

Persian translation of this paper entitled:
 تحلیل آیکونولوژیک عنصر تاج در قالیچه‌های محرابی دوره قاجار (مطالعه)
 موردی قالیچه محرابی مظفرالدین شاه
 published in this issue of journal

Original Research Article

Iconological Analysis of the Crown Element in the Altar Carpets (Mihrābi Rug) of the Qajar Era Case Study: The Mihrābi Rug of Mozaffar al-Din Shah

Sahel Erfanmanesh^{1*}, Zahra Amani², Hamed Amani³

1. Assistant Professor, Faculty of Art and Architecture, University of Sistan and Bluchestan.

Zahedan, Iran.

2. Ph.D. Student of Islamic art, Tarbiat Modares University, Tehran, Iran.

3. Lecturer, Faculty of Art and Architecture, University of Kurdistan, Sanandaj, Iran.

Received: 06/12/2021 ;

accepted: 11/06/2022 ;

available online: 23/10/2022

Abstract

Problem statement: Problem Statement: Carpets and rugs have always been used as a context for conveying the concepts of Iranian history and culture. The position of specific elements and motifs in carpets can manifest the idea of the time in which the work was created. One of the prevalent elements in altar rugs during the Qajar era is the crown. This element was replaced by a cresset form (Ghandil) or the great name of God in some altar rugs during the Qajar era, which was positioned lower than the forehead of the altar, as it was common in previous times. Another specific feature of this element is its association with tree or vase elements. Among the Qajar carpets with crown elements having a special place, there is a rug that is kept in the Carpet Museum of Iran that has a verbal and visual text and both refer to the coronation of Muzaffar al-Din Shah. Moreover, on the forehead of the altar, the crown element is associated with the lotus flower and similar icons. This study aims to answer the reason (why) and the manner (how) of the relationship between the name of Mozaffar al-Din Shah, the lotus flower, and the crown, below the forehead of the altar, and seeks to explain and analyze the verbal and visual icons which are associated with the crown element.

Research objective: This study attempts to analyze and explain the patterns used in the altar rug of Mozaffar al-Din Shah by addressing the crown element.

Research method: This research used a descriptive-analytical method. To study the altar rug of Mozaffar al-Din Shah, the iconology method was used for analysis on three levels.

Conclusion: Reviewing and analyzing the rug, has shown that according to the discourse of Archaism, the crown has a different identity in this kind of carpet. The resemblance between Taj-e Kiani (The Royal Crown) and FarreKiyâni (Faravahar), and its placement beneath the forehead of the altar, the position of the Quran Verse of Light (āyat an-Nūr) makes it a substitution for the Light of God (Nūr Allah).

Moreover, its association with the 'lotus flower', the 'tree', and the name of 'Muzaffar al-Din Shah' refers to the granting of divine splendor (Farr or Farrah) to him. It also emphasizes the establishment of a new government by Muzaffar al-Din Shah.

Keywords: *Taj-e Kiani, Iconology, FarreKiyâni (Faravahar), Altar Rug/Carpet, Erwin Panofsky.*

Corresponding Author: +989131092854 erfann_61@arts.usb.ac.ir

Introduction and Problem Statement

Art in any historical era represents the culture of that specific time in which an artwork was created. Among these arts, the carpets and rugs are considerable, with a prominent place among Persian traditional arts. Carpets, in a specialized local language known as 'Ghali', are those kinds of texts that manifest the essence and identity of Iranian society from the past to the present. The Qajar era is among those historical times in which the art of carpet and rug weaving (Ghali-Bafi) was considered one of the significant eras for representing some aspects of the society and ideas of that time. Among the various forms of carpets, the role of the altar during the Qajar time is also of special importance which like an entry gate (Astneh) was used as a place for showing the figures of distinguished people. In the altar rugs of the Safavid era, the Ghandil/Qandil/Qendil (Lamp, light) and the katibeh beneath the front part is a representation of Quran verse 35 of 'Surah An-Noor'. While in the Qajar era in some altar rugs, the crown element has replaced the Katibeh, below the forehead of the altar; the carpet of Muzaffar al-Din Shah can be mentioned as an example.

This carpet represents some sets of traditional elements such as the visual context of the 'tree of life', the 'Lion and Sun' (Shir-o-Khorshid), and the crown and lotus flower, which all are associated with a verbal text, referring to the reign of Muzaffar al-Din Shah and the inauguration of his rule. The present study aims to answer the question of how the association of these elements, the crown, the lotus flower, the tree of life, and the coronation of Muzaffar al-Din Shah beneath the altar can be clarified. Moreover, this study discusses the reason for placing the crown beneath the forehead of the altar and its relationship with the verbal and visual context. Hence, using the iconology method, an attempt has been made here to reveal the implicit meaning of the crown in these altar rugs. It has also been tried to find the meaning behind the image to get the implicit meaning of the crown in these rugs. In this method, it is also possible to access the content through the appearance, or the intuition by observing the work, or "synthetic intuition" according to 'Erwin Panofsky'.

Therefore, by using this method, the logic hidden in the carpet is being addressed and the relationship between the crown element, the altar, and the tree (lotus flower) would be identified.

Research Background

Studies that have been carried out so far on the altar rugs of the Qajar era have shown more attention to the structure and form of the rugs than to the relationship between the motifs and available elements in the rug and its content. Among these researches, the following articles can be cited: A research performed by Kamandloo entitled: "Reviewing the altar carpets of Astan Quds Razavi Carpet Museum and Studying the carpets of Haft Shahr-eEshgh" (Kamandloo, 2010), in addition to reviewing the carpets of 'Haft Shahr', the altar carpets of Astan Quds Museum in the Safavid and Qajar eras have also compared structurally. Moreover, another similar article entitled "Comparative study of altar carpets of Safavid and Qajar Era from design and motif aspect", has compared the structural form of altars during these two eras (Hajizadeh, Khajeh Ahmad Attari & AzimiNejad, 2017). Considering the iconology approach in this research, the other studies with a similar approach that have recently reviewed the carpet issue have also been addressed. Ghani in the article entitled "The Iconology of Dastdelbar (Beloved's hand) Motif in a ChaleshtorLozeng [e] Rug" considers the bunch of flowers in the carpets as a symbol of the branches of the 'tree of life' and specifically as a symbol of Farre. She believes that the hand is also referred to as the hand of Anahita, who is the benefactor of Farre or glory to people (Ghani, 2021).

Another study, "The Analysis of meaning in the Niche rug of the Solomon by iconology method" indicates the verbal sign positioned in the first margin of the rug, referring to the name of SulaimanNabi, and dealing with the related meaning in the target carpet. Their author believes that the presence of Sulaiman's name on Astaneh indicates the meaning of sovereignty (Shahriari, related to Shah or King) in its Iranian-Islamic concept (Erfanmanesh, Azhand & NamvarMotlagh,

2021). They also have dealt with the semantic concepts in rugs by adopting an iconological approach in an article entitled "Study of meaning in the altar rug in the Metropolitan Museum with an iconoclastic face." In their research, the verbal sign below the forehead of the altar has been emphasized; According to them, the inversion of the text below the altar is related to dervishes' principles including whirling (Sama), annihilation (Fana), and survival (Bagha) of God (Erfanmanesh, Azhand & NamvarMotlagh, 2020). Ghani and Mehrabi, in an article entitled "Analysis of the meaning of Bakhtiari image rug with Panofsky iconology method" refer to the 'Ascension of the Prophet' in one of the carpets of the Qajar era and address the philosophical concept of the work that is subconsciously manifested by the carpet weaver in the work (Ghani & Mehrabi, 2018). Ghani, in a work, "Iconology of Clay in Chalster Diamond (Kheshti) Carpet with Ervin Panofsky Method" has analyzed the Khesht-e Fereshteh (clay of angel) in the mentioned carpet. According to the adopted iconological approach, she has concluded that there is an archetype concept in the coexistence of plants and birds (Ghani, 2018). Therefore, by referring to this archetype for recreation, she has considered the pattern in the carpet as the weaver's need for creating and creative process. According to the mentioned cases, the research on the Qajar altar rugs by addressing the crown element has not been fully studied and analyzed so far, which from this point of view the present research study could be an original work.

Iconology in Theory

Iconology can be considered as the knowledge of discovering and revealing the content of indefinite and ambiguous images (Colombier, 1964, 235). In this regard, Erwin Panofsky is one of the researchers who has systematized this method by using Lessing's statement as 'nothing can represent a pure work of art'. He believed that to identify a work, it is required to be acquainted with the customs and conventions of that time, and understand the function of various types of related art styles; according to him, an artwork is

a reflection of the characteristics of the human mind. He argues that by referring to the relationship between an artwork and the era in which a work is created, the culture of that specific time can be better understood, through the iconology method (Panofsky, 2012, 479). He also believes that artwork, more than any cultural production, can represent: 1. the manner in which the human mind organizes and conceptualizes the world, 2. The way it displays the space and expresses the position of objects in that space, and 3. the way the objects are combined to form content. By talking over the iconology approach, he considers three levels of acquiring the final meaning.

At the first level, meaning is obtained by combining 'expressive' and 'factual' senses. Factual meaning is a kind of meaning that is constituted by encountering the objective and perceptible forms, through comprehending and receiving mutual relations between them in the form of 'practical experience'. 'Expressional' or 'transcendental' meaning, is acquired by aggregation of the audience reactions and perceptions from the previous meaning, which takes place through 'empathy'. According to Panofsky's method, at this level, it is a kind of natural or preliminary meaning; which is called the pre-iconographic description method (Panofsky, 1972, 6). The significant point at the second level is the recognition of the image subject, which is also called the 'secondary' or 'conventional' meaning. At this level, being acquainted with specific concepts and implications is required. Therefore, the researcher must be adequately familiar with the types of literary styles. This level is called 'Iconographic Analysis' (Panofsky, 2012, 103-119). The third level, which refers to an intrinsic meaning, requires understanding the philosophical, national, and religious principles and beliefs. This level is acquired by intuitive and authorial concepts (Panofsky, 1972, 7-9).

Research Methods

This study employed a qualitative research method, based on the descriptive-analytical approach. In terms of purpose, this research is a fundamental

study, as it analyzes the research topic-analyzing the altar rugs- based on the iconological method. The research data was gathered based on a library method. It was presented in tables and figures, the measuring tools were based on the library resources (books, dissertations, etc.). The research statistical population of this study included the altar rugs of the Qajar era; the case study was selected as a sample based on the verbal and visual signs with emphasis on the role of the crown element.

Research Structure

The altar (Mihraabi) pattern is one of the designs that is rooted in the rituals of Mehrreligion; This motif has also received a lot of attention after Islam, which has frequently been used in the art of carpet weaving. Among the carpets of the Qajar era, the altars were used in different patterns, with more adding motifs compared to the previous eras (Hajizadeh, Khajeh-Ahmad Attari, Aziminejad, 2017, 71).

The crown in association with trees and vases elements are among the common motifs and elements of altar rugs in the Qajar era; during this time Farrokhanior royal crown, in addition to being used in the coronation, has also been applied symbolically, as the role of this crown can be observed frequently on many flags, banknotes, coins, 'badges of honor' and stamps related to the documents of this historical time. In Table 1 some examples of these rugs have been presented, among which the carpet kept in 'The Carpet Museum of Iran' is fully being discussed here.

The studied figure (Fig. 1) is a 'Tabriz Carpet', which was woven in the 19th century in 150×214 cm. This rug is kept in 'The Carpet Museum of Iran' in Tehran. According to the element of Katibeh (tablet pattern) on the carpet, it seems it has been woven during the reign of Mozaffar al-Din Shah Qajar.

• Pre-iconographic description of the Altar Rug

At this step, the 'Perceptible Meaning' is being addressed. Therefore, initially, the appearance of the rug has been described. The presence of the vase here is notable, as it is the main incorporated element in the lower middle of the altar. Plant and animal elements in

the background of the rug are coming from the vase while expanding throughout the entire space of the altar. This rug consists of six margins that are decorated with 'Arabesque' and 'Khatai' (Floral Pattern) patterns with a nearly constant structure in Iranian carpets. However, there is another strip-shaped frame which is called Katibeh around the altar motif, which can be considered an additional margin. It can also be considered as part of the major carpet background/ context or a kind of connector between the traditional pattern and the visual text inside the altar. This strip frame contains twelve parts of armlet space and verbal text. The calligraphic text is positioned around the altar in Nastaliq script which includes a poem with the following content:













*During the reign of Mozaffar al-Din Shah,
A graceful and honor time initiated,
When he sat on the throne of the king,
The sedition and nemesis time ended' ...
By putting the crown sat on his head
The glory of the Moon and the Pleiades dropped down
When the sword of conquering the world dedicated to him
Destiny issued the order of his obedience
All kings of the world came down from their throne
When the king of the time rode on the saddle
Islam prayed for him, the Gabriel said Amen, Amen*
Moreover, around the rhombic or diamond shape, there is another verbal text which is decorated with verses² as below:

*as long as the earth is covered by a carpet of flowers
and Narcissus,
May the throne of all beings be like the spring,
[The king] with his harmless monarchy....
May the throne be adorned with the presence of the king.*

In a longitudinal division, the verbal text in diamond shape occupies one-sixth of this space. Moreover, as Fig. 2 shows, besides the decorative aspect, the reading direction and the position of the text have been specified here.

The carpet is divided into two parts by the traditional shape of 'Toranj', or diamond shape, according to Fig.

Table 1. The sample of Carpets belong to Qajar Era with patterns of crown and tree. Source: Authors.

| No. | Carpet Image | The place of the crown on the carpet | The crown pattern in the carpet | Comments |
|-----|---|---|---|--|
| 1 |  |  |  | Altar rug (Mehrabi carpet), Qajar era, 19 th century, Iran Handmade Carpet Exhibition in Japan; the image was printed on the catalog. |
| 2 |  |  |  | Tehran, 19 th century; 200 x 130 cm, woven by Mohammad TaghiKashani (Dadgar, 2001, Image) 221 |
| 3 |  |  |  | Kashan, Persian-weaving, Katibeh (Tablet) altar rug (Katibeh-Mehrabi), 120 years old, 133 x 203 cm, (Javadian, 1994, 21). |
| 4 |  |  |  | Bakhtiari Carpet, Tehran, The Carpet Museum of Iran, 19 th century; Source: Authors. |

3. The center of it, with a high visual value in terms of composition, is occupied by the lotus flower. On either side of the vase, there is a figure of an animal with a long neck, resembling a giraffe or a lion (Fig. 4). Inside the vase, the flower of Shah Abbasi (lotus) has been placed, and around the Toran shape is decorated with a verbal calligraphic text in Nastaliq script. The stem inside the flower vase ends at the crown, which is taken by the 'Lion and the Sun'. On either side of the lions and the crown is a design of two human hands as if offering flowers to the crown (Fig. 5). The royal crown has a head part (Sarband), pearl decoration, indentation, and many decoration items.

• Iconographic analysis

This level of analysis deals with the subject and the conventional meaning. Therefore, to achieve this significant point, the components of the work have been initially analyzed and identified, and then their relationship with the whole work was evaluated. Thereupon, the visual and verbal symbols are extracted, and then the signs inside them are described (Table 2). One of the most significant characteristics of such kinds of carpets is the altar shape; In other words, the design of the altar gives a unique identity to all the related motifs. The word altar or Mehrabis an Arabic word of Mehrābe



Fig. 1. Silk carpet, Tabriz, 1900 AD, 214 x 150 cm, The Carpet Museum of Iran, Tehran. Source: Authors.



Fig. 2. The Verbal text and its reading direction. Source: Authors.



Fig. 3. The visual signs and the visual values according to the emphasized directions. Source: Authors.

(Mithraeum) of Persian origin; Today, traces left by them can be observed in some images and even mirrors (Bolkhari Ghahi, 2019, 94). Similarly, after the advent of Islam, this motif turned into a holy place in mosques that was showing the direction of the Qibla and was used in carpets for prayers. These carpets became very popular during the Safavid era and were placed on the forehead of the altar, decorated with the great name of God, representing the divine light (Nūr Allah) (Erfanmanesh, Amani & Nemat Shahrabaki, 2021, 42-43).

Other motifs that have a great effect on shaping this appearance are trees and vases. In this specific carpet, on both sides of the vase, a four-legged animal resembling a giraffe is placed with two lions on top of it. The form of this pattern is similar to the 'tree of life', in which the animals on both sides of the motif represent protectors and guardians' roles. In 'Bundahishn' (Bun-dahišn, Primal Creation), the



Fig. 4. A vase with a lotus motif(Niloofar in Persian language) with two animals around it. Source: Authors.



Fig. 5. The visual signs of 'Lion and Sun', crown, hands, and flowers. Source: Authors.

encyclopedia collection of Zoroastrian cosmogony, the tree of life is believed to be something that brings immortality (Anōšagi) and its protection is attributed to 'Kermahi' (The guardian fish of the world) and it is considered as the protector of GOKARN (Tree of life; similar to cow's horn) (Faranbagh Dadeji, 1995, 87). Together, these motifs form a sacred trinity, consisting of the earth goddess in the middle, with two male protective elements on both sides (Mokhtarian, 2007, 1). These motifs together form a sacred trinity, a sacred trinity, consisting of the earth goddess in the middle, with two male protective elements on both sides (ibid.). In this figure, giraffes and lions have been replaced by Karmahi; the lotus flower (Niloofar), also known as Shah Abbasi flower is another motif with a special place. This flower is placed inside the vase, which is enclosed in a diamond or Toranj shape motif. Toranj, in turn, comprises a special space in the carpet, which regarding the location of the lotus flower- in the center-, and its place in the carpet, refers to a special place in terms of visual value, and is a sign of light and brightness.

The lotus flower in the middle of it is a symbol of creation and life in Mithraism religion. Additionally, this flower is related to light. It is also a flower with the role of protecting the semen of Zoroaster which deserves the care of the Khvarenah or the royal glory of Saoshyans (Moghaddam, 2006, 45). during the Safavid era, the 'Water Lotus' (Niloofar-e Abi) with a slight difference is also known as "Shah Abbasi flower" (Heshmati Razavi, 2000, 184-185); A verbal

text is also placed around the Shah Abbasi flower, with a strip around the altar.

The form of Katibeh as a textual form can have various interpretations, as it is placed inside another larger text, that is the carpet, and even in a greater belonging as the mosque and home in which it is located. The verbal strip text around the altar refers to the commencement of the reign of Muzaffar al-Din Shah and his coronation, which introduces him as the highest king of the world. In this text, Gabriel, as a symbol of Islam or a representative of it, demands health and well-being for the king. The verbal text, in the middle of the carpet, indicates pray written for Shah that says all the days of his rule, maybe like the spring, harmless and safe, which is related to the visual text that depicts a space full of joy and happiness. The text is written in Nastaliq, which was more considered and used during the Qajar era, as Muzaffar al-Din Shah had special attention and emphasis on this script as a specific calligraphic font, which is another proof of this position.

Moreover, above the items of the verbal text and the flower of Shah Abbasi, there is an element of crown (Taaj); this motif is the Arabic word of a Pahlavi term called 'Taag', which refers to a Jeweled hat that was used to be worn on an official ceremony; it is also called 'Afsar' (Mo'in, 2003, 740), consisting of two components: 1. 'Af' in Persian language means "to" and "towards", and 'Sar' which means head that used in Avesta in two forms of 'Sarah' and 'Sara', that these two components together mean something that is put on the head (Kia, 1969, 3-4).

Table 2. The Signs and Symbols in the Carpet. Source: Authors.

| Sign and Symbol | Motif/Figure | The Symbols in the Carpet |
|--|--|---------------------------|
| Power-Love-Light | Lion | Visual Symbols |
| Love - Light - Divinity | Sun | |
| Glory-Procreation-Light | Tree/ Lotus Flower | |
| Tree of Life - Recreation | A vase of lotus flower and the animals on both sides of it | |
| A place for the ritual of Mehr - A holy place in the mosque to show the direction of the Qibla | Mehrab/Mihrab | |
| Holy space, Light | Diamond/Lozenge shape (Toranj) | |
| Savior of the unseen world, Gabriel Angel | Hand | Verbal Symbols and Signs |
| Glorious, Kingdom, Light | Crown (Taj) | |
| Coronation of Muzaffar al-Din Shah | King Sitting on Throne | |
| Having divine light | Islam (as an entity) is praying and Gabriel is saying Amen | |
| Having the royal glory (FarreKiyâni) | Royal Crown (Taj-e Kiani) | |
| Peace and serenity during this time | Age of Spring | |

Therefore, the crown has a close semantic relation with the king. In addition, the crown on the carpet is a kind of a royal crown (Taj-e Kiani) according to the verbal text. It seems that Taj-e Kiani was popular at that time by referring to the legendary stories of Shahnameh and FarreKiyâni. Therefore, it is necessary to clarify FarreKiyâni and its relation with the crown or hat. FarreKiyâni or FarreShahi is Farr or Glory that is considered the ultimate desire of the kings, which only upright and truly Persian kings deserved this dignity (Shariati Rad, 2005, 64-68). The allocation of these two titles of FarreKiyâni and Persian glory gradually became the special right of the kings in the form of the monarchy, as FarreKiyâni gave the divine right of the kings in rule and provided them with divine approval as well. The transferring of such ancient concepts to the Qajar reign was a means for conveying their message to their addressees. It is also believed that 'Agha Mohammad Khan Qajar' adopted this royal title of Taj-e Kiani from the stories of Shahnameh; according to the historical research, he was very interested in Shahnameh and mostly he was accompanied by a person who was Shahnameh reader (Aazdud-Dowleh, 1983, 114). However,

the royal crown (Taj-e Kiani) that is observed in the altar carpet is very similar to the crown that Fath-Ali Shah Qajar put on Nowruz 121 AH and replaced with the crown of Mohammad Khan Qajar. The Qajar dynasty from the reign of Fath Ali Shah onwards started to eliminate some elements in the crown, by changing in form and crown elements of Zand and Safavid dynasties and replacing them with the elements of the pre-Islamic empire to accentuate the mythical concepts (Amanat, 2001, 24-29). The royal crown (Taj-e Kiani) from Fath Ali Shah onwards, resembled the final victory of the Qajar dynasty, which was made from the jewelry obtained from the previous dynasties (Meen, 1968, 73). The pattern of 'Lion and the Sun' (Shir-o Khorshid) is holding the crown. This pattern is one of the signs on the flag of the Qajar dynasty, which is considered a symbol of this monarchy (Zaka, 1965, 32-35). This pattern of 'Shir-o Khorshid' also indicates that the lion is in a sitting position in official and royal relations, while on military occasions it is in a standing position. In contrast to the opinion of Zoka, the lion is in a standing position at the coronation ceremony as it is required to take the royal crown. In addition to being a symbol of power,

the lion is also a symbol of love together with the sun (Vermazen, 2004, 75) and both refer to light and glory. Another visual sign in this carpet is the figure of a “hand” with a bunch of flowers. According to Ghani (2021, 112) these two signs on the carpet, are representing the branches of the tree of life which separately are placed in diamond patterns on the carpet. He believes the holding hand are resembling the hand of Anahita, the Persian Goddess, who gives glory to human beings. In this carpet, according to the verbal text, the hand can also refer to Gabriel, because it is the angel who gives glory to the king; according to this text, Gabriel wishes the king good luck and victory.

The overall form of the carpet indicates the association of the tree and the crown, or the vase and the crown. According to the history of this motif, it seems that in this carpet, the crown has replaced the cresset or Ghandil/Qandil pattern. The association of tree and cresset, under the forehead of the altar, is reminiscent of verse 35 of Surah An-Nur as below:

“Allah is the Light of the Heavens and the Earth. His light is like a niche [lantern][meškāt] in which there is a lamp [cresset, Mesbah], the lamp is in a crystal [Glass, Zojajah], the crystal is like a shining star, lit from ‘the oil of’ a blessed olive tree [Shajarah], ‘located’ neither to the east nor the west”

The verse of Light (Surah An-Nur) is one of the verses that has frequently been interpreted, especially with the symbolic expression of the words of Meškāt, Mesbah, Zojajah, Shajreh, which is the basis of this verbal conversation. According to what has been said earlier, it can be interpreted that the crown which has replaced the great name of God or the Ghandil is not a usual crown. This is because of its place under the altar, its connection with the elements of the lotus flower and the tree of life, and the hand in position of giving the flower, all have given a special value and place to it. Therefore, to find the implicit meaning of it, it is required to be aware of the main conditions and discourse during the Qajar era.

• Iconological interpretation

At this level of interpretation, it is required to be

familiar with the related conventional principles, social, religious, and cultural conditions in which a specific artwork is formed. Therefore, before dealing with the interpretation and clarifying the carpet elements, the cultural and social conditions of its creation and formation are being addressed here. Regarding the structure of prevalent thought during the Qajar era, it can be stated that one of the dominant and common discourses in this time was the kind of tendency toward the ancient culture or Archaism. This ideology had a special target and vision, as one of the most significant ones of them was to downgrade the common culture of that time as a factor of social backwardness which was required to be replaced by a new culture (Bigdelo, 2001, 20). During this time, many people like Jalaluddin Mirzawere tried to retrieve the ancient kings and write a book as Khosrownameh. During the Qajar era, kings had both the aura of divine sanctity and the support of the army under their command. At this time, art was mostly under the control of the king and his court. They had made art a mean for ruling power and manifesting their glory, both inside and outside of their territory (Abrahamian, 1999, 10-14; Floor, 2002, 19-21).

In the early Qajar era up until constitutional time, the king figure is the main element in the carpets and other elements are related to the king. While in the constitutional time, with the hegemony of this specific discourse, in some works, people gradually were starting to be placed at the center. However, despite the discourse of constitutionalism and the absence of figures of Muzaffar al-Din Shah at this time, there were still several carpets, which were decorated with the name of Muzaffar al-Din Shah in some key points of the work. Some of these carpets have been woven in Islamic schools of that time. Before the reign of Muzaffar al-Din Shah, it was not considered a profession or skill like other crafts. However, at this time, there were some schools in which industrial arts were educated. Among these schools, the most prominent one in the field of carpet weaving is the Islamic school (Keshavarz & Pourmand, 2017, 151).

As mentioned earlier, during this time, several carpets, decorated with the name of Muzaffar al-Din Shah, became popular, which represents the king's position in this class of society. It has been said that "Muzaffar al-Din Shah had a friendlier manner compared to his other ancestors; he was even more interested in the progress of the country and developing activities" (Nazem al-Eslam Kermani, 1978, 132). Therefore, pointing to the significance of the king -Muzaffar al-Din Shah- in this time, the growth of carpet weaving schools, and the prevalence of Archaism, the association of mentioned elements in the altar carpet can be explained as below:

- The pattern of the crown in the altar carpet merely indicates the coronation of a king. Therefore, it is concluded that the crown has a special and divine place, and other motifs like the plants have also been used to decorate the carpet.

- Given the crown is depicted on the altar and somehow is located on the pattern of Shah Abbasi flower, it can be said with high probability that this flower might represent the tree of life in relation to the animals around it. The association of these motifs, all in one place, is not accidental, and there is the possibility of finding a deeper meaning from the depths of these motifs. The prevalence of ancient-based discourse during the Qajar era suggests that there is a meaning for the crown which is different from something sitting on a head. Therefore, in the altar carpets, the crown is usually depicted in a place of an Islamic text, which was common in the past, to represent the divine light.

In this specific altar carpet, in addition to its place, beneath the forehead of the altar, the crown has been associated with other elements, which all have been related to the light and forgiveness of the Farre element. In this carpet, two key places represent a high visual value, one is the forehead of the altar, and the other is the diamond shape or Toranj motif. In the former shape, the crown is placed, which refers to the coronation of Muzaffar al-Din Shah according to the verbal text, and in the latter one,

the diamond shape, the lotus flower is inserted; The surrounding space of the Toranj motif refers to the kind of tranquility that will govern the world after this time. Inside the diamond shape, the lotus flower is placed, which has a close relationship with light besides referring to Farr-e Kiani. Therefore, in this specific carpet, with no image of the king, there is more emphasis on his position, compared to the other usual carpets which were frequently decorated with specific images of kings during this time. During this time, due to the presence of many carpet weaving schools, there were frequent numbers of carpets, which were decorated with the name of Muzaffar al-Din Shah, instead of using his image, as the king. Placing his name in the key points, next to the other symbols, which all point to the element of glory (FarreKiyâni) and the position of granting him divine power, highly refers to the spiritual position of Muzaffar al-Din Shah as the king. Therefore, his crown on the lotus flower, which represents Farr-e-Kiani, is also held by the sign of 'the Lion and the Sun', which points to the state of glory in addition to representing a national symbol.

In addition to the presence of Archaism discourse during the Qajar era, the effect of Islamic thought on the carpet pattern is also obvious, in regard to the carpet texture and the presence of a verbal text that refers to praying of Islam [as an entity] for Muzaffar al-Din Shah. Therefore, in addition to giving FarreKiani, as mentioned earlier, the presence of hands with a bunch of flowers next to the verbal text, can be a symbol of 'Gabriel' from the Islamic aspect or 'Anahita' according to the ancient concept, which refers to the generosity and reflects the glory of divine light. It seems that the carpet designer intended to mention the Persian and Islamic symbols by putting these elements together to express the spiritual position of the king. Shah or King is someone who has a royal glory (FarreKiani) and Islamic grandeur at the same time; In other words, a combination of these two Islamic and Persian discourses can be observed in the mentioned carpet, which has given the carpet a separate identity.

Conclusion

An implicit language creates a new space in which, by using symbols, signs, and similitudes, a deeper and broader content is possible to be expressed. Therefore, to comprehend the inner expression of these works, a systematic method is required to be adopted. Since the mentioned carpet seems to have been created based on such a language, the iconology method was used to represent it. Here, relying on the interconnected chain of meanings, it is concluded that this kind of carpet with a crown pattern below the forehead of the altar, where it was used to manifest the divine light, can be interpreted based on the ancient discourse. Owing to this specific discourse, the crown can be interpreted based on a divine status. Moreover, according to the crown title, royal crown or Taj-e Kiani and its reference to Kayanians/ Kayanids, besides its position, under the forehead of the altar, which was used to represent a light symbol, the crown can also be considered a royal glory or FarreKiani. Therefore, the king by acquiring this position acquires a kind of transcendental authority. Moreover, according to the research approach, which is based on an iconological interpretation, an intrinsic meaning can be observed beyond just a simple relation of the mentioned elements. Moreover, the association of Persian and Islamic texts together is quite tangible here. The presence of animal figures, the lotus flower, and the tree of life all point to greater generosity, which is the concept of recreation. According to what has been mentioned in the verbal text, this carpet is promising the advent of the reign of Muzaffar al-Din Shah, who had a special place among this class of craftsman according to the previous research studies; thereupon, his coronation was of great significance, referring to a new creation. Therefore, it appears that the presence of 'crown' and 'tree of life'-which in some cases there is a Persian tree in this place, such as the lotus flower- in addition to emphasizing the Iranian-Islamic identity of the text, refers to a new creation emerged by the crown, which is an allegory of the king of the time. As

mentioned earlier, the association of the crown, the tree of life, the lotus flower, the hands, the bunch of flowers, and the verbal text all point to recreation and a new beginning. Moreover, the expanded use of tree branches in the whole background is supposed to indicate the expansion of this creation that the carpet designer has consciously or unconsciously has conveyed this concept.

Endnotes

1. The continuation of the verbal text in the desired carpet was not eligible
2. The text of the poems is in Persian language; the verses has been translated into English only to inform the reader about the content of them

Reference list

- Abrahamian, E. (1999). *Iran between the two revolutions* (A. Golmohammadi & M. E. Fattahi, Trans.). Tehran: Ney Publishing.
- Azadud-Dowleh, A. M. (1983). *Tarikh-e Azadi* [History of Azadi]. Tehran: Sarv Publishing Institute
- Azhand Y., Namvarmotlagh B. & Erfanmanesh, S. (2021). Analysis Of Meaning In The Niche Rug Of The Metropolitan Museum By Iconological Method. *Kimiya-Ye-Honar*, 9(37), 71-85.
- Amanat, A. (2001). The kayanid Crown and Qajar reclaiming of Royal Authority. *Iranian Studies*, 34 (1/4), 17-30.
- Bolkhari, H. (2019). *Secrets of a flower*. Tehran: Iranian Academy of the Arts.
- Bigdelo, R. (2001). *Bastan-Garayi dar Tarikh-e Mo'aser-e Iran* [Archaism in the Contemporary History of Iran]. Tehran: Markaz Publishing.
- Colombier, P. (1964). La Methode iconologique. *Journal de savants*, (3), 235-240.
- Dadgar, L. (2001). *Carpet with Tree Patterns*. Tehran: Ministry of Culture & Islamic Guidance Publications.
- Erfanmanesh, S, Amani, H. & Nemat Shahrababaki, A. (2021). A comparative study of verbal cues in the Mihrab frontal part in the Mirabi (niche) rugs of Safavid and Qajar eras. *Art and Civilization of the Orient*, 9(34), 35-44.
- Erfanmanesh S., Azhand Y. & Namvarmotlagh, B. (2021). Analysis of meaning in the Niche rug of the Solomon by iconology method. *Honar-Ha-Ye-Ziba, Honar-Ha-Ye-Tajassomi*, 26(3),99-108.
- Faranbagh Dadegi (Bondaheshin). (1995). (M. Bahar, Trans.). Tehran: Tous.
- Floor, W. M. (2002). *Art (Naqqashi) and Artists*

(*Naqqashan*) in *Qajar Persia* (Y. Azhand, Trans.). Tehran: Il-e Shahsavan-e Baghdadi.

- Ghani, A. (2018). The Iconology of Fereshteh (Angel) Lozeng in a Chaleshtorlozeng Rug by Erwin Panofsky. *Theology of Art*, (14), 43-66.
- Ghani, A. & Mehrabi, F. (2018). An Iconological Study of the Bakhtiari Pictorial Carpet by Panofsky's Methodology. *Iranian Handicrafts Studies*, 1(2), 95-11.
- Ghani, A. (2021). The Iconology of Dast-e Delbar (Beloved's hand) Motif in a ChaleshtorLozeng Rug. *Theoretical Principles of Visual Arts*, 6(2), 104-113.
- Hajizadeh, M. A., Khajeh Ahmad Attari, A. & AzimiNejad, M. (2017). Comparative Study of the Design and Pattern in Prayer Carpets of Safavid and Qajar Periods. *Greater Khorasan*, 6(25), 51-72.
- Heshmati Razavi, F. (2000). *Tarikh-e Farsh* [The history of the carpet]. Tehran: Samt.
- Javadian, A. A. (1994). *Gozide-ye Ghaliche-ha-ye Nafis-e Mouze-ye Dafine* [Selection of gorgeous carpets of Dafineh Museum]. Tehran: Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance, Dafineh Museum.
- Keshavarz, H. & Pourmand, H. A. (2017). A Survey of Formation and Developments of the Islam School's Carpet Weaving in Tehran. *The Historical Studies of Islam*, 9(32), 135-166.
- Nazem al-Eslam Kermani, M. (1988). *Tarikh-e Bidari-ye Iranian* [History of Iranian Awakening]. Tehran: Agah.
- Kia, S. (1969). *Taj* [Throne]. Tehran: Ministry of Culture and

Arts Publications.

- Mokhtarian, B. (2007). *Peyvand-e Menare-ha va Gonbad ba Nemd-e Se-Tayi-ye Moghadas* [The relation between minarets and domes with the symbol of the Holy Trinity]. Retrieved September 20, 2020, from <https://anthropologyandculture.com>
- Moin, M. (2003). *Moin Encyclopedic Dictionary*. Tehran: Sigol.
- Moghaddam, M. (2006). *Jastar Darbare-ye Mehr va Nahid* [A study in Mehr & Venus]. Tehran: Hirmand.
- Meen, V. B. & Tushingham, A. D. (1968). *Crown Jewels of Iran*. Toronto: university of Toronto Press.
- Panofsky, E. (1972). *Studies in Iconology; Humanistic Themes in the Art of the Renaissance*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Panofsky, E. (2012). On the problem of describing and interpreting works of the visual arts. *Critical Inquiry*, 38(3), 467-482.
- Shariati Rad, A. (2005). *Fare-ye Izadi in the political thought of ancient Iran*. (Unpublished Master's Thesis). Shahid Beheshti University, Tehran, Iran.
- Tabatabai, M. H. (1995). *Tafsir-e Al-Mizan* (M. B. Mousavi Hamedani, Trans.) Qom: Eslami.
- Vermazen, M. (2004). *Mithra, cedieuMysterieux* (B. Naderzadeh, Trans.). Tehran: Cheshmeh.
- Zaka, Y. (1965). *Tarikh-che-ye Taghirat va Tahavolat-e Derafsh va Alamat-e Dowlat-e Iran* [The history of evolutions and developments of the Flag and the Symbol of Iranian government]. *Mardom va Honar*, (35), 32-37.

COPYRIGHTS

Copyright for this article is retained by the author(s), with publication rights granted to the Bagh-e Nazar Journal. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution License (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).



HOW TO CITE THIS ARTICLE

Erfanmanesh, S.; Amani, Z. & Amani, H. (2022). Iconological Analysis of the Crown Element in the Altar Carpets (Mihrabi Rug) of the Qajar Era Case Study: The Mihrabi Rug of Mozaffar al-Din Shah. *Bagh-e Nazar*, 19(113), 87-98.

DOI: 10.22034/BAGH.2022.318580.5059

URL: http://www.bagh-sj.com/article_153673.html?lang=en

