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Original Research Article

The Analysis of the Celebrity Carpet Collection Preserved in the Niavaran Palace; Emphasizing the Position of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and Prophet Jesus (pbuh) Based on Janet Wolff's Opinions

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Abstract

The wide reproduction of carpets called Mashaheer (celebrities) with images of explorers, prophets, and kings in the Qajar period is considered an important part of Iranian art history. In each reproduction of these carpets, there have been changes in the figures of the first row compared to the initial carpet. Based on the carpet preserved in the Niavaran Palace as the case study of the changes, besides the addition of Iranian kings around the main area, changes include the addition of the image of Jesus (pbuh) and the removal of the image of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) in the first row. Therefore, this research tries to answer why this image of the Prophet (pbuh) was replaced by Jesus (pbuh) on the mentioned celebrity carpet. According to the purpose of the research, which is to explain this replacement, the gathered data was analyzed using a descriptive-analytical method, with emphasis on the opinions of Janet Wolff. After collecting the data through field and documentary studies. The findings of the research show that the celebrity carpet in Niavaran has implicitly strengthened the idea of Christianity's superiority by replacing the image of the Prophet (pbuh) with the image of Christ (pbuh), within the discourses of archaism, Iranian identity and the intellectual currents of the Qajar era, and despite the presence and continuation of Islamic figures. This itself can indicate that the influence of institutions on art production in any era changes and interferes with the visual form on the axis of the desired ideology and emphasizes the hidden and deeper layers of meaning.

Keywords: *Qajar, Janet Wolff, Celebrities Carpet, Holy Muhammad (pbuh), Jesus (pbuh).*

Introduction and Statement of the Problem

Images as a superstructure of works of art can be a reflection of thoughts and thinking that have been formed in periods of history, and the exploration of images and the analysis of social productions of art can reveal to the audience the common thought and implicit ideology dominant in the works of a period. Since in the Qajar period, the ruling power

belonged to the king, therefore the productions of the large and exquisite carpet workshops are more expressive of the ruling ideology as a central sign and political hegemony. In this period, with the establishment of many foreign companies and the production and export of carpets by them, this art was influenced by the ideas of European countries more than before. This influence from the west can be seen in the popularization of carpets known as

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pictorial carpets, where the main element in these carpets is the human figure. Among these carpets, carpets with the name of Mashaher (celebrities) were reproduced on a large scale at the end of this period, whose distinctive feature is the placement of the figures of prophets, explorers, kings, and leaders under the temple's centurion, the first of which is the figure of Prophet Moses (pbuh) and the last belongs to Napoleon. In the first carpet or pretext of the other carpets, the first row under the pediment includes Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), Prophet Moses (pbuh), and Prophet Suleiman and the image of Prophet Jesus (pbuh) is absent. However, in the reproduced carpet preserved in Niavaran Palace, the image of the Holy Prophet is removed and the image of Jesus (pbuh) is replaced by his image. Also, in the margin of this carpet, the number 18, which was dedicated to Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), is given to Jesus (pbuh). Considering that this replacement occurred among the prophets, it can be said that there is an ideology behind this change that can be related to religion, politics, and production institutions. Therefore, based on Janet Wolff's theory of the social production of art, and library, documentary, and field information, some carpets from the celebrity carpet collection were analyzed with a descriptive-analytical method, to address the hidden ideology in the carpets, in addition to expressing the aesthetics and composition in the carpet.

Research Background

In her article "Images in Iranian carpet making: from ornament to portrait" (Lassikova, 2006), Lassikova discussed two reproduced carpets from the Carpet Museum, which are now in the Moscow Museum. The carpet from the museum is presumed to be a pure copy of French postcards and refers to the importance of archaism and the weakening of Islam in that period. In the article "Investigation of hypertextuality in Qajar era pictorial carpets with the theme of celebrities" (Erfan Manesh & Bezi, 2016),

the role of the identity and presence of the kings of ancient Iran in the carpets reproduced from the rugs of the Tehran Carpet Museum has been discussed. In the article "Mechanical reproduction of artwork in the Qajar era and its effect on Iranian carpets" (Keshavarz Afshar, 2015), it is stated that following the manifestations of Western civilization and through the attraction and fascination of the cultural and ideological atmosphere of the West, and also the emergence of the possibility of mass reproduction of the pictorial carpets of the Qajar period, they experienced dramatic changes in their artistic form instead of dealing with common motifs. In the article "The Discourse of Archaism in the Pictorial Carpets of the Qajar Period", (Imani, Tavoosi, Chitsaziyan & Sheykh Mehdi, 2016), it is pointed out that often in the pictorial carpets of the Qajar period, the images of kings and mythological stories and religious traditions and sometimes the images of European women have been replacing the carpets with the old hunting ground maps. In addition to that, in the seminars of the National Carpet Center, studies have been conducted on the carpet of celebrities in which the kings of ancient Iran are woven together with the greats of the world. However, in none of the conducted studies, the roles of the prophets in these carpets and their companionship have not been discussed, and no research has been done so far regarding the reason for the replacement of Prophet Jesus (pbuh) instead of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). Therefore, since the celebrity carpet has been reproduced in large numbers, it seems necessary to study this carpet to understand the art of the Qajar era.

Research Methodology

In this study, library, documentary, and field data have been analyzed in a descriptive-analytical way, and the case study is the celebrity carpet collection in the Niavaran Palace, which was selected purposefully. To find the ideology, the text is considered to be a social production, and based on Janet Wolff's point

of view, the work is first described. Then, it deals with the grounds for the creation of the work to understand the ideology of the work, and finally, the ideology of the work is discovered based on the combination of the aesthetic aspect of the work and the common thought in the creation of the work.

Theoretical Foundations

Since Janet Wolff admits that art is an ideological production that is studied as an ideological form and an aesthetic process, considering that the existing productions are mostly under the control of the ruling power, and the fact that a kind of authoritarian and ideological government has ruled in Iran, it seems that through the approach of social production of art, the carpet can be studied as a form of social production. Also, considering that Janet Wolff considers the artist and the creation of their work as a process that is influenced by different social and economic conditions, and the proportionality or disproportion of social conditions that can create a disturbance in it or even negate it, this discussion takes into account the political, cultural and societal context which plays an important role in the formation of the artwork. Therefore, considering that the present research's data was analyzed based on Janet Wolff's social production approach, and in this analysis and the presented theory, archaism has a special place, first the social production of art, and then archaism will be described to reach the appropriate theory for the analysis of the body in question.

Social Production of Art from the Point of View of Janet Wolff

From Wolff's point of view, the sociology of art is the study of the practices and approaches of art production institutions. She clearly recognizes art as an ideological product (Ramin, 2008, 267) in which the reaction of each field and cultural institution is different against the transformations of society, and the influence of politics in some arts is more than others (Wolff, 1988, 92). In addition to the effect of various institutions in society,

including political, economic, and social, on the work of art, she also pays attention to the aesthetic conventions in the work of art (ibid., 174-175). From her point of view, the ideas, thoughts, and values of the artist are derived from society, but cultural conventions, style, aesthetic type, and language interfere in the creation of a work of art. Therefore, one should be aware of the production logic and aesthetic codes of each work to gain knowledge about it (Ramin, 2008, 267). As a result, the sociology of art should develop a theory related to visual forms, in the same way that it explores the formalistic analysis of the structure of the design, to be able to analyze the ideological nature of a work of art accordingly (ibid., 269). Considering that ideology is represented in the work of art with visual language, therefore, to analyze "visual ideology", the composition and style of the work are examined because ideology is produced in these components (ibid., 449). Since the production of pictorial rugs and carpet weaving, in general, is a shared activity and a matter that takes place in large workshops, it seems to be more influenced by popular ideology than other arts, because power is based on economic status and especially on relations with the means of production (Wolff, 1988, 66-67). Wolff considers the artist or art producer under the influence of social constructions and interprets their creative action in this context. She believes that becoming an artist is a social process, and various social factors affect a person's becoming an artist, including being religious or non-religious, traditional or modern, political or class conflict, etc. Therefore, considering that the placement of the human figure on carpets serves political purposes more than ever, it seems that the ideology hidden in the celebrity carpets of Niavaran Palace can be reached through this point of view.

The Role of Archeology and Archaism in the Qajar Period

Based on the fact that this theory is the basis for the analysis of the carpet, it is better to first discuss the position of archeology and archaism in this

period, considering the following; The importance of the discourse of archaism in the Qajar period, the influence of archeology on the carpet patterns of this period, and the archaism discourse's views on religion as the cause of Iran's backwardness, which can also be one of the reasons for removing the name of the Prophet from the carpet in question.

The arrival of French archaeological delegations in Iran, the archaeological excavations, the discovery of historical places and works of art, etc. were among the important events of this period (Ghaffari, 1989, 105). The images of many of these excavations and explorations carried out by Forsat were depicted in the *Al-Muajem* lithographic book and provided awareness for others. Along with archeology and familiarity with Iran's past, a category called archaism, Iranian identity and discourse became prominent. Qajar dynasty was the first great dynasty that re-united Iran and ruled over it. This period is considered the main stage of the transition of Iranian society and culture from pre-modern to modern development. Tarafdari (2018, 55) considers the entry of nationalism as a modern ideology in the nineteenth century as a new form of historiography and representation of the past. The emergence and growth of this thought, whose formation goes back to the European Renaissance, is considered one of the most influential political ideologies in Europe, which gradually made its way to Iran and at the cultural and political levels through the neighboring Arab and Ottoman countries. The penetration of this colonial practice takes place in the form of nationalism and its purpose was to separate Muslims in a hostile and sometimes humiliating way.

Also, archaism was one of the new components for the modernization of Iran, to reproduce a new order in political, cultural, and social thinking by reviving ancient and archaic ideas. In addition, new social, political, and cultural infrastructures were sought to be based on ancient traditions (Akbari, 1996, 188). Discarding the culture and religion of Islam,

downplaying it, and in addition to these deletions, replacing a new culture can also be considered to be one of the most important goals of archaism (Bigdeloo, 2001). The starting point of this idea should be considered in the first encounters of the traditional Iranian society with the development-oriented technology-owning civilization of the West. Akhundzadeh also mentions other reasons for Iran's backwardness. He is among the people who consider the fall of Sassanid rule by the Arabs as one of the important factors of backwardness (Mirani, n.d., 94). He seeks to remove religion from society and replace it with nationalism; Nationalism which is based on ancient Iranian culture. Also, along with Akhundzadeh's opinions, Mirza Agha Khan Kermani was one of the supporters of this idea. He constantly called Iranians to clean the Persian language of Arabic words (Bigdeloo, 2001, 44-54). This speaks volumes about the influence of France during this period. Also, the conducted research shows that celebrity carpets are woven from a postcard (Lassikova, 2006, 7), although no example of a postcard has been found.

Description of the Study Corpus

The study corpus is preserved in the Niavaran Palace in Tehran (Fig. 1). Hassan Khan Shahrokhi is considered to be the designer of the carpet and Ali Kermani is considered to be the weaver of the celebrity carpet (Malul, 2005, 136). This carpet is woven at the end of the reign of Ahmad Shah Qajar and in the size of 3.40 x 5.30 meters with 9200 knots per decimeter.

Perspective has been fully observed in the design of this carpet and the design of the bodies and figures has been done skillfully. The upper part of the carpet includes columns of the Achaemenid period; In addition, the royal thrones are also designed, as if older and greater kings are sitting on different thrones.

The composition of the work has three margins, and if the reading direction in the carpet is considered from



Fig. 1. Celebrities carpet, 20th century, preserved in Niavaran Palace, source: Malul, 2005, 155.

the outside to the inside, the first part is the outer narrow margin that is decorated with lungworts (Fig. 2, A). The second layer or part is the second margin, which is larger and includes images of battles, mythical animals, and sitting on the throne, all of which are represented by prominent motifs of ancient Iran (Fig. 2, B); (Fig.3).

These pictures are adapted from the book *Asaar-e Ajam* (Ajam's works) written by Forsat al-Doulah Shirazi. There are mathematical relationships between the different parts of this margin, including: The first ratio: A is symmetrical to C with respect to point M (the center of the carpet) (Fig. 4, sample 1). The second ratio: B1 is symmetrical to C relative to the X1 axis, and B2 is symmetrical to A2 relative to

the X2 axis (Fig. 4, sample 2). The third ratio: D1 is symmetrical to C relative to the X3 axis, and D2 is symmetrical to A1 relative to the X4 axis (Fig. 4, sample 3); (Malul, 2005, 154).

The presence of geometrical order in the margins of the design emphasizes that the images are not vain, without reason, and only for decoration, but this order expresses an end and a purpose. The other margin is a narrow one that has 109 frames with Shamsa design (Fig. 2, C). These frames include the names of the kings in a counter-clockwise manner, starting from Kiyomarth and ending with Ahmad Shah.

On the other part, the images of the kings mentioned in the margin are illustrated (Fig 2, D). The mythical kings are placed among the columns of Persepolis, and Ahmad Shah, who is the last king and the carpet woven during his time, is placed in a separate frame at the bottom of the image. The text above the frame says The blessed image of the young emperor, His Highness Aqdas Sultan Ahmad Shah Qajar Khaled Melke. The sign of the sun with a crowned lion on it, which is a royal symbol, is located in this part. The compression of the images at the bottom is more than at the top. The figures at the top are shown more freely on the bed, on horseback, and in battle (Fig.5). Also, the arrangement of the kings is not based on a special rule; In a way that it cannot be said that the kings of ancient Iran are at the top and the kings and rulers after Islam are at the bottom because the images of Azarwindokht and Purandokht are seen in the lower rows. In general, it can be said that the historical kings and the Qajar kings are placed in the last row and most of their images include their top half (Fig. 6).

In the middle of the carpet, there is an oval frame around which the names of world celebrities are woven in Shamsa frames along with numbers (Fig.2, E). From the top of the oval, clockwise, the names start with the number 1 and end with Napoleon at the number 54 (Fig.7); (Malul, 2005, 136-138).

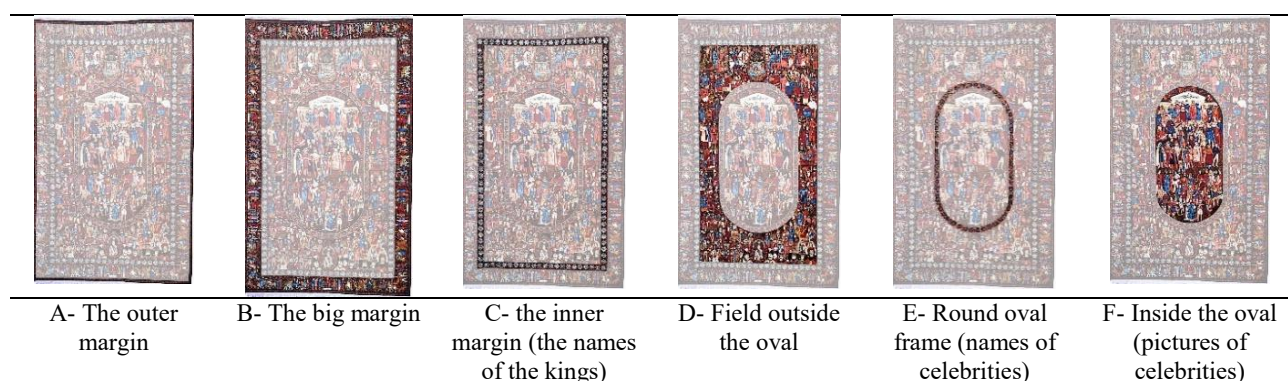


Fig. 2. Different layers of the carpet of celebrities or world leaders. Source: Authors.

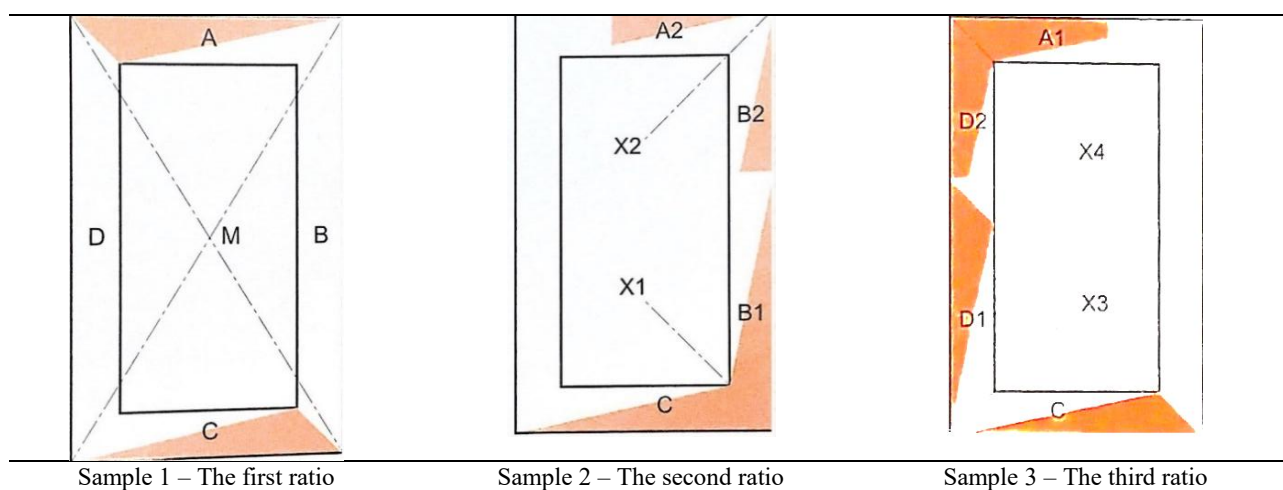


Fig. 3. Details of the second margin of the carpet preserved in Niavaran Palace, images of reliefs of ancient Iran. Source: Author's archive.



Fig. 4. Relationships between different parts of the margin. Source: Authors.

Inside the oval frame, the figures of the mentioned names are illustrated inside the oval with the same number as written in the outer frame, (Fig. 2, F). But the placement of figures in the field is not in order

of number. Below the pediment, the first row of prophets includes Moses (pbuh), Jesus (pbuh), and Solomon (pbuh). Jesus (pbuh) is seen wearing a purple cover with his hands open next to Suleiman (pbuh) who



Fig. 5. Detail of the depiction of the kings of Iran, beginning with Kiyomarth, the figure on the left. Source: Author's archive.

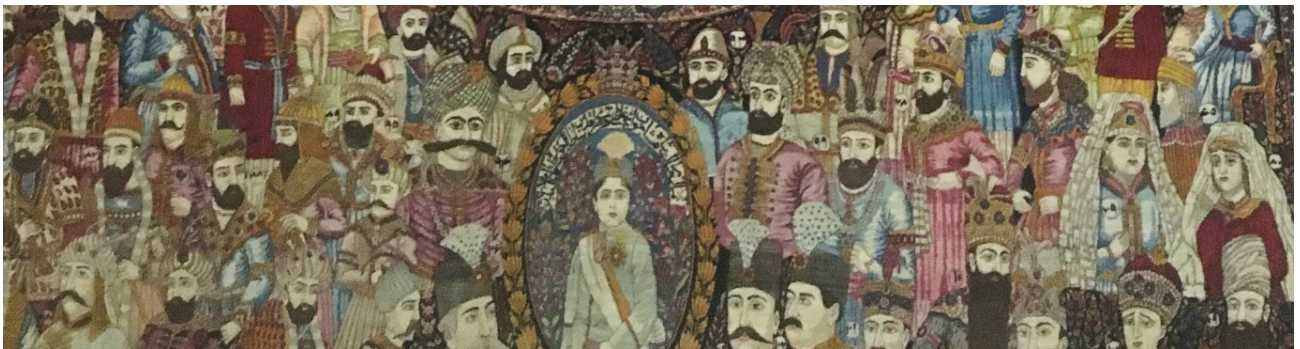


Fig. 6. Details of the depiction of the kings of Iran ending with Ahmad Shah. Source: Author's archive.



Fig. 7. Oval frame. Names from right to left: Solomon (number 2), Moush (Moses) (number 1), Napoleon (number 54). Source: Author's archive.

has raised his hand. In this image, Moses (pbuh) is also depicted with a blue cover while holding the tablet of the Ten Commandments next to two people with Arabic covers (Fig. 2, sample 2).

Lassikova admits that this carpet was woven based on the carpet in the Carpet Museum and considers it a copy

of a French postcard, therefore, the original carpet needs to be described and compared to the Niavaran Palace carpet. Due to the emphasis on monotheistic prophets, only these figures are examined in both carpets. There is no image of Christ in the first row of the carpet in the Tehran Carpet Museum, and the prominent figures of the




first row in that carpet are Moses, Suleiman and Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). On the carpet in the palace museum of Niavaran, Christ has replaced the number 18, the name of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). It is noteworthy that the figure who started Islam and is known by his name is removed. Instead, its replacement by the image of Christ represents the political-religious ideology that is hidden in the carpet.

The Role of Christianity in the Qajar Period and its Influence on the Art of Carpet Weaving

The figure that replaced the prophet in this period is the figure of Jesus Christ and this replacement was done in giving importance to the Christian religion. The presence of Christian missionaries in the Qajar period increased during the period of Fath Ali Shah and since the period of Napoleon Bonaparte with his extensive conquests (Mahdavi, 2015, 211). Napoleon sent medical, engineering, military, and religious experts to Count Gardane in Iran. Donboli considers the presence of two priests among these members as a reference to the view of that time towards Christianity (Maftun Donboli, 2004,

128). The Christian groups in Iran in the 20th century included the Russian Orthodox, American Protestant, Swiss, English, and French Catholics (Ghaffari, 1989, 131), and in a way, Iran became a focal point for the competitions and activities of these Christian groups in the 19th century (Ahmadi, 1999, 44; Ghafari, 1989, 165-168). In the meantime, the situation was more favorable for Catholics than others, who were mostly French. Many Qajar kings, especially Muzaffar al-Din Shah, valued Christians, especially the Catholic sect. It is one of the statements of Muzaffar al-Din Shah that “Assure the Pope that Catholics will always be treated with love and kindness in the territory of my government” (Ghaffari, 1989, 133-134). Also, the support of government officials to American and French missionaries increased during the era of Muhammad Shah and after that. Therefore, it can be said that among the religious minorities, Christianity had a special place in the society, especially in the court of the kings. In the carpets of this period, there are many doctrinal and memorial carpets of Christians, and most of them have the images of Maryam (Mary) and Jesus (pbuh) (Table 1).

Table 1. Famous carpets in Tehran Carpet Museum and Niavaran Palace. Source: Authors.

	Celebrities Carpet	Details of the first row under the pediment	Descriptions
1			Celebrities carpet, Kerman, 1900, (Dadgar, 2001, 131)
2			Celebrities carpet, 20th century, preserved in the Niavaran Palace. Source: Author's archive.

Analysis of Image as Social Production

By using the image to record the authority of the kingdom and strengthen the national identity, the pictorial carpets of the Qajar period find great importance under the influence of popular discourses, and the mass-reproduced celebrities carpets need to be analyzed as social productions. As mentioned before, the carpet in question consists of three general layers; The first layer from the outside to the inside, which is the outermost layer and is inspired by the Book of Al-Ajm, was formed under the popularization of archeology in this era. Because with the spread of archeology in this era, people got to know the culture of the past and lithography helped spread this culture. Therefore, the outermost layer expresses the ancient and past culture of Iran, which was obtained in archaeological discoveries. This layer is also formed with a special order. In the next layer, the kings of ancient Iran and the rulers after Islam are woven, and the beginning of the kings is with Kiyomarth and the end is with Ahmad Shah Qajar. After the importance of the ancient works of Iran, what is important are the kings who shaped this land from the past to the Qajar period. Nevertheless, the number of kings mentioned from ancient Iran is 82, and the kings after Islam until Qajar are 22 and all the kings of the Qajar period from Agha Mohammad Khan to Ahmad Shah are woven. Therefore, according to the number of kings before Islam, their importance is determined by the image. In the third layer are the greats of the world, including prophets, rulers, etc. In this part, there have been some changes compared to the carpet that exists in the Carpet Museum, which seems to be the pretext for this type of carpet. Jesus (pbuh) with the number 18 has replaced Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) with the same number in the margin (Fig. 8) and in the background (Fig. 9). This shows that Christianity has replaced Islam on the carpet (Table 2). Because the replacement of a prophet instead of another can represent the replacement of the same thought in that era. Also, in addition to Jesus's (pbuh) image, the



Fig. 8. Kashan, 130 x 270 cm, Kashan Mohtasham carpet, Mary and Christ (pbuh), Qajar period. Source: <https://www.essiecarpets.com/>

name of Jesus (pbuh) is written in the margin and additionally on the pillar near him, which shows his importance (Fig. 10).

In the images of the great people of the world, the celebrities have been selected, starting with Moses (pbuh) and ending with Napoleon. Therefore, the intitation of Moses (pbuh) and his place on the carpet next to Suleiman, also shows the importance of the Jewish religion and the prophets of that people. On the carpet, Jesus (pbuh) is placed next to Moses (pbuh) and the purple dress of Jesus (pbuh) has given him a special visual value and attracts the viewer's attention. In this carpet, where Moses (pbuh) and Jesus (pbuh) are in the first row, the importance of



Fig. 9. Right: a part of the margin of the carpets existing in the Carpet Museum; Left: part of the margin of the carpets in the museum of Niavaran Palace. Source: Author's archive.

the two religions, Judaism and Christianity, can be seen. Considering their location under the temple and the open hands of Jesus (pbuh), it seems that these prophets were of special importance. What is hidden in the importance of these two figures is that the designer of the carpet has assigned a special role to the prophets in the ranking and placement of the figures and has seen the fate of the world in their hands or regarded them as the originator of the world. Considering the prevailing conditions during the Qajar period and the position of Christians in this period, this replacement of Jesus (pbuh) instead of the Holy Prophet (pbuh) can have several reasons: Since the person who commissioned the carpet is not known and considering the countless carpets that were woven by order of Christians in this period, this carpet could have also been ordered by Christians or it could have been a gift for Christians. Because Christianity had gained a special status due to the preaching of missionaries and trips to European countries.

Another possibility is that the carpet could have been

woven under the influence of the views of those who, like people like Kermani and Akhundzadeh, saw the reasons for backwardness and ... in Islam, and considering the previous layers and the importance of archaism, they have removed the image of the Prophet not only in the background but also his name in the margin. Therefore, considering that a number of intellectuals of that period saw the cause of Iran's backwardness in Islam, it seems that this possibility can also be considered in this carpet, which was woven according to the popular discourse in that period and influenced by the thought of archaism and archeological discoveries, the figure of the Prophet (pbuh) which represents the religion of Islam and the leader of Muslims is removed and Jesus (pbuh) sits in his place.

Also, the presence of world leaders in the middle of the carpet shows another superiority. Because the kings of Iran are on the sidelines compared to the celebrities of the world. The replacement of Christianity instead of Islam is also superior to the first because the official religion of the Qajar period was Islam, however, the religious minorities, which are Jews and Christians, were placed in the center. Also, the presence of western companies in carpet weaving, and the arrival of Jews and Christians in this area can also be factors influencing the change of design in this period.

Conclusion

Every work is like a production that can be influenced by political, social, and cultural institutions according to Janet Wolff's statement. In general, arts can express the ruling ideology of any era and power system. In the Mashhaeer (celebrities) carpet of the Tehran Carpet Museum, where the figures of kings, rulers, and prophets and their names are written, religion, politics, and nationality are among the main factors in the development of visual aesthetics, and it can be concluded that these carpets were produced with an ideological and political purpose or as a

Table 2. Comparison of figures under the pediment in carpets of the Carpet Museum and the Niavaran Palace. Source: Authors.



	Images under the pediment in carpets	Descriptions
1		A part of the carpet preserved in the Carpet Museum, the images of people under the pediment from right to left: Moses, ____, Suleiman, Muhammad (pbuh).
2		A part of the carpet preserved in the Niavaran Palace, the images of people under the pediment from right to left: Moses, Suleiman, ____, Jesus (pbuh).



Fig.10. A part of the carpet preserved in the Niavaran Palace; Jesus (pbuh) and his name on a pillar near him. Source: Author's archive.

gift. In the studied example, the figure and name of the Prophet of Islam are removed and the figure of Christ and Christianity is replaced and found a more exalted place. This representation from the point of view of the subject of the Qajar era with ancient-historical references disrupts the establishment and continuity of common image traditions in a new tone and systematic arrangement. In addition, due to the elements that have

been added to the carpet outside of the main context, and apart from the ideas of archaism as an aesthetic tool, it is possible to observe the failure or change of the visual tradition in this carpet, in which one can point out to religious views in a new intellectual foundation, and structural reflections inspired from noteworthy visual patterns. In general, whether consciously or unconsciously, it seems that the role and composition of the carpet express another's superiority over the Iranians themselves. Another possibility that indicates this replacement is the connection with the West, and the presence of missionaries of religious minorities and their entry into the business, which caused changes in the designs of carpets. Therefore, the replacement of Jesus Christ instead of the prophet, which points to the superiority of Christian thought, can be due to the presence of Christian merchants and weavers, an order placed by Christians, or a gift to them. Therefore, the conscious reduction of the stage positions and the function of this right of precedence, is a controversial intersection on the strengthening of this idea that Wolff refers to as surrounding the subject and power with the axis of aesthetics, which enables the possibility of different semantic interpretations.

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