

Original Research Article**Changing the Meaning in the Discourse of Contemporary Iranian Calligraphy from the Perspective of Critical Discourse Analysis**Hojat Amani^{*1}, Hasan Bolkhari Ghahi², Sedaqat Jabari³

1. Ph.D in Analytical and Comparative History of Islamic Art, University of Tehran, Iran.
2. Professor, Ph. D in Islamic Studies, Philosophy of Art, University of Tehran, Iran.
3. Professor, Ph.D in Art Research, University of Tehran, Iran.

Received; 10/01/2021

accepted; 23/02/2021

available online; 01/04/2021

Abstract

Iranian Islamic calligraphy, which has the support of divine theology, cultural heritage, wisdom, mysticism, and literature, has changed its meaning in the face of modernism and rival discourses in transmitting meaning among social actors, especially contemporary artists with calligraphic tendencies. In some cases, it has been separated from its function and dignity and has become a trivial and vulgar element. This study seeks to find important and influential factors affecting and changing the meaning. Protecting the concepts and high values of calligraphy as an element emanating from the heart of Islamic civilization with a multidimensional critical discourse analysis approach indicates this research's necessity. Statistical Society based on the objectives of this study, we selected well-known artists employing Islamic calligraphy style. Therefore, it seems that one of the most important factors in addition to modernism is the commercialization of some of these works for sale in art markets. It is assumed that the flourishing of art markets in the region and applying the views of foreign art theorists in changing the meaning of calligraphy towards foreign goals is not ineffective. This study aims to use post-colonial studies, especially the Resistance element. This research utilizes the critical discourse analysis method. The results show that as much as society and artists distance themselves from customary and religious values and traditions and are superficial, they will stay away from understanding the meaning of Islamic calligraphy, which is the product of Islamic discourse will be subject to sales markets.

Keywords: *Islamic calligraphy, Critical discourse analysis, Cultural policies, Contemporary Iran.*

Introduction and problem statement

Art has always been one of the most powerful tools and one of the cultural phenomena in societies and has sought to discover the meaning and refine the human aesthetic spirit. The art of any civilization reflects

the characteristics and identities of that civilization that have given meaning to its people's lives. The art of calligraphy is one of the arts that has grown and developed from within Islamic civilization and can be understood in the context of its culture and

* Corresponding Author: hojatamani@gmail.com, +989166664796

civilization. Calligraphy in Iran has gone through a different and transformative path and has continued to live with the creativity of the artistic elite, which has changed in dealing with the phenomenon of modernism. The function of calligraphy seems to have expanded in the contemporary era, and in addition to conceptual and aesthetic purposes in conveying messages and letter shapes, artists use calligraphy for socio-political purposes (Blair, 2006, 180).

The arrival of modern and contemporary art currents in Iran, which also had the support of cultural policy during the reformist discourse, was welcomed by artists, especially the younger generation. Two decades after the Islamic Revolution, young artists began a new approach to conceptual arts. In the same years, with the changes that occurred in the cultural and artistic institutions of the country, extensive changes took place in the cultural field in Iran. One of its examples was in the field of visual arts, which led to the marginalization of painting canvases in the face of the noise of conceptualist art (Amani, 2008, 37).

After the initial excitement subsided, some artists sought to localize these new phenomena with Iranian-Islamic elements, which in many cases created a kind of incompatibility. Most artists in recent years, in an attempt to achieve exclusive and personal formats, have preferred to reduce the meanings of their works to deep concepts, because today's artist has the chance to use various tools and facilities such as computers, televisions, lasers and dozens. Moreover, he has had the chance to use nature and artificial nature, that each of them has its expressive ability, and to choose a new format for his work (Ali, 1977, 117).

Among the various elements and motifs used in contemporary art's localization, Iranian calligraphy has played a significant role. By involving this element, which had already been considered and used in the Saqakhaneh movement, the production of works of art by a wide range of Iranian artists in new forms and trends was re-established. Among

the works created, some changes in meaning are felt in the face of Iranian Islamic calligraphy, which is rooted in Islamic and mystical traditions and teachings. The purpose of this study is to identify and explain the important factors of this change that are studied and analyzed. Therefore, the statistical population of the research is based on well-known artists with a calligraphic approach to contemporary Iranian art, which has been selected in line with the objectives of this research.

Literature review

Islamic calligraphy has been studied by scholars of Islamic and Western societies from different aspects but from the point of view of meaning change; no similar case has been done so far, so this article seems original. Research on Islamic calligraphy by Sylvia Neaf, which focuses mainly on contemporary Arab visual arts, has, among other arts, considered contemporary calligraphy as a symbol of Islamic artists' innovation in contemporary art. In an article entitled "Rediscovering Islamic Art" published in 2015, he revives Islamic calligraphy in contemporary times and insists on the temporality of contemporary artists' efforts to revive previously forgotten traditions through innovations. He believes that this is a temporary phenomenon for traditional innovation that has been previously forgotten and adapted to Western art. In this study, he did not mention the change of meaning in the calligraphy discourse and focused more on the Arab world, and very briefly referred to Iran. Another article entitled: "A Critical Analysis of the Dominant Trends in the Contemporary Iranian Art Market with an Approach to Cultural Identity," written by Fatemeh Pourmand and Effat Sadat Afzaltusi, has been published in Bagh-e Nazar Magazine in 2017. This article criticizes the approaches of contemporary Iranian artists to cultural identity and concludes that cultural identity has lost its historical meaning and has become a commodity for sale. In this study, the factors of the

commodification of the works of contemporary artists and their differences with the present study, which is the study of factors of change in the discourse of contemporary calligraphy, will be considered. In addition, numerous articles on calligraphy have been published with different approaches other than the aspect of changing the discourse meaning of Iranian calligraphy.

Theoretical foundations

Meaning arises from artistic texts (visual image) is a function of the cultural, social, and political context. Meaning and message are born within the text in the historical context. Neither spoken nor written text is impartial, but its interpretation depends on particular positions and context. The purpose of textual discourse analysis is to discover meaning. Their discourses illuminate the meaning in context. To explain the meaning in discourses, the context of the text is important, but beyond it also be considered the factors beyond the text, for example, cultural events and social situation. Critical discourse analysis has elevated discourse analysis from a theoretical and methodological method to the levels of explanation. Therefore, this method is used in the study of meaning in calligraphy.

Critical discourse analysis is a kind of discourse research whose sociological aspect is preferred. As the word “critical” implies, it deals primarily with the abuse of power, domination, inequality, and the reproduction and resistance to power in the texts. This view, with a constructivist tendency, pays attention to the construction of identities in the context of language, the discovery of ideological and political characteristics of language uses, and the reproduction of power relations. An analytical look at both micro and macro levels, relying on text analysis, and empirical research in the field of linguistics and sociology (Fazeli, 2004, 88).

In this approach, language as discourse is also a kind of action (Phillips & Jorgensen, 2010, 112).

The new approach to critical linguistics, followed by critical discourse analysis, has in recent decades covered a wide range of disciplines such as literature, sociology, philosophy, political science, art, and psychology, and has served as a “reference in the struggle against exploitation and dominance” (Kalantari, Abbaszadeh, Sadati, Pour Mohammad & Mohammadpour, 2009, 14). Therefore, contemporary Iranian art includes the study of political power institutions and educational institutions (universities and museums, etc.). Criticism can be uncovered, and discourse relations can be interpreted and explained. The purpose of critical discourse analysis is to uncover the relationship between power and domination through rethinking and critical analysis of the past to understand the current situation.

Research methodology

In the first phase, the visual (form), structural and textual characteristics of the work (genre) were assessed and analyzed, then intertextual interpretation and its relation to the date or the content of the work were considered that it is a key to considering effectiveness in providing the possibility of creating a work and causes the reproduction of the discourse space.

It is based on the descriptive-analytical and deductive reasoning methods. This type of research, in addition to examining the “current situation,” explains the reasons for the how and why of the situation. Therefore, based on the goals of this research, through using the selected examples, the change of meaning in contemporary calligraphy as a factor in the localization of contemporary art in the works of contemporary artists was examined.

Samples and sampling technique

The selection of artists and their works have been based on the reputation of artists and these works in a particular art group, as well as their participation in various fields of art such as exhibitions, university

centers, and art auction markets. Furthermore, being prolific has been another important factor in selecting such artists and their works.

The methodological strategy of the research has been utilized to analyze the findings of this study to explain the meaning of contemporary Iranian calligraphy based on the criteria of the method of “discourse analysis,” especially “multidimensional critical discourse analysis”.

Methodology: In the analysis of the findings of this research, a qualitative method will be used. The strategy in the qualitative method is based on cognition, often through inferential analysis. Researchers do not represent all dimensions, so the combined method of induction and analogy can be used.

Historical backgrounds and contexts

Modernity in Iran was experienced in the historical context in the 16-17centuries (During the Iran-Russia wars) and it was also experienced as a violent historical rupture (Zia Ebrahimi, 2018, 30). Therefore, Iran is a country that has experienced a kind of modernity. Hence, the current root of cultural policy, which has emerged in developments, is the result of modernism in Iran, which has gradually found its way into the government’s vision. Thus, the issue of cultural policy and governing discourses formed by governments is considered a fundamental factor in how the arts are formed. Therefore, in Iran, cultural and artistic developments based on cultural policies can be divided into three periods: 1- Pre-revolutionary period and national and originalism discourses 2- Islamic Revolution period and value and Islamic art discourse 3- Reformist period and Reformist discourse.

Pre-revolutionary period and national and originalism discourses

The pre-revolutionary period starts from the Qajar period, the Constitution, the first Pahlavi, the second

Pahlavi, or the period 1907 -1926 (approval of the constitutional law until the fall of Qajar), 1926-1942 (the fall of the first Pahlavi), 1942 to 1, to the fall of the second Pahlavi whose important components are briefly mentioned. A review of the political geography of Iran, formerly considered Iran and one of the seven climates, and the transformation into present-day Iran, the replacement of the concept of the Iranian nation with the Islamic Ummah, the transfer of science from the humanities to Western-linked intellectuals. The gradual shifting from school to academy and university, which reduced the status of religious clerics, the formation of the National Assembly, the emergence of a different conception of politics based on people’s efforts to serve the government to advance the public interest. The meaning of the state from the personal fortune and wealth of kings to a stable institution for advance the public interest (Tavakoli-Targhi, 2016, 13-17) and many other cases were all changes and developments that resulted in a new social, cultural and political formation on society in the face of modernity.

The government of Iran was governed, but the first signs of the emergence of cultural policy arising from governance in the modern sense are also examined in this period. Establishment of Dar al-Fonun and publication of the events of Al-Faqih in the years between 1880 to 1815. As well as the establishment of various schools and universities during the time of Abbas Mirza, sending students abroad, translating texts from different languages, rereading Iranian history and etc. (Abrahamian, 2008; Zia Ebrahimi, 2018; Atabaki, 2012) and many other cases, all of them are in the framework of pre-constitutional cultural policy (Khaleghpanah & Sanai, 2020, 67).

With this premise in the first Pahlavi era, after the establishment of peace, attention was paid to the field of culture. Reza Shah’s actions in the field of culture and consequently its direct impact on the arts can be considered part of the modernization process

of “modern nation-state building” Establishment Archaeological Department means paying attention to the preservation of cultural heritage as well as the Department of Popular and folk Culture recognizing indigenous arts and the Conservatory of Decorative Arts, which is the official beginning of formal art education in the country. The establishment of art centers and institutions also began in the direction of the modern Iranian construction program in the first Pahlavi. The construction of museums, which were among the first modern institutions in Tehran. Establishment the buildings such as the theater center and the library To look at history and culture from a modern standpoint.

In the modernization process, applied arts such as sculpture and architecture, which could have been used as propaganda tools to advance the government’s goals, were highlighted, as well as the Mustazarfa School of Crafts (established with the support of Kamal al-Mulk) was closed and non-applied arts such as marginal painting fell from prosperity. In the field of calligraphy, which was the continuation of the Qajar period, other Islamic calligraphy styles were marginalized by highlighting the Nasta’liq and Shekaste- Nasta’liq styles as well as due to their abundant use in other objects. In other words, since the dominant discourse was Iranian nationality and was a form of xenophobia, including anti-Arabism in Pahlavi cultural policies, the main focus was on the Nasta’liq script, which is symbolized in architectural inscriptions, government papers, coins, and currency, etc. It was processed and overshadowed other styles of Islamic calligraphy. Another discourse that was formed in the first Pahlavi period with the establishment of the National Works Association was the discourse of nationalism. The Association of National Works was built to propagate nationalism. Stabilished Buildings under the influence of pre-Islamic Iranian art, such as the tombs of Ferdowsi, Khayyam, Abu Ali Sina, and Kamal al-Mulk. In this way bildings were decorated with Nasta’liq

calligraphy script. Khayyam’s tomb, was decorated by the first Iranian calligraphy style (Taaliq) for example.

With the fall of Reza Shah’s government, which represented “modernist nationalism” in the first decade of the second Pahlavi era, Iranian society witnessed the emergence of “anti-colonial nationalism”, the most important achievement of which was the “nationalization of the oil industry.” After the United States’ direct intervention in the defeat of Dr Mossadegh, anti-colonial and critical ideas about the West became stronger in society. Globally, the conflict between the Eastern and Western blocs has escalated with the rise of independence movements, and a tendency has gradually emerged among Third World intellectuals to move them towards their indigenous identities and local traditions. The escalation of the situation, especially in the decade: sixty AD, had a definite effect on the whole identity discourse of this period in Iran (Kachueian, 2008), and the discourse of originality or return to self was formed. Quoted from (Moridi & Taghizadegan, 2012, 147).

Thus, nationalism continued in the second Pahlavi period as a large part of cultural policies, with the difference that the elimination of Islamic elements and symbols that were present in the dominant discourse was largely modified. In this regard, the Fine Arts Administration, with the aim of supporting Mali was formed from artists with the dominant discourse of nationalism. The “Fine Arts Department” was one of the first government organizations that were established to collect Iranian cultural capital in 1951 and from the beginning had two important goals: first, the improvement and expansion of national arts, and second, the establishment of offices and centers. To develop and train other artistic disciplines. The result of these factors led to the emergence of a kind of Iranian and antiquity in the second Pahlavi period. To legitimize the structure of the monarchy, not only it linked its relationship to the ancient Achaemenes

history, but also in the cultural space considered The Post-Islamic period. Also in the same time in the field of the calligraphy, some of the Iranian Calligraphers with the efforts of Seyyed Hossein Mirkhani and other master of calligraphers such as Ali Akbar Kaveh, Ebrahim Bouzari, and Seyyed Hassan Mirkhani, under the Mehdi Bayani's effort that who was researcher, and university professor established as "Free Calligraphy Classes" in Tehra. Thus, the calligraphy training, which was mostly in the form of traditional, became more coherent. Along with the establishment of the University of Tehran as well as the Faculty of Fine Arts in the early 1920s and the granting of government, study trips by several visual art graduates to Europe, and their return later this decade, modern Iranian painting began with the Khoros Jangi (War Rooster) Association and Apadana Gallery. It seems that even the first generation of modernist painters in Iran forms their most important works of modernist painting under the general discourse of nationalism (Esmailzade & Shad Ghazvini, 2017, 123). Because their concern was to localize the formats they had learned in Europe. This process can be seen in a more complex way in the painters of the second generation of innovative Iranians who were trying to use the native Iranian culture and heritage to create Iranian works.

• **Originalism discourse or return to one's national identity**

After World War II, which coincided with the Post colonial studies was initial in 1960s, and the formation of ideas such as East versus West. Thus, unlike the previous nationalist discourse, which sought to eliminate the religious tradition, the originalism discourse sought to combine religious tradition with modernity. This initially critical discourse was soon accepted by the government and reinforced by Ali Shariati and Jalal al-Ahmad's ideas, leading to the regulation of cultural policy and cultural programs and the establishment of the Supreme Council of Culture and Arts in 1968. Therefore, in the 1962s and

1972s, the concept of original Iranian culture as the central axis of theorizing was placed by both elites and intellectuals and by the government. Therefore, modernists along with the preservation of cultural heritage in the creation of art institutions such as the museums of Kahke- Marmar, Isfahan decoration Art, Shiraz, and Kerman, as well as the Reza Abbasi Museum that the aim of all for presentation of the old and traditional cultural heritage. The art of calligraphy continued to be a symbol of traditional art, and re-examination of its culture led to the rediscovery of calligraphy by some artists, which took on a modern form alongside the Saqakhaneh movement. Because the two currents of Saqakhaneh and calligraphy could dispel nationalism and modernism as symbolically together; In fact, both with a religious tradition (*ibid.*, 129). However, in Iran, the first change in the meaning of the Iranian calligraphy discourse can be seen in the Saqakhaneh movement.

• **Saqakhaneh School is a crossroads of the discourse of calligraphy and modern art**

The contradictory policies of the Pahlavi government as the dominant power or the ruling discourse, on the one hand, sought to expand relations with the West and, on the other hand, emphasized ancient nationalism. Thus, the artists under the influence of the domination of power, on the one hand, sought to keep pace with the current of Western modernism and, on the other hand, sought Iranian identity in their art.

The nationalist tendency with the approach of modernism, which was in line with the cultural policies of the Pahlavi government, was supported by cultural agents in the 1940s and 1950s, despite the clear opposition of anti-Western theorists. In the meantime, the Saqakhaneh movement was a good response to the government's artistic policy in the connection between modernism and nationalism in modern Iranian painting (Hosseini- Rad & Khalili, 2012, 15).

Although this school's painters are inspired by the

world style of the time in style, they use traditional themes and motifs, among which calligraphy is of great importance. The artists considered “Saqakhaneh as the way to reach art not in choosing familiar subjects or using old paintings, but in using the treasures of decorative and folk arts as well as Persian calligraphy” (Pakbaz, 2012, 214).

Hussein Zande Rudi, one of the Saqakhaneh school artists, has also claimed to be the first to develop calligraphy in the Arab world. Whereas in the Islamic world before the 1960s, the Letterist movement and other artists had these experiences. In Iran, we can name three other artists who used calligraphy in their works before him: Mohammad Saber Fayouzi (1910-1974) was one of these artists, although he did not have an exhibition, calligraphy as a painting - Calligraphy experienced after World War II (Fig. 1). Also Nasser Assar, whose work was based on calligraphy with the influence of Eastern art. In addition, Mansoureh Hosseini (1927-2013), whose calligraphy was combined with the abstract atmosphere. “Blue colors in the background depict a stormy space that looks like the movement of a pen in Iranian calligraphy as if the painter is trying to compose a poem about life” (Fig. 2).

However, despite the use of traditional calligraphy in his works, Hossein Zandeh Rudi claims that the use of manuscripts in his works is beautiful and for the power of the text and the expression of thought that written. He prefers to use writing instead of the word calligraphy (Ali, 1997, 156). Despite his claims, he has used traditional and religious calligraphy in some of his works and has given another meaning to calligraphy by creating modern forms and movements on it (Fig. 3). The meaning in Zande Rudi’s collection of calligraphic works can be summarized as the result of national discourse.

Parviz Tanavoli is another Saqakhaneh artist who collected metal objects, illustrated spells, prayers, and amulets, as well as sculptures reminiscent of religious tombs and related objects. He works



Fig 1. M.S.Fayouzi.Untittel 1940s ink on cardboard. Source: shams art gallery.



Fig. 2. M. Hosseini.Anal Haq 1940s oil on canvas. Source: Iranian academy of arts archaives.

with a variety of materials - from bronze, copper, brass, and scrap iron to rosewood - in a variety of dimensions, from very small rings to three- or four-meter-tall public statues. The most famous theme of his work is the sculptural representation of the word “nothing.” In its original composition, which was first exhibited in 1965 at the Borgzeh Gallery in Tehran, gypsum hands hold copper railings on top



Fig. 3. H.Zendeirodi.untitled 1960s Print on paper. Source: Ali, 1997.

of which the word “no Persian” sits in a plastic ring. In later presentations, the sub-elements have either been harmonized with the whole composition or even removed (Blair, 2006, 18).

In sum, the use of tradition by these artists has been more a “formal” reference to tradition than a reference to an associative theme or conceptual content, the quality that is more evident in the abstract tendency of this current. “In other words, they focused on visual traditions (including shapes, motifs, colors, etc.), all of which together could provide a comprehensible link to traditional and sometimes religious practices rather than references to specific content” (Kashmirshekan, 2015, 107 - 109).

The period of the Islamic Revolution and the discourse of Islamic-Iranian cultural policy

The Islamic Revolution had established a cultural

order in Iran that was linked to the religious values in Imam Khomeini’s guidelines in the years before the revolution with the aim of strengthening Islamic rituals as well as the fundamental formation of Islamic ideas in mobilizing the people. Accordingly, in the first years after the revolution, cultural planning came to the fore, and many principles were formulated and approved for it. Iranian-Islamic culture is a central signifier of articulating the discourse of government cultural policy with an emphasis on engineering and considering signs such as revolutionary spirit, multiple cultural identities, scientific and cultural progress, Persian language, spiritualism, etc. Draw the equivalent around this central signifier. Highlighting everything that strengthens and represents the Islamic Iranian identity based on Shiite Islam’s ideals and marginalizing anything that challenges this central sign is the most important discourse strategy of this discourse. In the studied texts, the ultimate goal of cultural policy is to build an Islamic-Iranian identity and unity achieved as a result of the equivalence of the mentioned signs (Khaleghpanah & Sanaei, 2020, 69). Mohammad Ehsaei artworks include the official discourse. Words and letters are used as calligraphy. In his works, sometimes as the bearer of divine message and words, and sometimes mystical words and phrases like it and love and such meanings are included. The purpose of Qur’anic calligraphy (in statistical works) is to create a kind of visual mercy for the soul so that it can enjoy it and reach transcendence (Fooladvand, 2012, 29) (Fig. 4).

Reformist discourse

The end of the war marked the beginning of a new era for the Iranian political community. During this period, political and social conditions changed, and the conflict between revolutionary art as the central signifier of national identity with the reformist discourse was formed.

With the beginning of the reform era, civil society became the spotlight and different discourses



Fig. 4. M.Ehsaei.untitled 1970s oil on canvas. Source: Art tomorrow magazine.

competed with each other. In this period, the idea of combining Islamism and nationalism was revived, with a different that the traditions of Islamic cultural history received more attention than Ideologicals Islam In 2003, cultural heritage as an organization was recognized by the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance to revive traditional Islamic art. During this period, the works of art once again combined Islamic decorations and modern themes, and the works of paintings of the Saqakhaneh school of the 1962s were once again considered (Moridi & Taghizadegan, 2012, 157).

Emphasizing civil society and the idea of a dialogue of civilizations in this period on the one hand and changes in the field of communication and world media, on the other hand, artists were introduced by new media in the world as well as education,s system in the country. Young people to the latest arts, which were generally supported by imitation of the West and by institutions such as the Museum of Contemporary Art of the time, caused a conflict between the discourses of value art (Islamic ideological art) and traditional art (traditional Islamic art). New art movements and effects of indigenously with Iranian and religious concepts were able to attract artists with different tendencies towards these phenomena.

Reformist discourse, although creating opportunities for inequality in artistic discourses, provided the conditions for the prosperity and development of the

visual arts. The formation of art groups, associations, and domestic and international exhibitions based on the idea of dialogue among civilizations are some of these achievements.

The re-changing in the social structure and the resulting political currents as well as the development of artists' relations with foreign countries and the pluralistic intellectual space that are caused the growth and development of galleries and museums in the country. These factors are the main element of changing the meaning. In the country, the official discourse of art, which can be called the discourse of the Huzeh e- Hoari. In this situation, the discourses compete with each other and result in the various calligraphic works of art in which the change of meaning is seen. In this type of works, the combination of letters and words of Islamic calligraphy composition together without considering a special meaning and only to create a beautiful visual composition such as Farhad Moshiri,s artworks who arranges letters and numbers together without a semantic purpose. these artists used the letters and words from the aesthetic and decorative aspects of letters to convey a concept. Because these letters have undergone hundreds of years of transformation and have reached a well-proportioned and beautiful form by the practice of talented calligraphers, such as Haa (H in Persian alphabet), which due to the visual form of this word has been used to create works by several artists such as Hossein Zandeh Rudi, Fereydoon Omidi and Mojtaba Ramzi is located.

Another type of contemporary calligraphic works that has rarely been done among the artists of Islamic societies is works that have been inadvertently mixed with anti-religious concepts according to the forms of Islamic calligraphy. In fact, They are made up by Western art directors, such as most of Sarah Rahbar,s works which have paradoxically combined flags dedicated to the Muharram (Aashura flags) and composition sacred religious words such as Allah or Aba Abdullah Al-Hussein, etc., with the American

flag. It seems that such works are formed more in opposition to the prevailing policies and persuasion of Western policies than can be evaluated as specific content (Fig. 5). Because of semantic poverty, they are driven towards objectification and marketing. Also, the works of Mehdi Mirbagheri, who combines Islamic calligraphy, especially the Sulus script, with female figures and changes the calligraphy from their origin, have degraded the meaning in a personal direction.

In general, it can be said that although such works seem to have been formed to criticize the political atmosphere of contemporary Iran, the views of directors and policymakers in Middle Eastern markets in determining the role of actors in such

works can not be ignored. Therefore, it is not wrong to consider the change of meaning in contemporary calligraphy; after the discourse of modernism, it is articulated with economic subjects.

Articulating the discourse of Islamic calligraphy and economics

The discourse of Iranian Islamic calligraphy, which has the source of divine theology, cultural heritage, mysticism, and literature, has maintained its inter-textual chain with it. Islamic calligraphy has changed its meaning in contemporary times in the process of transmitting meaning among social actors. In many cases, it has been detached from its function and dignity and has been seen as a trivial element in the works of some artists. There are also many examples of the use of calligraphic motifs in clothing, shoes, and other commercial goods. This change of meaning among social activists can be attributed to changes in the structure of society in the contemporary era and the articulation of Islamic art with the economics of art. Around the year 2000, West Asian art gained worldwide attention, especially in London. Ali (1997), Isa (2001), Neaf (2003), Porter (2008), Monem (2009), Farjam (2009) have written several books entitled Middle Eastern Art or Arab and Iranian Art. Thaeab (2010) and other critics and commentators have each contributed to the knowledge of the art of these areas. Also, in 2009, an exhibition of works by West Asian artists called the Modern and Contemporary Middle East Art Group by Vanisha Porter was held at the British Museum, which in addition to recognizing the works of local artists, flourished and created new markets for the sale of such works. Also, the addition of Oriental arts to the University of Sousse, the holding of art festivals such as Art Fair Dubai, the establishment of new galleries, and the holding of sales auctions marked the formation of the West Asian art movement in Europe. Although Islamic calligraphy has survived for centuries with the help of resistance to Western influence and has protected



Fig. 5. S. Rahbar.usa flag 2018 mixed media.
Source: <https://darz.art/fa/artists/sara-rahbar>.

itself from Westernization, in modern times, it has been associated with conflicts with the significant growth of Western productive institutions such as galleries, especially in Iran. Looking at the records of gallery owners and the profession of gallery owners in the past few decades, it can be claimed that most gallery owners have economic goals, and lack of knowledge on the art history and related events have caused challenges for the discourse of Islamic art by imposing their own tastes and stereotypes. The fact is that escaping these cultural stereotypes due to their thriving market occurs only in very rare cases, and such innovations are sold to the victim (Mostafavi, 2009, 1 Quoted from Abolhassan Tanhaei, Ravadrad. & Moridi, 2011, 21).

Other larger institutions, such as auction houses that have been active in the field of West Asian art, with special policies select contemporary art samples in Islamic societies with predetermined and pro-Western criteria. This eventually legitimizes some calligraphic works that have been contrasted with the discourse of Islamic Art. Middle Eastern art is a special kind of art market that has been supported by art institutions such as Christie's Auction House, British and New York Museum of Art, and some Iranian and Arab buyers (ibid., 22). However, one cannot ignore the calligraphic movement that has meaning and content, as well as the experiences of artists with post-colonial views. This view is important because economic concepts in many cases play a decisive role in changing the meaning in the discourse of Islamic calligraphy and does not mean that Muslim artists fully following the institutions of power and legitimacy of art with the intention of increasing economic income and institutional hegemony Western artworks depict these methods of artistic creation as the only possible method and the works of the artist are referred to them without intention (ibid., 35). Therefore, we can see the traces of the Western colonial discourse in the contemporary art of Iran and the region, which tries to apply itself

as a superior standard and example.

Conclusion

The meaning in the discourse of contemporary Iranian calligraphy has often been subject to the dominant discourses. In each historical period, due to changes in the cultural policies of the ruling policymakers in the process of meaning transfer, traditional arts, including calligraphy, have undergone a change of meaning; In such a way that in the intersection with modernism and new phenomena to personalize and the dominant discourses, in some cases, the art of calligraphy has moved away from its function and dignity and has become an objectification and a vulgar thing. With the boom in art markets in the region, created by Western policymakers and promoting the criteria of their purposeful choices, this change of meaning can be attributed to the articulation of the calligraphy discourse with economics. Therefore, in general, it can be said that as long as society and artists distance themselves from religious values and traditions and are superficial, they will stay away from understanding the meaning of Islamic calligraphy, which is the product of Islamic discourse, and will be subject to sales markets.

Reference list

- Abrahamian, Y. (2008). *Iran between two revolutions* (A. Golmohammadi & M. Ibrahim Fattahi, Trans.). Tehran: Ney Publishing.
- Afsarian, I. (2009). Biyenal-e ghodrat: meydan-e reghabat-e honarmandan-e naghsh [Biennial of Power: The field of competition for painters]. *Sociology of Art and Literature (Letter of Social Sciences)*, 1 (2), 171-195.
- Ali, W. (1997). *Modern Islamic Art: Development and Continuity*. Florida: University Press of Florida.
- Amani, H. (2008). Nogerai dar honar-ha-ye tajassomi-ye Iran: bastar-ha-yebshokofaei-ye honar-e jadid dar Iran [Modernity in Iranian Visual Arts: The Prosperity of New Art in Iran]. *Aeeine-ye khiyal*, 11 (1), 36-43.
- Atabaki, T. (2013). *Tajadod-e amerane: jamee va dolat dar asr-e reza shah* [Authoritarian modernity: society and government in the era of Reza Shah]. (M. Haghightatkah, Trans.). Tehran: Qoqnu.

- Blair, S. (2006). Islamic calligraphy: Edinburgh University Press. Reexploring Islamic Art: Modern and Contemporary Creation in the Arab World and Its Relation to the Artistic Past. *Res: Anthropology and aesthetics*, (43), 164-174.
- Esmailzade, K., Shad Ghazvini, P. (2017). Discourses of “nationality” and their role on development of Iran modern art trends in Pahlavi era With an emphasis on art patronage institutions as mediators. *Sociology of Art and Literature*, 9(1), 109-132.
- Fazeli, M. (2004). Goftemen va tahlil-e goftemen-e enteghadi [Discourse and Critical Discourse Analysis]. *Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences (University of Mazandaran)*, (14), 81-106.
- Fooladvand, H. (2011). Mohammad Ehsaei Exploration in form and content. *Honar-e emrooz Honar-e Farda*, (6), 28-32.
- Hosseini- Rad, A. & Khalili, M. (2012). The role of intellectual movements and government interests in nationalistic approaches of Iranian modern painting during the Pahlavi era. *Honar-Ha-Ye-Ziba: Honar-Ha-Ye-Tajassomi*, 4 (49), 5-18.
- Khaleghpanah, K. & Sanaei, A. (2020). Modernity and the Discursive Formation of Cultural Policy: Discourse Analysis of the State and Cultural policy in Iran (From 1907 to the Present). *Applied Sociology*, 31 (3), 57-74.
- Kachueian, H. (2008). *Tatavor-e goftemen-ha-ye hoviyyati dar Iran: Iran dar keshakhash-e tajadod va ma baed-e tajadod* [The Evolution of Identity Discourses in Iran: Iran in the Struggle of Modernity and Post-Modernity]. Tehran: Ney Publishing.
- Kashmirshekan, H. (2015). *Honar-e moaser-e Iran* [Contemporary Iranian Art], Tehran: Nazar Publishing.
- Kalantari, S., Abbaszadeh, M., Sadati, M., Pour Mohammad, R. & Mohammadpour, N. (2009). Discourse analysis: with the emphasis on critical discourse as a method of qualitative research. *Sociological Studies*, 2 (4), 7-28
- McKinn, D. (2019). *How to do critical discourse analysis: a multimodal introduction* (M. Kouchakzadeh, Trans.) Tehran: Surahe Mehr,
- Moridi, M. R. & Taghizadegan, M. (2012). Goftemen-ha-ye honar-e meli dar Iran [Discourses of National Art in Iran]. *Cultural Studies and Communication*, 8 (29), 139-160.
- Neaf, S. (2003). Reexploring Islamic Art: Modern and Contemporary Creation in the Arab World and Its Relation to the Artistic Past. *Res: Anthropology and aesthetics*, (43), 164-174.
- Pakbaz, R. (2012). *Naghahiye Iran: az dirbaz ta emrooz* [Painting of Iran: From long ago to today]. Tehran: Zarrin and Simin Publications.
- Phillips, L. & Jorgensen, M. (2010). *Discourse analysis as theory and method* (H. Jalili, Trans.). Tehran: Ney Publishing.
- Pourmand, F. & Afzaltusi, A. (2019). Critical Analysis of Predominant Orientations in Contemporary Iranian Art Market towards Cultural Identity. *Bagh-e Nazar*, 16 (70), 31-48.
- Tanhaei, Abolhassan H., Ravadrad, A. & Moridi, M. (2011). A Discourse Analysis Of The Middle East Art. *Sociology of Art and Literature*, 2 (2), 7-40.
- Tavakoli-Taroqi, M. (2016). *Tajadod-e bomi va bazandishiy-e tarikh* [Indigenous modernity and rethinking of history], Tehran: Pardis Danesh.
- Van Dyke, T. A. (2008). *Studies in multidimensional discourse analysis: from text grammar to critical discourse*. Tehran: Office of Media Studies and Development.
- Zia Ebrahimi, R. (2018). *The emergence of Iranian nationalism: race and the politics of dislocation*. Tehran: Central.

COPYRIGHTS

Copyright for this article is retained by the author (s), with publication rights granted to the journal of art & civilization of the orient. 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**

Amani, H., Bolkhari Ghahi, H. & Jabari, S. (2021). Changing the Mmeaning in the Discourse of Contemporary Iranian Calligraphy from the Perspective of Critical Discourse Analysis. *Journal of Art & Civilization of the Orient*, 9 (31), 57-68.

DOI: 10.22034/jaco.2021.266825.1180

URL: http://www.jaco-sj.com/article_128653.html?lang=en

