that Nezami, the raconteur poet of 12th century ad considers the art as the most precious essence of creation, the most permanent and productive phenomenon of the world, and the most persistent and useful impressions of mind and reason of men. He considers the artist as the most perfect products of creation and favorite creatures on earth.

Hakim Nezami in the case of painting art, has used the words pattern, designer, and painter in their current meaning for several times and the word “face” has used in some cases as the painted picture. In his poems, portrayer means someone who paints the portrait or face of somebody and does this act by watching and
looking at real face of the person; meaning this painting is realistic and couldn’t be symbolic. Also Nezami has spoken of painting picture on the paper so many times. He has composed verses of wall painting and the pattern of wall showing that he has witnessed this style of painting and has had information about this field that he had been able to address it in his poems.

Nezami has addressed to painting on arch in a debate between Romans and Chinese and also to painting on the rock in two cases, and has demonstrated the effect of painting and picture on people’s culture in his poems. It seems that in the poem “travel of Mani to China”, Nezami has mentioned features of 3D painting we are seeing the current age.

He has mentioned brush, paper, and color as painting tools and reminisced three painters in his poems named Mani, Shapour and Shideh and an architect named Senemar who has also been very capable in painting; which seems he has used the name of mentioned painters in a mythic way and by his heard about their fame.

He also has mentioned many colors. The interesting point about colors is that Nezami has been aware of psychologic effect of colors which are proposed today. Also in his poems he has used colors symbolically. In his poems he addressed the pattern of brocade several times that shows the life of the artists in his age who painted on silk and valuable cloths and this art probably had been in the following of textile production from late times in Iran.

Since the investigation and recognition of art in previous centuries is a subject that has not been the subject of research for much researchers and recognition of art through literature is still an new subject, it is recommended in the following of the above research using interdisciplinary studies and also reading and investigating other rich literary and historical sources, proceed finding vague and unknown cultural and artistic cases in the past so that the discovery of unknowns in the past become the light of the way to the future. Enlightening the artistic effects of the past and reasons of its victories and failures could be a lesson for all enthusiasts in today’s art and culture.

Endnote

12. Sandal is a soft red and dark as soil, since soil is kind of reddish.
Reference list