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Original Research Article

A comparative Study Between the Faces and Clothing Items in Manichaean Paintings and Those of Early Islam*

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Abstract

In Manichaean paintings, the presence and role of man are very prominent. Manichaeans had special methods and principles for designing human faces; by borrowing from the faces of different lands and nations and integrating them with the imagination of his mind, Manichaean artists have tried to create different faces with different execution methods. Like Manichaean paintings, humans have an active presence in the paintings of early Islam, and the painters continued Manichaeans' way and method of drawing human portraits. Although there have been some changes in the portraiture of early Islam, the overall shape and features of the facial parts and, in some cases, the clothing of the figures, are the same as in the Manichean art style. This study tries to answer these questions: Manichean portraiture is influenced by the faces of which lands and nations, and what are its characteristics? What was the reason for drawing identical faces in Manichaean paintings? What features of the face and clothing of Manichaean paintings can be seen in the paintings of early Islam? The purpose of this study is to explore the characteristics of the face and clothing in Manichaean paintings and examine their similarities and differences with those of the Abbasid (Baghdad School), Samani, Ghaznavid, and Seljuk eras. The present study was done using a library-documentary study with a descriptive-analytical approach and a comparative approach. This study is of great importance because it raises new issues and makes new claims in terms of the stylistics of the art of painting in finding the origin of the art of painting and portraiture in early Islam (the Abbasid (Baghdad School), Samani, Ghaznavid, and Seljuq eras). Hence, this study aims to prove this hypothesis that the painting of early Islam was strongly and significantly influenced by the Manichaean style of portraiture. The results indicated that characteristics such as drawing identical faces, three-side angulation and oval shape of the face, lack of shading and simulating volume, small and elongated eyes, linear and slightly curved eyebrows, a small mouth and lips, a straight or arched nose, and hair arranged on the forehead are among the main characteristics of Manichaean portraiture, which were also used in the portraiture of early Islamic eras.

Keywords: *Manichaean painting, Early Islamic painting, Portraiture, Human, Painting.*

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Introduction

With a general look at the paintings of Manichaeans, first of all, human faces and figures attract the attention of the audience, showing the special and bold role of man in Manichaean paintings. Manichaean artists drew faces according to certain principles, which depended on different social and geographical conditions. They created unique and special figures according to the society in which they live and by using the works of the past and integrating them with their imaginations. Due to migration and living among the Chinese and Uighurs, the Manichaeans drew faces in their paintings that are closely related to the faces and clothing of the Chinese and Uighur people. Portraiture did not change much in the early periods of Islam, and the artists continued the Manichaean style of portraiture, and the biggest change occurred in the clothing of the figures, which seems to have approached the religious and social beliefs of the Islamic community. As mentioned above, this study seeks to answer these questions: Manichaean portraiture is influenced by the faces of which lands and nations? and what are their characteristics?. What were the reasons for drawing similar faces in Manichaean paintings? What are the characteristics of the face and clothing of Manichaean paintings seen in the painting of Early Islam? The purpose of this study is to study the characteristics of the face and clothing of Manichaean paintings and to examine their similarities and differences with the Abbasid (Baghdad School), Samani, Ghaznavid, and Seljuq periods. The results indicated that Manichaean portraiture is influenced by the faces of the Chinese people and Central Asian Turks (Uighurs) and the drawing of identical and similar faces in Manichaean art is probably related to the Manichaean religion, in which the human body is not significant and the soul and spiritual dimension of the human is considered important. That's why the faces were drawn similarly to each other. Drawing the same faces, three-sided angulation and oval shape of the face, lack of shading

and volume simulating, small and elongated eyes, long eyebrows, small mouths and lips, straight or arched nose, and hair styled on the forehead are among the main characteristics of Manichaean portraiture, which are also seen in the portraiture of Early Islam; The only difference is in the type of clothing of the figures, which became Islamic clothing in the early periods of Islam, but similarities with Manichean style clothing can also be seen in several cases. The necessity of the present study is due to the fact that Manichaean art was one of the most important and influential arts in Iran, so this topic is very important for discovering the commonalities of the art of portraiture in different periods of Iran. On the one hand, it causes to disclose the existing ambiguities about the reason for drawing unrealistic faces similar to each other in Early Islam. Therefore, this study can lead to both a better understanding of this art full of surprises and the recognition of the impact on the portraiture of the early periods after Islam. Although there are very few works left from Manichaean paintings as well as the paintings of Early Islam, examining each of them, we have tried to identify new dimensions and angles of portraiture of these periods. Therefore, this study can contribute to human knowledge in the field of portraiture in Iran.

Research Background

Researchers have done a lot of research in the field of Manichaean painting and especially the Manichaean religion, but no researcher has done noteworthy research on the faces and clothing of Manichaean paintings and compared them with those in early Islamic paintings. This issue shows the necessity and innovative aspect of this research. In various books, articles, and theses about the Manichaean painting style and Early Islam paintings, information, and images have been presented, and this study is an attempt to complete and focus on their portraits. Among the books, articles, and theses related to the topic of this research, Azhand (2020), in a book titled

“Painting of Iran” investigated the characteristics of Iranian art and schools of painting before and after the advent of Islam. Klim Keit, (2017), in a book titled “Manichaean Art,” discussed the characteristics of Manichaean artwork. In this book, he stated that with the spread of Islam, Iranian painting did not decline in any way. It should be thought that Islamic painting and the art of book writing in Iran and Western Turkestan were strongly influenced by Manichaean art. Shabani and Mahmoudi (2014), in an article entitled “The comparison of Turfan’s paintings and the paintings of people of Varkeh and Golshah of the Seljuq period,” discussed the similarities between the Manichaean and Seljuq works in terms of face and clothing. They concluded that Seljuq portraiture originated from the Manichaean art of Central Asia. Akhondi (2010), in a thesis titled “Examination of the Evolution of Portraiture in Traditional Iranian Painting,” investigated the features of portraiture in Iran from the Sassanid period to the end of the Safavid period. He concluded that portraiture before Islam served as a background for drawn faces in Islamic painting have been combined with religious beliefs after Islam, and have caused the emergence of an innovative method in Islamic portraiture, and the traditions of Manichaean portraiture played an essential role in transferring these beliefs to Islamic periods. In most of the articles and theses, there have been discussions on the comparison of Manichaean portraiture with Seljuq portraiture, but there is no research on the portraiture of the Abbasid, Samanid, and Ghaznavid periods and its comparison with Manichaean portraiture. In general, it can be concluded that due to the importance of Manichaean art in the formation of early Islamic art, few sources have been written on Manichaean art and its relationship with early Islamic art.

Methodology

This study is a comparative study with an emphasis on Manichaean portraiture. It was carried out with

a descriptive-analytical approach using library-documentary sources. For this purpose, books, articles, theses, as well as personal analyses and reasonings were studied. Therefore, library sources were scrutinized for primary information, and then portraiture in Manichaean paintings and early Islamic eras were described separately and based on visual criteria. Then, they were analyzed using a comparative method to answer the desired questions. The samples of this research included the murals, banner paintings, and graphic sheets discovered in the Turfan oasis of Manichaean art, as well as murals of the Abbasid era, illustrated books of Baghdad school, pottery of the Samani era, Ghaznavid murals, and pottery and graphic books of Seljuq era.

Manichaean Art

The painting tradition of the Manichaeans goes back to Mani, the founder of Manichaeism (Klim Keit, 2017, 61). Mani was one of the artists who started painting, calligraphy, and Nebigan Negari (Book painting)¹ to spread, preserve and survive his cult. Mani’s innovation in religious-mystical attitude was also manifested in his art and created a new artistic feature. The most important aesthetic aspect of Manichaean art is the theme of the salvation of the human soul and reaching the heaven of light². Liberation from the earthly world, which was considered a mixture of light and darkness, was considered the most important theme of Manichaean art (Esmailpour, 2021, 164). Because Mani was born in Babylon in a Parthian family, he was probably familiar with the tradition of Western Parthian painting and based his painting on this tradition. Later Mani’s followers in Central Asia evolved his painting style with influences from other traditions. In the middle of the 7th century AD, the Buddhist art of Eastern Turkestan began another transformation. This was when, under Chinese political and cultural influence, the center of artistic activity moved from Kucha to a more eastern area called Turfan. After Eastern Turkestan fell to the

Uighur Turks³, Turfan's artistic achievement spread among the followers of different religions. Thus, the Manichaeans under the support of the new rulers benefited from this achievement. Almost all the documents of Manichaean painting, whether depicted on the walls or paper and cloth scrolls obtained from the Turfan region, mainly belong to the 8th and 9th centuries AD. Examining these works has partially clarified the style of Manichaean painters for us. Undoubtedly, following Mani, Manichaeans were engaged in illustrating and gilding books, but their art was allowed to grow and develop in the court of the Uighurs. Although the paintings of Turfan (Fig. 1) are only fragmentary images, confirm this point. In general, the Manichaean book painting tradition remained stable in Central Asia for a long time, and then it was spread throughout Iran by the Seljuqs (Pakbaz, 2021, 41-44). By reflecting and searching in Manichaean paintings, it is clear that these paintings are formed with symbolic expression in a well-reasoned and cogent way, and the main elements used are influenced by Manichean concepts and instructions and have obvious clarity. However, despite the simple appearance of Manichaean paintings, the symbolic depth of the elements opens a new meaning to the painting of this era (Panjehbashi & Mohammadjani Divkolaei, 2022, 27).

Examination of the Characteristics of Manichaean Portraiture

Considering that Manichaean art served the Manichaean religion and the paintings were designed and illustrated based on the teachings of this religion, and the mission of this religion was to reach the human soul to salvation and heaven of light; Therefore, human forms are the main and inseparable elements of Manichaean painting. By examining the remaining works of Manichaean painting and observing human forms and comparing faces with each other, we often encountered faces that are similar to each other, indicating that the Manichaeans used the same pattern



Fig. 1. Part of Manichaean painting art on paper. Source: Gulácsi, 2016, 298.

in drawing faces (Fig. 2), although in some paintings there are slight changes in the faces. These details will be mentioned in the continuation of this study; however, in general, the following characteristics can be pointed out: an oval and fleshy face and in most cases with a three-sided angle, small, elongated, and black eyes, a relatively large distance between the eyes and eyebrows, a curved and almost thick line for the eyelids, a black line with a gentle curve for the eyebrows (sometimes thick and sometimes thin), a small mouth and puckered, red lips, nose in a smooth, straight linear and a sharp point at the tip of the nose, the nostrils are bent backward at a low angle (sometimes the nose is curved linearly) and the tip of the nose is round). The coloring of the face and body is uniform and smooth, and there is no simulating volume or shading.

The pattern of Manichaean portraiture is very similar to Chinese faces, which was adapted due to the migration and travels of the Manichaeans to China; Of course, if we look more closely at the faces in the paintings, we also come across the faces of the Central Asian Turks, who were the Uighurs. Since the characteristics of the faces of Chinese and Uighurs are close to each other, the differences between the two are not very clear and tangible in Manichaean paintings, and it requires more detail and precision. In the Manichaean paintings, the faces with Chinese



Fig. 2. Examples of faces in Manichaean paintings. Source: Archive of Authors

characteristics have small eyes with low elongation, very thin and long eyebrows with a gentle curve, fragmented, thin and small beards and mustaches, and the skin color is yellow and pink in most cases, and the cheeks are rosy (Fig. 3).

However, the faces possessing the features of the Uighur faces in the Manichaean paintings have more elongated eyes than the eyes of the Chinese (stretching the eyes upwards to near the end of the eyebrow), thick, very long and close together eyebrows (in a frown), mustache and beard of voluminous, black and uniform from the parotid, elongated face and fleshy cheeks, and the skin color is dark or yellow (Fig. 4).

The Manichaeans also followed principles that were specific to themselves in painting faces and figures; The use of lateral lines is one of the common methods in Manichaean paintings, usually, the lines around the faces, bodies, hands, ears, as well as the line behind the eyelid, noses, and lips are in red, and the lines of the eyes with pupils, eyebrows, beard, and mustache are always in black. In Manichaean paintings, usually, the gesture of the hands and fingers of gods or some chosen men⁴ has been performed in the state of preaching in Vitarka Mudra⁵, and the arm is bent to the side or held in front of the body (Fig. 5); generally, however, the chosen ones (men and women), as well as the Hearers, had their hands hidden in their sleeves as a sign of respect.

Hairdressing and Clothing of Men and Women in Manichaean Paintings

In Manichean paintings, the faces of men and women can often be found in the position of gods, chosen ones, the Hearers⁶, and those who bring offerings. Since the Manichaeans drew all the faces in the same way, they had to use different elements and signs

to separate and differentiate the characters in each picture. One of the signs is the type of clothes and hair makeup and the arrays around people's heads. The male and female gods in Manichaean paintings always wore luxurious clothes with warm and bright colors and were full of creases (creases were performed by colored lines). God's hair makeup was also different from ordinary people's. Most of the women had long hair parted in the middle and a few pieces of short, curved, or curly hair from the foreheads to the ears. Most of the time, men also had long hair with a parting in the middle. Moreover, all the male and female deities were decorated with a crown and a halo around the head in the Manichaean images, and the types of halo and the pattern inside them changed based on the position of the deities (Fig. 6).

In the Manichaean community, men and women were present in selected positions, which are also depicted in the Manichaean paintings. The clothing of selected men and women is the same; they were wearing white, long, and simple shirts with black lines showing pleats. Their hands were hidden in wide



Fig. 3. Examples of Manichaean face painting that are similar to Chinese faces. Source: Archive of Authors.



Fig. 4. Examples of Manichaean portraits that are similar to Uighur faces. Source: Archive of Authors.



Fig. 5. Manichean portraits with a red contour and the hand gesture of God and Chosen in the form of Vitarka Mudra. Source: Archive of Authors.



Fig. 6. A sample of the type of clothing, hair decorations, and halo around the heads of the Manichean male and female gods. Source: Archive of Authors.

and lowered sleeves as a sign of respect and they only took them out of the sleeves when it was necessary. The only difference between the clothing of selected women and men was in the type of their hat or scarf; men wore two types of hats: One model was long and sometimes short, and the other type was winged, which was tied under the chin with a red band. Men's

hair also protruded from beneath the turbans and was placed on the shoulder in a strand form. There were two types of turbans worn by selected women, both were square with two sharp edges, but one type had cloths hanging around it to below the neck, which completely covered the hair, and in the other type, the cloths around the turbans were shorter and the hair was seen from below. Of course, in most cases, the hair of the selected women was completely hidden (Fig. 7).

The hearers, who were from the Manichaean community, were mostly depicted sitting on their knees with their hands hidden in their sleeves and respectfully listening to the sermons of the chosen ones. If he was a person from the normal class of society, he would wear a simple and long dress with a belt tied around his waist, and his hair would simply fall on his shoulders; But if he/she belonged to the royal class, he would be depicted with a decorous dress and usually full of motifs and a golden belt on his waist and decorated hair, and with a cap or a crown on his head (Fig. 8).

In several Manichaean paintings, images of princes (usually Uighur princes) were depicted as offerers. The offering princes stood on the door or next to a window between two red curtains and had a flower with a folded and broken stem in their hands (Klim Keit, 2017, 97) and their hands were hidden in their sleeves as a sign of respect. The female offerers wore a long shirt and sometimes with motifs and their hair was made up and collected around them and wore a golden crown. The men who made offerings also wore a long patterned shirt tied with a belt and their hair was often very long on the back of their heads to near their waists. On the men's heads is a crown or a hat that was tied with a red band under the chin (Fig. 9).

Iranian Art in the First Islamic Century

From the first Islamic century, there is scattered information about the evolution of the art of illustration



Fig. 7. Samples of hair covering and decorations of selected men and women. Source: Archive of Authors.



Fig. 8. The hearers from the ordinary class (right side), a young hearer (middle side), and the hearers from the royal class (left side). Source: Archive of Authors.



Fig. 9. Image of male and female offerers. Source: Archive of Authors.

in Iran. This information can sometimes be obtained from historical and literary texts and sometimes from the artistic remains of the Umayyad and Abbasid eras. Iranians played a big role in the rise of the Abbasids and their cultural and artistic influences are clearly visible in the artworks of the Abbasid Caliphate. These impacts can be seen in the discoveries of Samarra and Abbasid palaces, which have benefited from Sassanid influences and Central Asian heritage (Azhand, 2020, 105). The oldest paintings of the Islamic period are extremely rare. There are many reasons for the lack of information. First of all, it was the ban and hostility that was expressed in the Islamic world towards the representation of the human body and all forms of animal life. The second factor that led to such a narrow field of research is the miserable sequence of acts of destruction that have affected the existing samples of visual art. Iranian painters decorated the walls of palaces, but these artworks were destroyed by the kings' thrones, and only a few fragments of these murals remain scattered. Another material that painters used was paper; the continuous use of this fine material in the West was very unstable and uncertain, and this instability was doubled in the East. However, the uneven course of the history of the Islamic world caused the deterioration and loss of artworks worse than any other destruction. The burning of libraries in a part of the world was an irreparable tragedy, and undoubtedly, in the fire of 998/389, which completely destroyed the library of Sultan Samani, unique treasures, and many artworks in Iran were destroyed by fire (Arnold & Pope, 2014, 3-5). Therefore, our information about the visual art of Iran in the first centuries of Islam is limited to a few damaged murals, images on clay and metal vessels, as well as the reports of some Muslim historians in this regard (Pakbaz, 2021, 46-47).

Portraiture in the Abbasid Era

With the arrival of the Abbasids, who moved their capital from Damascus to Baghdad, this city became

the cultural center of the world. Given that Baghdad was one of the largest capitals of the ancient world and Iran, close to Tesphon, it is possible to see the aesthetic and artistic views of Iran even centuries after the fall of the Sassanids, in the art of this land, especially in the art of architecture and murals in the Abbasid palaces or the art of illustrating books (Toosheh Asl, 2020, 116-117). Iranian artists were probably involved in building and decorating Abbasid palaces, and its example can be found in the murals of a palace in Samarra known as Josq al-Khaqani. These paintings belong to the first quarter of the 3rd century Hejira (Pakbaz, 2021, 45). The murals of the Abbasid palaces had a decorative and figurative nature, and of course, their figurative aspect was superior to their decorative aspect. These murals originated in Central Asia and in fact, mixed the Eastern and Western artistic traditions (Azhand, 2020, 75). One of the famous murals of this palace is a painting of two court dancers (Fig. 10), which are represented in a linear symmetrical composition. The dancers are wearing a long, fringed dresses and they have raised one leg. Each of them openly pours wine into another cup. The look, body movements, and folds of clothes are solid and conventional. Richard Ettinghausen⁷ considers this painting to be influenced by Sassanid designs or Turfan murals due to the long braided hair and wide shirt collar of the dancers (Ettinghausen & Grabar, 2001, 51). The facial features of the two dancers are depicted as similar; an oval pink face with a three-sided angle, elongated but large eyes with a line behind the eyelid, linear eyebrows with a slight bend, a small horizontal linear mouth, and a long and arched linear nose. To show the shape of the chin, a curved line is placed on the lower part of the lip. The face, shape of the hands, and bodies of the two dancers are men, while the earrings and decorative arrays on their hair, as well as the shirt they are wearing, all show that these two individuals are women.

In (Fig. 11) a woman is depicted, which is similar

to the faces of the two dancers in the mural. She is depicted with an oval-shaped face with a three-sided angle, plump and fleshy cheeks, large eyes (with a line in the corner of the eye to show the elongation of the eye) and with a long eyebrow, a long and arched linear nose, and small linear-shaped lips. She has a decorated crown on her head and a bunch of black hair on the back of her head and in front of her forehead, and there are two curled hairs on the top and bottom of the ear. In terms of the type of clothing, she is wearing a long, simple, and monochromatic shirt with creased lines.

Portraiture in Illustrated Books of the Baghdad or Abbasid School

In the emergence of the Baghdad School, the influences of Manichaean and Uighur circles, Byzantium, and Nestorian Christians played a big role, but all these influences are intertwined in an Islamic whole (Azhand, 2020, 97-98). The paintings of the early and middle periods of the Abbasid era were mostly manifested in murals, and the pictorial art of the final period, i.e. the last decades before the collapse of the caliphate and its capital Baghdad, was



Fig. 10. The original mural and the reconstructed image of two court dancers, Josaq al-Khaqani Palace, Sammara. Source: Hoffman, 2008, 112.



Fig. 11. The original mural and the reconstructed image of the huntress, Sammara. Source: Hoffman, 2008, 115.

obtained in the form of calligraphy (Kuhnel, 2009, 87-88). Among the books of the Baghdad school, we can mention Kalileh and Damna, Mahmaal Hariri, Al-Aghani, Al-Adwieh al-Mufarda or Al-Hashaish, Sural-Kawakb, Al-Bitra and other scientific and literary versions of illustration. These versions have been successful in terms of the use of subjects, and the power of painting and coloring (*ibid.*). The al-Aghani version written by Abul Faraj Esfahani, which was written in 616-614 AH, belongs to the school of Baghdad (Cattelli & Hambis, 1997, 35). In the illustrations of this book, there are images of rulers with concubines, dancers, minstrels, and tables full of food and drinks (Azhand, 2020, 99-100). In one of the pictures of this book (Fig. 12), a king is depicted in the center and his ladies (attendants) around him. The king's face is full-faced and fleshy, with small and very elongated eyes, eyebrows with a gentle curve, thin and long, small mouth and lips, voluminous and black beard and mustache, the red contour of the face, nose, line behind the eyelids and hands, the king's hair has been also hidden in a hat and a patterned halo around the head. His robe is long with patterns and armbands tied on his hands. The attendants also have the same facial features as the king, and only their faces have a three-sided angle and they have a simple and monochromatic aura around their heads. Women's hair is also braided around the face.

In the Baghdad school, most of the works were in the field of philosophy, medicine, logic, and mathematics, but Muslims also discovered wide horizons in the field of astrology and astronomy, and the oldest work of this type that has remained in illustrated form is Sur al-Kawakb Al-Hammada written by Abd al-Rahman Sufi at the beginning of the 5th century Hejira. The human figures in this book have big heads, short bodies, and detailed hand and foot designs (Azhand, 2020, 100). The characteristics of the faces in this book can be said to be large and oval faces with a three-sided angle, elongated eyes

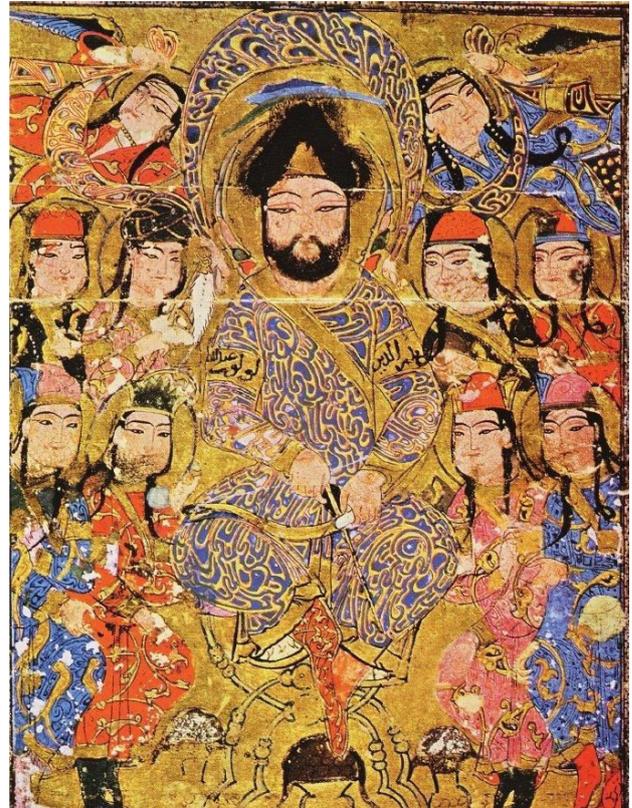


Fig. 12. The king and his attendants, The book of Al-Aghani, probably Mosul. Source: Azhand, 2020, 100.

and eyebrows, small, bud lips, a nose with an arched and long line, large ears, long and falling hair on the back of the head, and the hair on the front of the head usually having makeup and falling on the forehead to the ears. The long robes are tied with a belt and have black lines to indicate folds and pleats (Fig. 13).

The book of Al-Bitarah (Veterinary Medicine) was written by Ahmad Bin Hossein Ahnaf in Baghdad in 605 AH. In one of the images in this book, he shows two horsemen (Fig. 14) who have a special depth of view and the artist has conveyed the visual rules with special care, especially the vividness of the movement showing his mastery (Akashe, 2001, 316). The faces of the two horsemen are similar to the faces of the Uighurs; The face is oval, three-sided, and with a halo around the head, small and elongated eyes, thick and elongated eyebrows facing upwards and close to each other in the form of a frown, these two individuals have long and drooping mustaches with

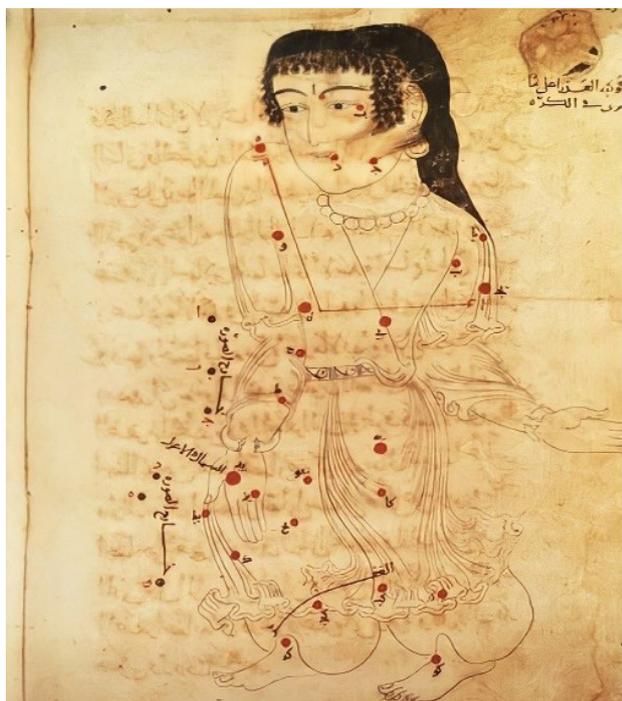


Fig. 13. The Book of Sovar al-Kavakeb Al-Sabeteḥ Sufi.
Source: Azhand, 2020, 101.



Fig. 14. Al-Bitarah's book, Two Horsemen, Baghdad. Source: Azhand, 2020, 111.

voluminous beards. Their clothing is Arabic; they have worn a turban like a hat, which is tied under the chin with a strap, and a long robe with armbands.

• Portraiture in the Samani Era

Most likely, book writing was popular during the Samanid era; as it has been said that one of the Samanid princes (Nasr II) hired Chinese painters who were probably Manichaeans to illustrate *Kalila and Demeneh* (Pakbaz, 2021, 47). There are no other works of painting from this era other than fragments

of murals and painted pottery from Neishabur. The murals are not suitable for examining the portraits of this era because the figures from the Samani murals are faceless and the faces are destroyed and cannot be examined. Therefore, to investigate the portraiture of the Samanid era, due to the lack of visual sources, it has been tried to probe the portraiture of this era by referring to the pottery. In Samani pottery, the most complex and mysterious motifs are related to the human role. Watson⁸ connects the figures carved on Samani pottery with the painting traditions of the Sassanian era and Manichaeic thought (Watson, 2004, 247). Probably, these dishes depict members of the ruling class. The existence of special symbolic states and elements with some of these motifs makes possible the connection of these figures with the themes of ancient Iran (Ataie, Mosaviye Haji & Koulabadi, 2012, 75). The figures in Samani pottery are solid and dull and drawn in the form of half-face, full-face, and three-face. There is a lot of emphasis on the sidelines and the complete removal of the face. The characteristics of the facial features include big and round and sometimes small and elongated eyes, thin and long eyebrows, a nose in the form of two smooth vertical lines, and lips are also smooth and horizontal lines. Men usually have massive beards and mustaches, hair (men and women) is simple or braided and long, and in some cases, a few curls of hair are drawn on the forehead. The clothing of men and women was in the form of a long garment with a belt and garments with many motifs but without folds and pleats lines (Fig. 15).

• Portraiture in the Qaznavid Era

The Qaznavids decorated their palaces with murals and probably employed Central Asian artists to decorate their palaces. The murals of Lashkari Bazar Palace (Afghanistan) are the only remaining evidence of paintings from that era. In the historical texts of the paintings of this palace, it is described that the painting was done on a plaster background, on molded stucco moldings in places that were protected from

rain and humidity and can be seen under the arches (Abbaszade, Khamse & Mortezaei, 2020, 115). Most sources indicate that human figures have a special place in the building murals of the Qaznavid era and the faces are usually the faces of political and military figures such as kings, soldiers, and bodyguards. It seems that scenes from the battlefields and court life were the main themes of these murals. The paintings of this palace represent forty-four characters (the ruins of two pillars show that their original number was seventy individuals); the bodies are depicted in full face and the legs in half face. The figures, almost all of which were destroyed in the fire of the back posts, were in three-quarter profiles and had a halo around the head (Fig. 16). The figures are wearing short-sleeved clothes, only the neck of which is seen, and a long robe that is tied on the left side (Bombaci, Ettinghausen & Schrato, 2015, 97-98).

Among the characteristics of murals in this era, were an oval shape with a three-sided angle, a head bent towards the shoulder, small and elongated eyes, thin eyebrows, a straight and long linear nose, a small mouth and lips, and a halo around the head can be mentioned (Figs. 16 & 17). The hair is also loose on the back of the head and a long and curly hair strand hangs on the ear. In terms of clothing, the figures are wearing patterned and long shirts with armbands and belts (Fig. 16).

• Portraiture in the Seljuk Era

In the Seljuk era, architecture, metalwork, and pottery reached the peak of prosperity. Although there is a strong possibility that various types of visual art were also prevalent in this period, only a few pieces of murals and a few illustrated copies have remained from that era, which provides no sufficient information in this regard. On the other hand, the characteristics of the visual art of the Seljuk era can be understood from the paintings on the pottery and especially the so-called enamelware⁹. Although the potters were active in the central areas of Iran and mainly in the city of Kashan, they were strongly influenced by



Fig. 15. Samples of Neyshabur pottery of the Samani era. Source: Hokmabadi et al., 2015, 62-64.



Fig. 16. A part of the murals of Lashkari Bazaar Palace, 5th century A.H. Source: Schlumberger, 1952, 262.



Fig. 17. A person's face on one of the pillars of Lashkari Bazaar Palace, Qaznavian. Source: Azhand, 2020, 83.

Eastern artistic traditions, especially the Manichaean tradition (Pakbaz, 2021, 51-52). The pottery of the Seljuk era provides an image of the painting of this era because the best paintings of this era were drawn on pottery (Cattelli & Hambis, 1997, 33). In the Seljuk pottery (Fig. 18), the faces are drawn the same and similar to each other. The faces are oval and mostly three-faced and in rare cases, full- and half-faced, the faces are fat and fleshy, full circling of the face, the eyes are small and very elongated, and the eyebrows are linear and thin and with a gentle curve, the nose in the form of a straight and long line and in some cases in the form of an arch, a small mouth and the lips in a short and horizontal line. In most cases, the hair of women and men is long and two strands of long hair hanging around the face, men with small and short beards and mustaches, and clothes are long and full of motifs (usually slimy motifs) without creases. From the Seljuk era, there are many illustrated books, most of which are about different sciences and knowledge, and the examination of their paintings complements the knowledge we have obtained from enameled pottery in this field (Tajvidi, 2008, 66). It is customary to call a group of paintings that should be called Seljuk paintings under the general title of Baghdad school. There is no doubt that the manuscripts containing these paintings originated from several different centers that were a considerable distance from each other, but all of them were within the territory of the Seljuqs, and the painters themselves were not from Seljuk Turks, but from Iranians and Arabs. Therefore, the title of Seljuq is more suitable for this part of the Iranian painting. The unique manuscript of the Persian romance, Samak Ayar's book, belonging to the Badalian library, is a turning



Fig. 18. Samples of pottery from the Seljuk area. Source: Azhand, 2020, 114.

point and a suitable starting point for determining the identity of the paintings of Iran's Seljuk era (Arnold & Pope, 2014, 38-39). In the images of this book, the figures were wearing colorful and patterned clothes with salamis in two pieces, the upper garment was designed in the form of a cassock or open front or closed in front, and the cassock sleeves are all up to the elbows. The individuals' faces are identical and similar to each other, oval and often three-sided faces, elongated eyes, small mouths and small lips, and red cheeks. Some figures have a halo around the head and crown, long hair and two strands of long hair hanging in front of the face, and short and curly hair in front of their ears. One of the sheets of this manuscript contains all the features mentioned, showing two winged angels (Fig. 19).

Another version that has been attributed to the Baghdad school, that is, Galen's Treatise in the State Library of Vienna, has some illustrations with a red background and details of the decoration of the images that bring to mind the style of enameled pottery (ibid.). One of the images in this book (Fig. 20) is divided and framed as if something is occurring in each frame. This image contains a large number of human figures, each of which (in pairs or groups) is placed in a part of the frame. The faces are all drawn in the same way, oval and three-sided faces, elongated almond eyes and long eyebrows, small mouths, flat linear noses, facial contours, red back and middle lines, and long and drooping hair for both men and women. Both women and men were depicted with massive beards and mustaches, and all figures even birds have halos around their heads. There is no negative space in the image and the image is full of human figures.

Another very important manuscript, which has also been remembered in recent years, and there is no doubt about its authenticity, is the graphic Divan of Varga and Golshah, and its paintings are considered among the best examples of visual art of the Seljuk era (Tajvidi, 2008, 70-71). There is an obvious



Fig. 19. The image of Samak Ayar's book, Shams is listening to the words of Shamat and Parian. Source: Arnold & Pope, 2014, 348.



Fig. 20. An image of Galen's treatise, Sultan and his attendants, and other events. Source: Tajvidi, 2008, 67.

affinity between the images of Varagheh and Golshah and the images of enamel vessels of this era in terms of portraiture, patterning, and composition (Pakbaz, 2021, 52-53). The images are full of human figures and horses. The faces are all depicted the

same; The faces are oval and fleshy, almond-shaped and elongated eyes, small mouths, arched noses, very long hair and two strands of hair falling in front of the face and two strands of hair at the back of the head. And all the faces have a halo around the head. Moreover, the clothes are drawn without motifs and only curved lines are used to show pleats (Fig. 21).

A Comparison of Manichaean Portraiture with Abbasid (Baghdad School), Samani, Ghaznavid, and Seljuq Painting

As mentioned earlier, in their portraiture, the Manichaeans borrowed the faces of the Chinese people and the Central Asian Turks (Uighurs) and then created their portraits in their paintings using their creative minds and in a different way. In the paintings of the later eras, the Manichaean style of portraiture can be seen. In the early centuries of the Abbasid era, when murals were more common, Manichaean portraiture patterns are less seen; Some details such as lengthening the ends of the eyes and drawing the nose in a linear shape and the face with a three-sided angle and flat coloring without shading happened in the Abbasid era, and also the most important characteristic of Manichaean portraiture, which is the drawing of the same faces, is repeated in the Abbasid murals. In the illustrations of books of the Baghdad school, not only the principles of Manichaeism are used, but the faces are very close to the faces in Manichaeism, especially in the Book of Al-Aghani (Fig. 12); Even the method of circling the face in red color, which was a special method for Manichaeans, was used, or in the Book of Al-Baitareh (Fig. 14), the horseman's face has clear correspondence with one of the Manichaean faces, which was similar to the face of the Uighur Turks. In the Samani era, unfortunately, there is no illustrated manuscript, and some murals having figures which have been left from this era also lack faces. Therefore, it is inevitable to refer to the pottery of the Samani era, which is decorated with human faces, although the pottery



Fig. 21. An image from the book of Varaqeh and Golshah, the capture of Varaqeh and the appearance of Golshah in front of Rabi.

Source: Tajvidi, 2008, 70.

of this era does not provide complete information, by examining and looking closely, the features of Manichaean portraiture, such as the pattern of the same faces, linear nose, elongated eyes, small mouth in Samani pottery can be received. There are only a few damaged murals from the Ghaznavid era, many correspondences can, however, be observed between the portraiture of this era and Manichaean portraiture, even in drawing the form and model of the halo around the head, the method of the Manichaeans, who drew patterned halos, was used. While in the books of the Baghdad school and the Seljuk paintings of a halo around the head were simply painted. During the Seljuq era, however, more documents were available; the pottery and illustrated books of this era give us a lot of information about the Seljuk style of portraiture. The faces in the Seljuq pottery correspond exactly with the Manichaean faces, but in the Seljuq illustrated books, the characteristics of the Manichaean portraiture such as small and elongated eyes, linear nose, lips, three-faceted angulation, and identical faces and other characteristics are used, but with some changes have been made so that the faces are not exactly similar to Manichaean faces. In general, among the common and distinct facial features of these eras with Manichaean, we can mention identical faces and similar to each other, which is repeated in all these eras, and faces with small and elongated eyes, thin and long eyebrows, and straight linear nose. The face with a three-sided angle and flat coloring and lack of shading and volume are among the most characteristics that have

made their way from Manichaean paintings to the early periods of Islam. Despite these commonalities, some differences are not in the portraiture, but only in the type of clothing of the human figures, which seems to have become more Islamic in these eras, as well as the model of the hat is also Arabic and the clothes are richly carved, while in Manichaean paintings, the clothing is mostly simple and without patterns and only pleats were included in the design of the clothes. Only in the murals of the Abbasid era, the book of *Sovar Al-Kawakb*, *Varaqeh*, and *Golshah* are adapted from the Manichaean type of clothing. All these mentioned cases are classified in [Table 1](#).

Conclusion

By examining and comparing the faces in Manichaean paintings, we often come across repeated and similar faces. Since the Manichaeans designed and depicted pictures based on their thought and religion. In the ritual of this religion, the soul and the spiritual dimension of man are mentioned, and the reaching of the human soul to salvation and heaven of light is the supreme goal of the Manichaean religion. Therefore, it seems that the physical dimension of a person was not important for the Manichaeans, and the reason for drawing similar faces was probably to show the equality of humans. One of the main features of Manichaean portraiture is oval and fleshy faces with three-faced angle and a halo around the head, small and elongated eyes, long eyebrows, nose in the form of a straight line, long and sometimes arched, bud lips. In most cases, men have beards and mustaches (sometimes small and fragmented and sometimes large and uniform), which are borrowed from the features of Chinese and Uighur faces. Regarding the portraiture of early Islam, it can be acknowledged that the portraiture of the Abbasid (Baghdad school), Ghaznavid, Samani, and Seljuk eras was a clear adaptation of the Manichaean portraiture style. Basic changes in the portraiture of these eras are not observed, for example, the faces

Table 1. A comparison between faces and clothing in Manichaean and early Islamic painting. Source: Authors.

Sample Image	Common Features		Sample Image
	Face	Clothing	
(Mural) Abbasid 	A three-sided and oval face, elongated eyes, thin and long linear eyebrows, an arched linear nose, curved hair on the forehead, and curly hair near the ear.	The model and form, the pleats at the end of the skirt, and the colored lines used to show the pleats	Manichaean 
Baghdad school Al-Qani Book 	A three-sided and oval face, a halo around the head, small and elongated eyes, thin and long linear eyebrows, a smooth linear nose, red and bud lips, a voluminous beard and mustache, the red contour of the face, nose, line behind the eyelids and hands	Lack of similarity in clothing	
Sovar Al-Kavakeb Book 	Three-sided and oval face, elongated eyes and thin and long linear eyebrows, arched linear nose, bud lips, hair made up on the forehead	Black lines to show pleats at the end of the shirt	
Al-Baitarah book 	A three-sided and oval face, thick eyebrows, elongated eyes, fallen mustaches, thick beards, a halo of light	Lack of similarity in clothing	
Samani (earthenware) 	Thin line eyebrows, straight line nose, small mouth, triangular beard, curly hair on the forehead	Lack of similarity in clothing	
(Mural) Ghaznavi			

are not seen with Iranian identity or with volume processing and shading, and there is no trace of the faces becoming more realistic, thus it is quite obvious that Manichaean portraiture was the model of artists

after Islam. Among the common features between Manichaean portraiture and these eras are: drawing the same faces, oval and three-sided faces, a halo around the head, small and elongated eyes, long

Rest of table 1.

Sample Image	Common Features		Sample Image
	Face	Clothing	
	<p>A three-sided and oval face, a halo around the head with a border and decorative band, elongated and small eyes, thin linear eyebrows, straight linear nose, bud lips, curly hair next to the ears</p>	<p>Lack of similarity in clothing</p>	
<p>Sejuk Earthenware</p> 	<p>A three-sided and oval face, halo around the head, small and elongated eyes, thin and long linear eyebrows, long and sharp linear nose, small mouth, men's sparse beard and mustache</p>	<p>Lack of similarity in clothing</p>	
<p>Illustrated Book Samak Ayar Book</p> 	<p>A three-sided and oval face, a halo around the head, rosy cheeks, small and elongated eyes, thin linear eyebrows, straight and long linear nose, red lips, curly hair near the ears</p>	<p>Lack of similarity in clothing</p>	
<p>Book of Galen's medicine</p> 	<p>A three-sided and oval face, a halo around the head, small and elongated eyes, thin and long linear eyebrows, a smooth linear nose, red and bud lips, a voluminous beard and mustache, the red contour of the face, nose, line behind the eyelids and hands</p>	<p>Lack of similarity in clothing</p>	
<p>Veragheh and Golshah Book</p> 	<p>A three-sided and oval face with a halo around the head, small eyes, thin eyebrows, a redbud mouth, a red contour of the face, line behind the eyelids, nose, and lips</p>	<p>Show pleats with colored lines</p>	

eyebrows, and bud lips; even the way of performing the face of Manichaeans, which is the contours of the face and nose and the lines behind the eyelids and hands are red, can be seen in the illustrations of Al-Aghani's book and Galen's treatise, Varakeh, and Golshah. Another principle of the Manichaeans is flat and uniform coloring, the faces are drawn without volume or bright shading, and most of the faces are pale and soulless, which is also exactly repeated in post-Islamic paintings. In general, it can be stated that the roots of painting in the early eras of Islam go back to Manichaean painting and Manichaean painting had a great influence on the painting of the post-Islamic periods. This effect occurred mostly in portraiture, and the portrait painters were able to create relatively new faces by taking into account the Manichaean paintings and following them.

Endnotes

1. According to Middle Manichaean Persian texts, authors and scribes were called "Debir" and other artists named "Nabigan Negar" (book painters) were in charge of gilding and painting books (Klim Keit, 2017, 33).
2. The main paradise in Manichaean mythology is the place of the Great Father or Zarvan (Esmailpour, 2021, 350).
3. The Uighurs are Turkic tribes living in the autonomous state of Xinjiang or Eastern Turkestan (Uighuristan) centered on Urumqi, in the northwest of China. According to the latest statistics for 2009, some of them are now living in Kazakhstan and a small part is living in Kyrgyzstan (Chen, 2019, 7).
4. The privileged and elite class of Manichaeans were only engaged in religious and ritual affairs, and the lowest class were the Hearers who provided them with food and clothing (Esmailpour, 2021, 356).
5. Buddhist reverence is seen in Buddha images and statues. According to the Manichaean tradition, a dinavar raises his left hand following Buddhist teachings (vitarka-mudra). This adaptation of Buddhist symbolism, whose shape is similar to that of a bag, is specific to that group of Central Asian Manichaeans who, like Kish Ben in Tibet, took a Buddhist color (Klim Keit, 2017, 109-111).
6. The common class and the Manichaean masses, who did not listen to the sermons of the Manichaeans and had the duty to provide food for the Manichaeans, and had the right to marry and eat meat (Esmailpour, 2021, 358).
7. Richard Ettinghausen
8. Oliver Watson
9. A very delicate type of pottery with images and patterns on the glaze and under the glaze, which is also called Haftrang. The colors used for painting enamel vessels include azure, green, turquoise, red, brown, or black, yellow, and white, and sometimes all the colors and sometimes most of the mentioned colors are used for decoration (Kiani, 1996, 16-20).

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