

**Original Research Article**

## Iconographic Themes in the Wall Paintings of Nasir al-Mulk House in Shiraz

Gohar Shahraki Moghadam<sup>1</sup>, Jamaledin Soheili<sup>2\*</sup>

1. Ph.D. Candidate, Department of Architecture, Qazvin Branch, Islamic Azad University, Qazvin, Iran.
2. Associate Professor, Department of Architecture, Qazvin Branch, Islamic Azad University, Qazvin, Iran.

Received; 19/12/2022

accepted; 06/03/2023

available online; 01/07/2023

### Abstract

One of the most important eras in the development of Iran's art and architecture, especially in the format of murals, is the Qajar era. The dominant attributes of this period are relations with the West and adopting its culture and art. Qajar's mural art was represented in different buildings, including houses. Nasir al-Mulk House of Shiraz is one of the buildings of the Qajar era, and in its Shahneshin Hall, there are prominent and diverse ceiling paintings. Given that the existing paintings on the ceilings of this building provide a combination of Iranian and Western concepts and contents, the comparative study of their motifs becomes significant both for a better understanding of the visual and topical approaches of the ceiling painting art of the Qajar and also to fill the gap of the comparative information in this field. The ceiling painting of the aforementioned building was studied to answer the following question: What contents and representations do these paintings imply based on the iconographical comparative analysis?

This research aims to identify, study, and carry out a comparative evaluation of the motifs in the ceiling of the Nasir al-Mulk House based on the iconography method.

In addition to the library studies, this research was supplemented by data from field investigations, including in-site examination, documenting the paintings, and also describing and explaining them.

The results of this research provoke the readers' attention not only to the existing motifs in each mural but also to their latent concepts. The semantic perspective of the art of this era discloses the fact that despite the imitation and separation from originality, this art reached an individual identity that could be named as Qajar style. In the end, this research was an endeavor to provide a deep understanding of the existing concepts in the murals of this era in Shiraz and to discover the ontological viewpoints of individuals in this period.

**Keywords:** *Mural, Iconography, Nasir al-Mulk House of Shiraz, Qajar art.*

### Introduction

With a long history in Iran, mural painting has been used as an art form in the Islamic era to design buildings

with painted decorations. This ancient tradition has been an ascending trend in the palaces of the Safavid Era and then in the monuments of the Qajar Era. This movement began in the Safavid Era and reached its peak point in the Qajar era, drawing the attention of ordinary

\* Corresponding Author: +989123816120, soheili@qiau.ac.ir

people with their special tastes to the art scene. This case resulted in the appearance of murals representing various public approaches and beliefs in aristocratic houses and mansions, as well as palaces. The artists of that era have represented the public beliefs in the pictures so that these Iranian-social beliefs and themes have been integrated into Persian and western art in some houses, implying a new form of wall and ceiling murals. These arts can be used as documents to study the social status of that time. A sample of these ceiling paintings is seen in Nasir al-Mulk House, which belonged to the Qajar Era. The current study chose this house to reveal the changes that occurred in the Qajar Era focusing on these paintings. It attempted to show how the society faced the west and western art, as well as the interconnection between murals and social evolutions and themes in the culture of the time.

The extant study identifies the theoretical foundations of iconography and art of Iran during Qajar Era by using the descriptive-analytical method and documentary-bibliographic studies in the first phase. In the second step, this study will examine the murals of Nasir al-Mulk Mansion in Shiraz, classify these murals, and analyze them in terms of iconology. This study then presents the research findings through tables and charts.

## Literature Review

Theoretical foundations of iconology and its strata: “Iconology is a branch of art history studies that address the meaning or concept of artworks in confrontation with their forms. It is also an interpretive technique that arises more from composition than from analysis” (Panofsky, 2016). Iconology, on the other hand, has its roots in religious art movements of the 18th century (Levine, 2013, 324). The modern concept of “iconology as a method” in art history owes to Erwin Panofsky. Panofsky, influenced by Aby Warburg’s historicism and anthropology in art, emphasized ancient heritage life and transformation in literature and art (Emmens & Schwartz, 1967, 109). He believed that an art historian is responsible for studying and rejecting past heritage and revitalizing ancient documents (Lee, 1968, 370). Panofsky and other members of the

Warburg Circle in the Hamburg School tended to develop philosophical studies that attempted to shift from the intellectual level to personal and collective psychology, paving the way for psychological, sociological, and dialectical studies on art phenomenology (Argan & West, 1975, 297–304). Panofsky, unlike Warburg, took an applied and practical approach to iconology (Diers, Girst, & Von Moltke, 1995, 62-63). Conceptually, “iconography” and “iconology” are similar with the same root; Panofsky defines iconography as a technique for “description and classification of images and the required basis for more interpretation” and considers iconology a kind of iconography that implies “any kind of interpretive matter” (Panofsky, 2016, 40-41). Some researchers define iconology as a method that “describes and interprets images and symbols to discover social relationships, cultural meanings, and political-economic powers” (Hoelscher, 2009, 132). Panofsky divided the triple phases of the art object, known as iconology, into three meaning strata: 1) natural or primary meaning (pre-iconological stratum), which is based on the truth and expressive meaning of pure forms and primary specific compositions (e.g., color, line, and so forth) as meaning carriers and the world of art basics. 2) Conventional or secondary (iconographic stratum) meaning, which means linking art basics and their compositions (elements) with special subjects or concepts represented in images, stories, and allegories. 3) Intrinsic meaning or content (iconological stratum), which means a person who describes and summarizes them in a work discovering and interpreting symbolic values and revealing the main attitude of a nation, era, stratum, philosophical or religious school. This is usually unknown to the artist and may be different from their intentions (Panofsky, 2016, 37–40). Panofsky proposed specific corrective tools and principles to prevent possible risks and exaggerations in iconology phases, including exaggerated interpretation. Table 1 reports the mentioned principles.

### • Art of the Qajar Era

Qajar art consists of dispersal, polygamy, superficiality, and a kind of haste in acquiring symbols of western art and

culture due to social-cultural issues and infrastructures, as well as ontological beliefs. The social-political contexts must be identified to understand the advent of any kind of culture, art, and direction, to use elements and even color in the artworks, to pay attention to concepts and subject matter, and even to use symbols (Goodarzi, 2009). It was surprising that Iranians' reactions, from the Shah and courtiers to ordinary people, included both informative outcomes and self-defeat when confronted with Western culture and civilization. On the other hand, many parts of the traditional society of Iran were not ready to accept western patterns. In general, these conditions led to the advent of different cultural layers in the highly traditional society of Iran (Khatoonabadi, 2011).

The influence of western architecture on the architecture of the Qajar Era first appeared in kingdom buildings, then in public buildings, and finally in residential buildings. Many historians referred to this architecture as "postal card" architecture. Moreover, the construction of the

palace is another distinctive characteristic of this historical period. Following these innovations and changes, native architects accepted the new way of incorporating it into their work. This process continued until underlying changes occurred in the main elements of the construction, and even the interior decorations of the buildings became a hybrid art form, including mural paintings that became popular at that time (Askari Chavardi, Bigdeli, Jahanbakhsh & Ali Sufi, 2017). Another considerable cultural-social factor in the late Naseri Period is the advent of a new platform for the presence of noble women in the masculine world: the women who were kept far from men and such atmospheres. Various factors, such as increased knowledge of women due to reading books and education, and the entrance of western women into the lives of Qajar men, led to the presence of women on these platforms (Armaghan, Soltanzadeh & Irani Behbahani, 2015). Moreover, Eyn Al-Saltaneh describes the intellectual influence of the

Table 1. Triple phases of iconological interpretation. Source: Panofsky, 2016, 48-49.

Row	Interpretation object	Interpretation action	An instrument for the interpretation	Corrective interpretation principles (history and tradition)
1	Primary or natural matter: A) actual B) expressive/including the world of artistic subject matters	Pre-iconological description (quasi-sub-analysis)	Practical experience (introduction to objects and events)	Style history (introduction to the method in which, objects and events are expressed with forms under different historical conditions)
2	Secondary or conventional matter: including the world of images, stories, and allegories	Iconological analysis	Literal sources knowledge (introduction to specific subject matters and concepts)	History of species (knowledge through a method in which, specific matters or concepts, and or objects of events have been expressed under different historical conditions)
3	Content or intrinsic meaning: including the world of "symbolic" concepts	Iconological interpretation	Combined intuition (introduction to basic tendencies of the human mind) subject to personal psychology and worldview	In general, the history of cultural signs or symbols (introduction to the method in which, basic tendencies of the human mind or specific concepts and subject matters have been expressed under different historical conditions)

West on Iranians and their perception of Europeans, “we have learned the meaningless actions of foreigners, while we have not seen their good industries and rules. We just learned from western culture to use a cane, wear eyeglasses, wear shirts and neckerchiefs, smoke, speak fast, use body language, and drink wine. Nevertheless, we did not learn good habits from them, and these actions indeed are sufficient” (Salour, Ghahraman Mirza Salour & Afshar, 1995). These writings are signs of exposure to western culture. The historical studies indeed indicate that dealing with the West was first limited to apparent and primary perceptions of the West Civilization, which influenced deeper levels of institutes, organizations, and intellectual foundations.

Painting in the Qajar Era: The paintings of this period have been influenced by various factors regarding the basic transformations in different cultural and social aspects of Iran during the Qajar Era, especially in the Naseri period. Some of these changes have stemmed from global approaches, while others have been influenced by the intellectual and social movements within society. For instance, cultural elements synchronization has been adopted from the West: national identity, an approach to naturalist art, the influence of European art and imitating it, a reference to the art of ancient Iran, inspired and impressed by the art of the Safavid Era. Therefore, 4 general techniques can be mentioned for the painting of this era: 1) Iranian-traditional; 2) Iranian-foreign; 3) foreign behavior; and 4) street painting.

During the Naseri period, certain social conditions occurred that resulted in changes in cultural and artistic movements: 1) traditionalism, 2) eclectic movement that tried to integrate European art into the traditional art of Iran, 3) modernist movement that was highly influenced by the West and western art, 4) public and ordinary art (Khatoonabadi, 2011, 8-47). The modernist movement of the Qajar Era was highly influenced by European art attempting to imitate western art and painting. This influence led to many transformations in art, which affected the structure and spirit of paintings of that time. One of the most important changes occurred

in the kingdom iconography in which, nature painting, abstract painting, and decoration were considerably adapted to each other (Pakbaz, 2017, 151). The most important feature of kingdom iconography was seen in illustrating specific individuals in certain bodies and styles, but the whole color elegance and variety existing in visual works that were common before that era focused on human form painting without considering other details of the space (Ebrahimi Naghani, 2007, 87). Hence, an ideal face was a mixture of pre-painted personal characteristics and conventional features. Therefore, a kind of characterization with similar features and some personal specifications for each person was seen in all murals. However, this aesthetical metric was imitative without any Iranian background (ibid.). Accordingly, a stream appeared in the art and iconography that did not follow the traditional movement and selected western samples and subject matters as the pattern.

Mural painting and its evolution: mural painting has a long history in Iran, which was not invented during Qajar Era, but the Qajar dynasty continued that tradition that reached its peak point during the Fath-Ali Shah period (Azhand, 2006, 5-34). In Islamic countries, mural painting art was usually limited to public places and geometrical motifs, so narrative images were rarely used in private places. This habit, however, was changed until the Qajar Era, so the visual narrations and pictures appeared in public places after that time, which led to many evolutions in the painting tradition that was replaced with European art. Mural painting began based on the design of sculptures in the Fath-Ali Shah period, and then mural paintings appeared (Diba, 2001). The subject of murals was mainly limited to specific matters, such as 1) pictures of Shah and courtiers, 2) women, 3) flowers and bushes, 4) narrative pictures and Ghazal ceremonies. Generally, murals can be investigated based on their two aspects: A) subject matter, and B) implementation technique. The present study addressed the subject matter of murals.

## Research Background

It is essential to identify the subject matters applied in

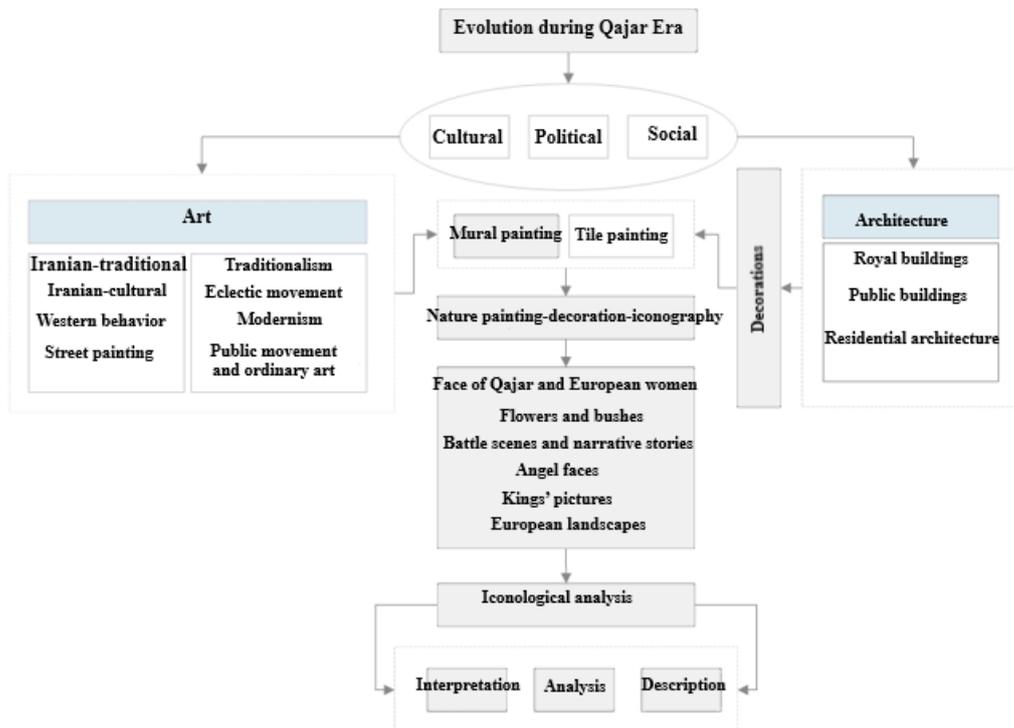


Fig. 1. Conceptual model of research. Source: Authors.

ceiling paintings and the wisdom beyond the conceptual layers of these works to achieve the objectives of this study. The visual elements used in these works have been connected to social phenomena of that era leading to thematic evolution in these pictures during different eras. Hence, identification of the elements of hybrid Iranian-Western art with an iconological view is a new approach to these pictures and reading them again, which has been done in the present study. Moreover, references related to murals of the Qajar Era and studies conducted on the art of the Qajar Era were reviewed and summarized herein. In Iranian studies conducted on this subject, Azhand explains that mural painting in Qajar Era reached its peak point. Some so-called market artists of that time represented public beliefs in these pictures manifesting the public beliefs of the society in addition to their art, which provide sociological value to studying Qajar Era (Azhand, 2006). In the book entitled “mirror of imagination,” Goodarzi presents a huge collection of motifs from the Qajar Era (Goodarzi, 2009). Sokhan Pardaz and Marasi explain in their paper that tendency of art in the Qajar Era is towards the Ancient Iranian era instead of European

schools, address the influence of ancient Iran’s art on the architecture-dependent decorations in buildings constructed in the Qajar era, and compare the decorations of two mentioned buildings (Sokhan Pardaz & Marasi, 2009). Shokoohian and Shirazi conducted a study entitled “subjective classification of murals of Baghe-Eram in Shiraz during Qajar Era” to identify murals of this monument describing and classify these murals (Shokoohian & Shirazi, 2010). In another study under the title of “study and examination of historical murals of Tabriz (Qajar Era),” Pashapoor and colleagues studied murals of the Qajar era in terms of motifs, numbers, background, and location in different sites of the building (Pashapoor et al., 2014). Armaghan et al. tried to detect the influence of woman’s role change in the society of the Qajar half-era and its impact on the architecture and painting of that time (Armaghan, Soltanzadeh & Irani Behbahani, 2015). In terms of the influence of the West on the painting of this era, the study entitled “west’s influence on the Iranian painting from the beginning of Qajar Rule to the end of the Naseri era” by Laal Shateri, Sarafrazi & Vakili. Can be mentioned that addresses the

entrance of western styles in the Iranian painting from the early Qajar Era to the late government of Naser al-Din Shah. This study concluded that the painting of the Qajar Era was changed due to numerous interactions with Europe and Westernism among courtiers (Laal Shateri, Sarafrazi & Vakili, 2016). Some studies have been conducted on mural painting in Qajar Era. Madhoushian Nejad, Haddadian & Razani. conducted a study entitled “comparative study of mural paintings in the main halls of Qavam-ol-Dowlah House in Tehran and houses of Hariri in Tabriz” to compare murals in Shah-Neshin halls of the two mentioned houses and found that proximity to the capital, wealth, and political status of the owner as factors affecting the technique and subject matter of painting (Madhoushian Nejad, Haddadian & Razani, 2017). In the study entitled “study of painting in Kushks of Zand and Qajar dynasties in Shiraz,” Tavazo & Noroozi and colleagues aim to study and identify paintings in Kushks of Zand and Qajar dynasties in Shiraz (Tavazo & Noroozi, 2018). Esmacilzadeh and Shad Ghazvini considered the role of building painting during the late Qajar and first Pahlavi periods and its relationship with nationalism dialogue with an analysis based on the concepts of mediation and totality in the methodology of Lukacs and studied one of the features of painting in Qajar and Pahlavi era that is landscape and building paintings (Esmacilzadeh & Shad Ghazvini, 2018). In the study entitled “architectural decorations in pond room of Dokhanchi House in Shiraz,” Azar Safaee and Mohammad Sadegh Mirza Abolghasemi studied decorative features comparing them with other decorations existing in Dokhanchi House in terms of content and implementation (Safaee & Mirza Abolghasemi, 2019). Hosseinian, Soheili & Eslami. Conducted a study to examine political-social changes in murals of Tehran Imam Juma during the Qajar Era (Hosseinian, Soheili & Eslami, 2020). Mostafavi and Soheili described the foundations and characteristics of the neutralism school and shared elements and concepts available in murals of Seyyed Javadi Mansion, and neutralism paintings (Mostafavi & Soheili, 2021). Regarding the research

approach, Erwin Panofsky accurately studied iconology in the book entitled “meaning in visual arts” (Panofsky, 2016) which has been a strategic and useful guide for the present paper. According to reviews, most of the available studies have been conducted on the murals and their motifs in Qajar Era without reading and analyzing the schemas and motifs existing in the ceiling paintings of royal mansions of Shiraz based on the social elements and changes that time using iconology, which indicates a distinction between the present study and previous ones and is a novel aspect of this research.

### Methodology

This study was conducted using the descriptive-analytical method through the iconology technique, which is pursued based on the description, analysis, and interpretation, and applies “interpretive-historical” antecedents to deepen the research layers making them symbolic layers. For this purpose, initial data were collected through written references, and pictures were taken of the considered house. The motifs were classified in the next step, and then the classified motifs were examined throughout the inferential reasoning based on triple iconological phases. By identifying and reading the value and symbolic system in the text of the studied work, the latent and symbolic concepts of them will appear in cultural-social and political platforms through which, the work is formed.

### Introduction to Nasir al-Mulk House in Shiraz

Nasir al-Mulk House is one of the houses built during the Qajar Era in Shiraz and is located in the God-e-Araban neighborhood near Lotfali Khan Zand Street and next to the Nasir-al-Mulk Mosque. This house is part of a large complex of Jolokhan (frontage) (a space like a square), bath, water reservoir, and mosque built by Haji Mirza Hassanali Khan Nasir al-Mulk, the third child of Haji Ghavan al-Mulk and governor of Fars during Qajar period, while Jolokhan and bath of this structure have been destructed. This house has two courtyards towards the north and south that has one main longitudinal axis

through which, an indoor hall and large sash window room (Orsi) in addition to the outdoor hall and exterior Orsi room are located. In this complex, only the indoor hall and Chalipa Orsi room have remained unchanged. The entrance gate of the house is located in a frontage, which street construction destroyed the frontage, Hashti (vestibule), and a part of staircases connecting to the lateral rooms of the indoor hall. Plastering and mirror decorations are the main decorations used in the NasirAl-Mulk House. The rooms located on the second floor have two rows of niches with plastering and mirror decorations. The hall and rooms consist of niches, ceiling with plastering, and mirror decorations with mixed Iranian-European motifs. The ceiling of two floors is designed in lathing form with European-style paintings. In painting, pictures of European houses, churches, and faces can be seen. These paintings exist in the Panj Dari (a large room with five interconnected windows) or mirror hall of this monument. Fig 2 depict the area of the building and its location plan.

## Discussion

Mural paintings of Nasir Al-Mulk House: a large part of the visual and artistic culture of Iran belongs to visual works shaped by their environmental origin in interaction with architectural space (Alavinezhad, Nadaliyan, Kafashchian & Shirazi, 2010, 6), and the house is one of those places that has embodied the appearance of these visual works in its atmosphere. The mansion considered in this study is located in Eshagh Beyg Neighborhood in Shiraz, Iran, and was built by Mirza Hassanali Khan Nasir Al-Mulk the third son of Haji Ghavam Al-Mulk, one of the governors of Fars during the Qajar Era. The main building consists of a main hall and a part of an indoor courtyard, which is the outdoor and basement part, and a mirror hall has been constructed symmetrically with two large sash windows with elegant Girih tiles and colored glasses on two sides of it that are connected to indoor and outdoor courtyards. A central Shah-Neshin (alcove) is located on two other sides of the hall, which are connected to adjacent rooms from two sides by a sash

window. NasirAl-Mulk House, like other old houses, has a winding basement with stone-made beautiful arches and mesh skylights. Plastering has been used to imitate the Sesani technique on building facades. Plastering and mirror decorations are the major decorations seen in this house, and the hall and rooms are covered with mixed Iranian and European motifs and designs. The ceiling of each floor has been lathed and designed with European paintings. In general, pictures are located on the ceiling with the following subject matters: 1) women's face and music ceremonies with western styles, 2) war and military arrangements and pictures of narrative stories; 3) pictures of winged angels; 4) flowers and birds. 5) Symbolic elements of the lion, sun, and symbolic animals; 6) European landscapes

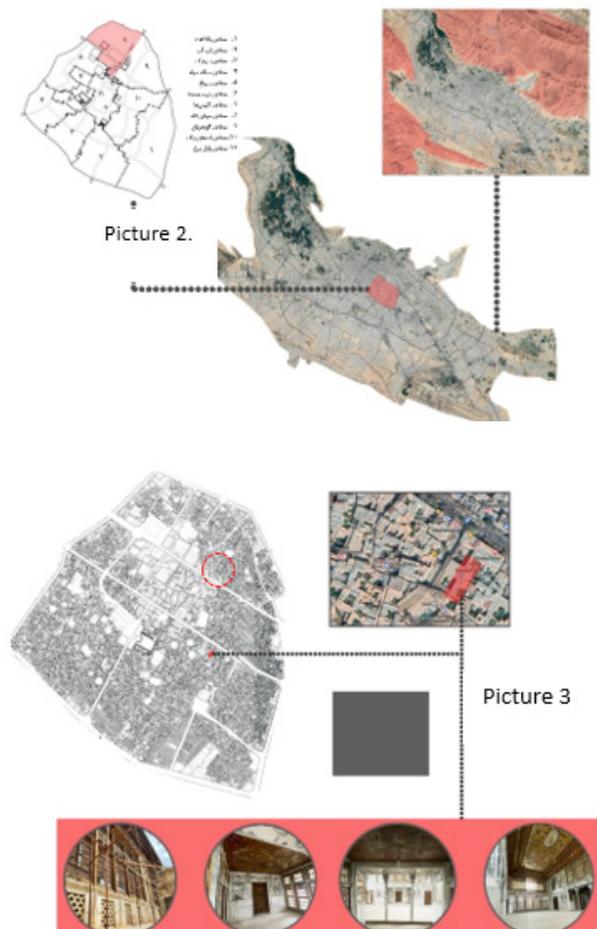


Fig. 2 . The building area and plan of local and geographical location. Source: Authors.

• **Woman's face and music ceremonies with western style** in the Fath-Ali Shah Era, a woman's face was painted under the high influence of her sexual power, and discontinuity can be seen in the portrayal of the female face in these works (Table 3). The reason is that it is hard to find a woman's portrayal that is designed only for displaying their gender or character (Sojoodi & Ghazi Moradi, 2012, 112). In paintings of the early Qajar Era, the face and body of women were painted like men, and their clothes could show their gender; hence, these images were gradually replaced with the face of the Western woman in the mid-19th century, so that feminine elegance appeared in these pictures (Najmabadi, 2001, 89-92), and Iranian woman found a new identity for the first time and was shown in a form without hijab, or with a hijab that was different with its previous concept (Afzal Toosi, Salahi & Salahi, 2014, 578). Moreover, the influence of European art in Iranian image painting paved the way for other new images, such as Ghazal ceremonies and some patterns like the Christian art that were absent in Iranian art before that time (Pakbaz, 2017, 132-148). Most of the images in NasirAl-Mulk mansion has been designed with women's subject, and the abovementioned points can be seen in women's portrayals of these mural paintings. In some paintings, women are seen wearing scarf, hats, and or unveiled hair in form of single-painting or collective murals. The distinctive point of these images can be seen in no similarity between the faces, clothes, styles, and forms of their images of Iranian women. Moreover, it should be noted that these images are identical to the paintings of European art; however, they display the spirit of modernity and willingness for change in a part of society in that era. Different kinds of women images in mural paintings of the studied mansion, type of ceremonies, and their clothes can be classified and introduced as reported in Table 2.

• **War and narrative paintings**

war, military arrangement, and war camp paintings have been always considered the widely-used subject matter in mural painting, which has been popular in various periods (Table 4). These paintings are also seen in Qajar Era so James Morier writes about this case after visiting Fath-Ali

Shah in his residence in Tehran, "it is a large painted with golden design hall. A huge painting of Iran-Russia war is seen here in which, Shah and his white hours are easily seen" (Diba, 2006). Narrative paintings can be seen in the images painted in NasirAl-Mulk mansion that narrate an incident or story of literature or historical books of Iran indicating a group of riders that are identifiable in new Iranian-Western forms. It seems that these images have been painted just for landscape painting purposes.

• **Angels' faces**

the angel motif in Iranian art can be found in stone works and paintings (Table 5). These images were mainly proposed in two religious and non-religious forms, in which religious paintings were designed for sanctity, while non-religious images were designed in form of love goddesses without holiness (Akasheh, 2001, 108). The angel motif was one of the popular images used in murals and tilework of the Qajar era, which can be divided into the following classes: 1) those angels with human-like bodies with two wings, which had a feminine body if their wings are removed, 2) human-like angels without any difference. These angels are the only types of angels that do not have wings, 3) little angels with small wings that were widely painted in Qajar Era, and were painted as obese angels with 3D volumes, 4) little angels that, unlike the previous ones with the covered penis, were naked with western faces (Safarzadeh, Moosavi Fatemi & Ahmadi, 2010, 98-99). The angels painted in the studied mansion are of the second class with human-like faces without wings, and the third class of little, naked, and obese angels with small wings. The mentioned angels have been painted beside the landscapes, women with different clothes (with the scarf and hat in single or collective forms) as a dream of paradise. Many of these paintings can be found in the European stamps and postcards of the 18th and 19th centuries, that most of these paintings have been influenced by western souvenirs, and seemingly are painted as decorative elements copying the postcards (Ansari & Heydari, 2018, 17-28).

**Conclusion**

As a technique, iconography provides a new opportunity

Table 2. Women's single face. Source: Authors.

Study framework	Description, analysis, or interpretation
Image	
Description	<p>These murals are painted in circular frames with three-sided faces and European clothes and headscarves. Moreover, the use of the pure form of objects and painting of the elegant feminine world and pleated dresses in oval-shaped frames in images indicate realism. Realistic configuration by using centralized and sharp lighting with innocent faces and pleated cotton clothes narrates the visual realism.</p> <p>An arrangement of paintings, circular frames of paintings, and pleated clothes, shadows, and dark backgrounds point to the presence of configuration.</p> <p>General description:</p> <p>The presence of Europeans, especially women in the lives of Iranian men and women, increased their knowledge of women and men (Armaghan, 2014).</p>
Iconographic analysis	<p>Presentation of European women's faces with specific European clothes, naked bodies, and unveiled hair in mural paintings and backgrounds with warm colors have highlighted the work. The portrayal iconography presents a specific sense of elegance created mysteriously, indicating the unlimited presence of women in men's lives.</p> <p>Using some elements, such as flower crown on the head of women in paintings using intense colors indicate the elegant feminine sense in the limited society of that era.</p> <p>Portrayals depict the more highlighted presence of European women's thoughts on masculine beliefs of that time.</p> <p>The portrayal with luxurious coverage of background with bright and dark colors and poor presence of dark lighting indicates the personal and social luxury orientation by using women's bodies to collectivize the principles of that time regarding social luxury (Ansari &amp; Heydari, 2017).</p> <p>The main analytical concepts:</p> <p>Interpretation of women's position, Westernism, faded masculine-feminine borders (Armaghan, 2014)</p>
Iconological interpretation	<p>The thematic folk images imply the public interest of that era in displaying an image of European women and indirect expression of willingness towards change among Qajar women, and the tendency of men of that time towards this case.</p> <p>The painter painted these landscapes to create a seductive scene of material pleasure. The woman's look with warm backgrounds and sensual expression leaves the audience with a reflective identity, and indicates the sense of presence in the society of that time, paying attention to the role of women from the view of men of the time.</p> <p>Creating a gender-based view in paintings of the Qajar era and living differences between men and women that led to social and gender problems in societies of that era (Taghipour &amp; Aghamiri, 2015).</p> <p>Pointing to more attention to women and their presence in society (Ansari &amp; Heydari, 2017); (Hosseinian, Soheili &amp; Eslami, 2020).</p> <p>Main analytical concepts: aesthetics, family structure change, house body change (Armaghan, 2014)</p>

Table 3. Narrative paintings. Source: Authors.

Study framework	Description, analysis, or interpretation
Image	
Description	<p>This mural points to group wars in which some men with Arabian clothes fight with the symbolic animal, the lion, in the landscape in which, this war is painted (mural 1).</p> <p>In this image, some men of the Qajar era have pointed their guns at an animal, which possibly shows a hunting scene. The painting details of animal's skin and soft form, using bright and contrasting colors (the highlighted reddish color of blood) is an allegory of good-evil fights inspired by the stories and narrations in the Qajar era (mural 2).</p> <p>In this mural, some men are seen with Indian clothes and riding on elephants and horses hunting and attacking a lion, which is jumping towards them (mural 3).</p> <p>In this mural, some Qajar men are attacking an animal and a hunting scene has been painted (mural 4).</p>
Iconographic analysis	<p>This mural illustrates the historical iconography of the fight between Arabs and mythical animals by using the warm and enacting some concepts based on a new beginning, representation in the framework of social changes and antiquarianism (Ansari &amp; Heydari, 2017) (Hosseinian, Soheili &amp; Eslami, 2020) (mural 1).</p> <p>The iconography of popular narrations of the Qajar era and representation of hunting mythical animals. Illustrating the fight indicating the period dynasty. Reflection of strengths and weaknesses in the competence of society and governors concerning people and presenting ancient roots (Ansari &amp; Heydari, 2017); (Hosseinian, Soheili &amp; Eslami, 2020); (mural 2).</p> <p>The fight between Indian horse riders and mythical animals (mural 3).</p> <p>The fight with some mythical animals (mural 4).</p>
Iconological interpretation	<p>Paintings that include mythical animals present a subject matter with good and evil, and fighting themes indicate historical narrations of wars showing their dissatisfaction through these images.</p> <p>Moreover, these murals express the sense of anger rooted in the painting configuration by using color contrast implying the classism conflict.</p> <p>Suitable use of color and bright background to represent the incident revealing the daily events of society (Ansari &amp; Heydari, 2017).</p> <p>Main analytical concepts:</p> <p>Structural changes in governments, power, and political authority show-off, off the triumph of good over evil</p>

for moral painting studies. In this case, the mural painting of NasirAl-Mulk House in Shiraz is a unique mural with unique artistic values, which has received less attention. Moreover, the most significant aspect of Iranian art is its close relationship with symbolism and mystery, which is the outcome of relationship and thought existing

in the artworks expressing the identity of a nation. Communication between symbols and reality is seen in the symbology of historical periods in Iran. Although some artists have achieved a specific symbol through exaggeration, they have found other symbolic motifs pointing to realities beyond their appearance only by

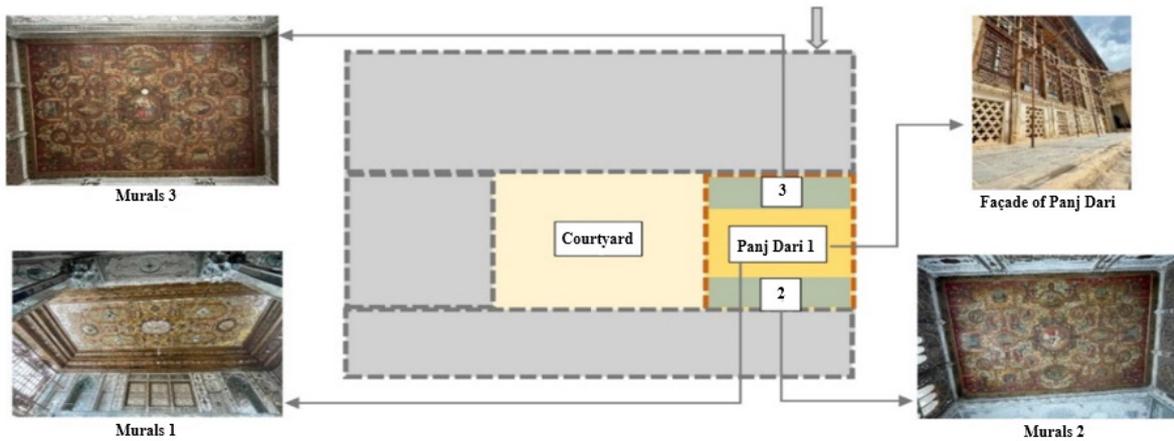


Fig. 3. Location of Panj Dari Room and Mirror Hall. Source: Authors.

Table 4. Humanoid angels' paintings. Source: Authors.

Study framework	Description, analysis, or interpretation
Image	
Description	<p>In these paintings, angels are humanoids without wings and little angels of the third type, which were popular during the Qajar period, around the mother angel. The most important point in these paintings is the presence of angels beside the landscape pictures.</p>
Iconographic analysis	<p>A portrayal of humanoids and little angels and Qajar's winged angels that their images have been shown (Ansari &amp; Heydari, 2017). The iconography of popular subjects and cultural pictures (ibid.).</p>
Iconological interpretation	<p>Paintings have a slang interpretation and expression (ibid.). Main analytical concepts: Divine protection by angels</p>

simplifying the form to a geometric shape or inventing abstract forms. In this research, analysis is done based on the iconography that expresses new definitions and subject matters as follows:

A) The primary or natural subject matter of paintings implies common themes, such as the display of European and Iranian women, fight and battle scenes, guardian

angels, flowers, and plants.

B) Secondary or conventional subject matters of murals imply some concepts, such as a change in dress of women, evolution in rituals and behaviors, presence of Europeans, especially women in the life of Qajar men and women, increased awareness of women and men, power show-off, the triumph of good over evil, and is

Table 5. Ghazal ceremonies and dating men or women. Source: Authors.

Study framework	Description, analysis, or interpretation
Image	
Description	<p>The most important point of these paintings is the presence of men along with women in distinguished atmospheres, while men wear European clothes. Feminine ceremonies showed in different types of customs and figures.</p>
Iconographic analysis	<p>The slangy narration of iconographic faces of women and men in their ceremonies</p>
Iconological interpretation	<p>A subject matter implying the change in the position of women and their different presence in the society and presence of men beside them indicating enhanced relationships beyond their regular mental frameworks of that era (Ansari &amp; Heydari, 2017); (Hosseinian, Soheili &amp; Eslami, 2020).</p>

protected by divine angels.

A) Iconological interpretation of these murals in three main scopes of woman role redefinition, government conditions, power show-off, and symbolic social concepts indicate that the use of these motifs on the walls of NasirAl-Mulk House at two public and specific levels could be applied as a visual messenger to convey some concepts, such as changed aesthetical taste, changed women's position, power show-off, and political power of governors of that era, in addition, to show the divine power for human protection.

The research results can be completed by explaining that the first underlying change occurred in the culture during the Qajar era when Iranian painters experienced new techniques. The subject matter of mural paintings in houses was heavily influenced by social changes and the ordering person's wealth. Hence, we can see the luxury orientation and overuse of color for the visual reading clarity of the picture in these murals. In all paintings, details have been considered because they are all rooted in western thought in Iran. The artist of these murals tries to present novel thoughts and beliefs by transferring them

to the minds of the audience. The murals with fight and battle themes represent the ancient backgrounds, and the artist narrates the images. When the role of women in the lives of men during the Qajar Era is stated, and when images of European women are seen on the wall, the instrumental presence of women in men's lives is considered during the Qajar Era. The artist has painted the initial concept of the physical presence of women in men's lives without considering the Wets spirit that tends to break taboos and initial concepts and improve the role of women from physical presence to a rational and logical power, bringing equality between men and women based on a new understanding and women's power in the society. All of the mentioned subject matters are taken from the spirit of the Qajar Era, which can be derived from the paintings of that period. This is a type of identity that Qajar society acquired through historical epic-religious narratives.

In the paintings available in the studied mansion, moreover, the artists have tried to represent social subject matters about life and present some ideal sciences of reality structurally, subjectively, and visually. The artist

aims to express ordinary incidents clearly so the artist has preferred symbolization and mythmaking to realism, many of them are rooted in epic, mythical, romantic, and ethnic memories and stories. The position of artists makes them obey the order of the ruling class while illustrating the specifications of their arts and classes through half-hidden motifs in paintings. Moreover, the artist aims to show the cultural dualism in society and the tendency towards the West and change by illustrating both western and traditional dressing styles. After the murals of NasirAl-Mulk House in Shiraz were analyzed and interpreted accurately and after the artist's goals were described, it could be stated that the artist has created all dreams and desires of people in these murals expressing some historical and ethical memories besides their environmental factors and national memories. Finally, it should be noted that the analysis presented in this study was just a minor part of the mural painting of the Qajar Era in Iranian art. This study was conducted to recognize some subject matters of mural paintings in a house located in Shiraz, by using iconology, due to a research gap in reading paintings of this building. This study tried to accurately analyze all motifs and murals of Nasir al-Mulk House, and the value of symbols is not eliminated despite some motifs having been repeated in other buildings. Identification of widely used symbols in the Qajar Era may make us more familiar with the artistic views of the people of that time. Most art experts know the Qajar era as a period when Iranian art had no progress, while a profound look at the art of this era reveals that despite the imitation and lack of originality, the art of this time has had a unique and distinctive nature and concept, which can be named Qajar Art Style. The extant study helps to achieve a deep understanding of concepts available in murals of this era in Shiraz and that time.

### Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

### Reference list

• Afzal Toosi, E., Salahi, G. & Salahi, L. (2014). Studying tile paintings with motifs of Qajar women in the houses of Shiraz.

Journal of Women in culture and art, (4), 577-594.

- Akasheh, S. (2001). Islamic painting (Gh.Tahami, Trans.). Tehran: Publication of the art field.
- Alavinezhad, M., Nadaliyan, A., Kafshchian, A. & Shirazi, A. (2010). A comparative study on the use of the two terms of architectural decorations and mural painting in Islamic sources. *Negareh*, (15), 5-18.
- Ansari, H. & Heydari, E. (2017). A reflection on the effects of the development of Iranian culture and society in the middle of the Qajar era on wall painting (as evidenced by the wall paintings of the Saram-ud-Dole mansion in Kermanshah). *Fine arts magazine*, (33), 17-28.
- Argan, G. C. & West, R. (1975). Ideology and Iconology. *Critical Inquiry*, (2), 297-305.
- Armaghan, M. (2014). Evolution of interior architecture and culture of living in royal mansions of Qajar era (palaces and houses of Tehran), (Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis in Architecture), Islamic Azad University Central Tehran Branch, Tehran.
- Armaghan, M., Soltanzadeh, H. & Irani Behbahani, H. (2015). Redefining the role of women in the family and its effect on the decoration of paintings and the structure of noble houses in Tehran during the Qajar period. *Bagh-e Nazar*, (12), 11-24.
- Askari Chavardi, J., Bigdeli, A., Jahanbakhsh, A. & Ali Sufi, A. (2017). New Civilization Architecture and Institutions in the Qajar Period. *Tarikh Ravai*, 2 (4), 36- 61.
- Azhand, Y. (2006). Mural painting during Qajar era. *Journal of Visual Arts*, (25), 34-41.
- Diba, L. (2001). Invested With Life: Wall Painting and imagery before the Qajars. *Iranian Studies*, (34), 5-16.
- Diers, M., Girst, T. & Von Moltke, D. (1995). Warburg and the Warburgian tradition of cultural history. *New German Critique*, (65), 59-73.
- Ebrahimi Naghani, H. (2007). Human shape in the painting of Qajar Era. *Golestan-e-Honar*, (9), 82-88.
- Emmens, J. A. & Schwartz, G. (1967). Erwin Panofsky as a humanist. *Simiolus. Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art*, 2 (3), 109-113.
- Esmaeilzadeh, Kh. & Shad Ghazvini, P. (2018). The Genre of Landscape and Building-Painting (The Artistic) and the Discourse of Nationalism (The Political), during the Late Qajar and Early Pahlavi Periods an Analysis Based on "Mediation" and "Totality" in Methodology of Georg Lukacs. *Kimiya-ye-Honar*, 7 (28), 57-77.
- Goodarzi, M. (2009). Dream mirror: analysis of motifs and decorations in the art of Qajar Era in Tehran. Tehran: Sureh Mehr.
- Hoelscher, S. (2009). Landscape iconography. In R. Kitchin & N. Thrift (Eds.), *International Encyclopedia of Human Geography*. Amsterdam: Elsevier, 132-139.
- Hosseinian, H., Soheili J. & Eslami, S. (2020). Studying the Effect of the Political-Social Development in Qajar Era on Murals of the House of Imam Joma in Tehran. *Glory of Art*, 12 (3), 7-24.

- Khatoonabadi, A. (2011). Poetry and Painting in the Qajar Period: A Challenge between Tradition and Modernity. *Contemporary Persian Literature*, 1 (21), 39-55.
- Laal Shateri, M., Sarafrazi, A. & Vakili, H. (2016). West's influence on the Iranian painting from the beginning of Qajar rule to the end of the Naseri Era. *Journal of Historical Researches of Iran and Islam*, 2 (19), 185-210.
- Lee, R. W. (1968). Erwin Panofsky. *Art Journal*, 27 (4), 368-370.
- Levine, E. J. (2013). The Other Weimar: The Warburg Circle as Hamburg School. *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 74 (2), 307- 330.
- Madhoushian Nejad, M., Haddadian, M. A. & Razani, M. A. (2017). Comparative Study of Mural Paintings in the Main Halls of Qavam-ol-Dowlah House in Tehran and Houses of Hariri in Tabriz. *Journal of Artificial Arts of Islam*, 1 (1), 36-51.
- Mostafavi, A. & Soheili, J. (2021). Representation of Naturalism in Qajar Murals of Seyed Javadi Mansion. *Athar*, (93), 213-323.
- Najmabadi, A. (2001). Gendered transformations; beauty, love, and sexuality in Qajar Iran. *Iranian Studies*, (34), 89-102.
- Pakbaz, R. (2017). Iran painting, from past to now. Tehran: Zarrin and Simin.
- Panofsky, E. (2016). Meaning in visual arts (N. Akhavan Moghadam, trans.). Tehran: Cheshme publication. [in Persian]
- Pashapour, M., Mohammadzadeh, M. & Charkhi, R. (2014). Study of historical murals of Tabriz during Qajar Era. *Journal of Art Research*, 2 (7), 81-88.
- Safaee, A. & Mirza Abolghasemi, M. (2019). Decorations in the architecture of Shiraz's Dakhanchi house pond. *Journal of Ministry of Science*, (17), 87-94.
- Safarzadeh, N., Moosavi, Fatemi, N. & Ahmadi, B. (2010). Comparative comparison of the image of angels in Renaissance book layout with Qajar lithographs. *Negareh*, (36), 92-105.
- Salour, M., Ghahraman Mirza Salour, A. & Afshar, I. (1995). *Ain al-Sultaneh Diaries newspaper*. Tehran: Asatir Publications.
- Shokoochian, Gh. & Shirazi, A. A. (2010). Study and classification of subject matters of murals in Bagh-e-Eram of Shiraz during Qajar Era. *Negareh*, (16), 27-42.
- Sokhan Pardaz, K. & Marasi, M. (2009). The reflection of Iranian ancient art in the architectural decorations of Amir Kabir's house and Imam Jome's house. *Negareh*, 4 (13), 53-68.
- Sojoodi, F. & Ghazi Moradi, B. (2012). The effect of constitutional discourse on the image norms of the Qajar period. *Journal of Sociology of art and literature*, (1), 93-122.
- Taghipour, P. & Aghamiri, M. (2015). Manifestation of feminism theories in women's body painting in the palace of Fath-Ali Shah. *International Conference on Research in Sciences and Technology*, Tehran, Iran.
- Tavazo, N. & Noroozi, M. (2018). Study of painting in Kushks of Zabd and Qajar periods in Shiraz. *Second National Conference on Contemporary Iranian Architecture and Urban Planning*, Shirvan.

#### 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

Shahraki Moghadam, G. & Soheili, J. (2023). Iconographic themes in the wall Paintings of Nasir al-Mulk House in Shiraz. *Journal of Art & Civilization of the Orient*, 11(40), 5-18.

DOI: 10.22034/JACO.2023.377168.1284

URL: [https://www.jaco-sj.com/article\\_170966.html?lang=en](https://www.jaco-sj.com/article_170966.html?lang=en)

