

Original Research Article**A Comparative Study of the Verbal Signs in the Front of Mihrabs
on the Rugs of Safavid and Qajar Periods**Sahel Erfanmanesh^{1*}, Hamed Amani², Abolghasem Nemat Shahrebabaki³

1. Assistant Professor, Faculty of Art and Architecture, University of Sistan and bluchestan, Zahedan, Iran.
2. Assistant Professor, Faculty of Art and Architecture, University of Kurdistan, Sanandaj, Iran.
3. Lecturer, Faculty of Art and Architecture, Department of Carpet, University of Sistan and Baluchestan, Zahedan, Iran.

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Abstract

A systematic reading of works of art helps to identify meaning and identity in visual works. This is because the visual works of art including Mihrabi rugs reflect the intellectual and cultural changes of the time through their historical and social backgrounds. The front of Mihrab is one of the most important points in these rugs. Studies show that the patterns of the Qandil (lamp) and the Katybeh (inscription) under the front of the Mihrab in the Safavid Mihrabi rugs have a special place in terms of visual value. Moreover, they indicate the verse of Noor (light). As they are signs of the Noor verse, they also refer to an Islamic text. However, gradually, after the Safavid era, in the Qajar period, the signs were replaced by specific names and non-Islamic verbal signs in most rugs. Therefore, this study seeks to answer and explain this change from Islamic to non-Islamic texts and pay attention to anthropocentrism in the Qajar period. This study aims to shed light on existing differences related to verbal signs in the rugs using a comparative analysis. To this end, this study attempted to match the themes in the verbal texts written under the frontal part of the Mihrabs in the Qajar and Safavid periods. Based on the comparison among the rugs, it was concluded that the artists were more inclined towards Islamic and Shiite principles according to the common beliefs in the Safavid period. However, in the Qajar period, the tendency towards archaism, the influence of the West, and anthropocentrism led to the creation of rugs with different themes and symbols.

Keywords: *Mihrabi Rug, Qajar era, Safavid era, Mihrab, Verbal signs.*

Introduction

The 35th verse of the sura of Noor¹ is one of the verses that has been constantly interpreted, especially with the coded expression of the words Mishkat, Mesbah, Zajajah, Shajareh, which form the basis of this expression. Islamic commentators, sages, and mystics have offered different interpretations of this noble verse. Al-Ghazali was one of the mystics

who divides light into five parts (the sensitive soul, the imaginary soul, the intellectual soul, the mental soul, the holy spirit of the prophet) in “Meshkah Al-Anwar” (Ghazali, 1985, 22). According to Grabar² (1992, 154), Al-Ghazali’s mystical interpretation of the verse of Noor has been one of the reasons for using the Qandil in many works afterward. Therefore, due to the structure of the Mihrabi rug, the verse of Noor is manifested on it on a large scale.

* sahel Erfanmanesh61@gmail.com, +989131092854

In the Mihrabi rugs of the Safavid period, under the front of the Mihrab, inscriptions such as “Allah is the Greatest” and “Glory be to the Most high and Praised” and sometimes “Allah Muhammad and Ali” are woven. However, in most of the Mihrabi rugs in the Qajar period, the verbal signs placed there are emptied of Islamic thought. In addition, in most rugs, the names of historic kings, legends, national heroes, and commissioners are seen. Therefore, as mentioned, the verbal sign in most Safavid rugs refers to Islam, and in the Qajar period refers to a non-Islamic text. As the purpose of this research is to know the hidden thoughts and beliefs in the Mihrabi rugs of the Safavid and Qajar periods, the question is how can the difference between the verbal text in the rugs of these two periods be explained? Why the verbal sign inside the Mihrab is a representation of the verse of Noor in the Safavid period, and is distanced from this thought in the period after? Therefore, to obtain the appropriate answer, it is better to compare the verbal text inside the Mihrab in some rugs from the Safavid period with examples from the Qajar period. Because man’s scientific knowledge is always associated with comparative studies. Through this comparison and discovery of differences and similarities, along with the thought of that period, one can understand the difference of verbal signs in the two periods of Safavid and Qajar, and also the hidden thought in them.

Literature review

Although many significant works have been written about the Mihrabi rugs of the Safavid and Qajar periods, few works have compared the verbal text within the Mirab in the Qajar and Safavid periods. Among the researches that have been done on these carpets, the following can be mentioned: Abdullah Mirzaei, Morteza Shajari, and Mohammad Taghi Pirbabaei (2014), in the article “The Manifestation of Asma Al-Hosna³ in the Mihrabi Rugs of the Safavid Era, deal with various manifestations

of God in the Mihrabi rugs. Parviz Eskandpour Khorami, Mohsen Ghaseminejad Raeini, and Seyed Badroldin Ahmadi (2010), in the article “The Secret of Patterns in the Mihrabi Carpets and Prayer Rugs of the Islamic Period in Iran”, examined the role and function of prayer carpets and rugs, and the two motifs of Qandil and the cypress, and their place in the carpet. The result of this research is that the Mihrabi rugs are considered to be a symbol of paradise. Mahnaz Shayestehfar (2005) describes 7 Mihrabi carpets of the Safavid period, in the article “Application of Religious Concepts in the Calligraphy of Safavid Carpets” And the result of the analysis of these rugs is that the rugs, in addition to the use of prayer, express Shiite ideas that are common in the Safavid period. Yaghoub Azhand, Bahman Namvar Motlagh, and Sahel Erfanmanesh (2020), in an article entitled “Study of Meaning in the Mihrabi Rug in the Metropolitan Museum with an Iconography Approach”, have studied the meaning of the rug with an iconic approach. In this research, the verbal sign under the front of the Mihrab in the Mihrabi rugs is emphasized, and the authors consider the inversion of the text under the Mihrab as Sama (state of trance), Fana (state of complete annihilation), and Baqa-al-Allah (survival of God) in the discourse of Tariqa (the path). Sahel Erfanmanesh, Yaghoub Azhand, and Bahman Namvar Motlagh, in the article “Analysis of the Meaning of the Mihrabi rug of Suleiman Nabi with the Method of Iconology” (2021), have studied the meaning of that certain rug with an iconological approach. Also in this research, the emphasis is on the verbal sign in the first margin, i.e. the name of Suleiman the Prophet. Mohammad Amin Hajizadeh, Alireza Khajeh Ahmad Attari, and Maryam Aziminejad, (2016), in the article “Comparative Study of Design and Pattern in Mihrabi Rugs of Safavid and Qajar Periods”, compared the form structure of the Mihrabs in two periods. They observed the general difference in the

rugs of these two periods in the form of Mihrabs and complimentary decorations. Hossein Kamandloo, (2009) in his article “A Look at the Altar Carpets of Astan Quds Razavi Carpet Museum and the Carpet of Haft Shahr Eshgh”, examines the carpet of Haft Shahr and other Mihrabi carpets and compares the carpets of Safavid and Qajar periods. He has concluded from the comparison of rugs from these two periods that their differences can be seen in the dimensions of carpets, the use of Persian calligraphy and poetry instead of Arabic verses and hadiths, and the use of important religious and mythical and national figures under the arch. Anis Tanhaei and Rezvan Khazaei (2009), in the article “Reflection of Prayer concepts in Safavid and Qajar Mhrabi Rugs”, reviewed various types of Mihrabi rugs including inscribed, Qandili, Tree-like, and Vase-like. The conclusion obtained from this article is that all the elements used in the rug are considered in line with prayer and worship. The authors of this study believe that Suleiman’s name on the threshold refers to the concept of *Shahriari* (Kingdom) in its Iranian-Islamic sense. Therefore, the difference between the verbal texts under the frontal parts of the Mihrabs in the Qajar and Safavid periods has not been covered in any of the mentioned researches. Also, in most researches, the role of thought and discourse of the two periods in carpets has been neglected.

Methodology

The research method is comparative, descriptive, and analytical. The research is time-based and longitudinal. This research mainly focuses on differences than similarities because the themes and subjects of the verbal signs under the frontal parts of Mihrab require separate attention in each rug. By expressing the differences, it is possible to show the independent and different ideas in this representation in the rugs. Therefore, from the rugs with Mihrab designs, 20 rugs from the Safavid period and 15 from the Qajar period were selected

as the sample. The selected rugs were featured with the inscriptions under the Mihrab. To organize the reading of rugs, they were divided based on different themes and subjects of the inscription inside the Mihrab parts. The attempt was made to select two samples from each theme and subject. From each group, a rug with such features was included. A total of seven rugs from the Safavid period and seven from the Qajar period were analyzed using the qualitative method.

Theoretical foundation

• Comparative Study

A comparative study has been one of the first study methods in the past. Such studies do not have a specific time, they have always been present and still are, as cognition has always been associated with adaptation. The most important feature of comparative arts studies is having two or more figures or bodies that are examined in the research. The most important feature of comparative arts studies is having two or more corpora that are examined in the research. Various classifications are considered for comparative studies. One of these classifications is the classification based on the main structures. It can be categorized into longitudinal or historical sequences, transversal or cross-historical, thematic, form, and pattern, and interdisciplinary (Zekrgoo, 2002, 165-171). In longitudinal comparison or historical sequence, a subject is selected in a specific culture and geographical area, and its evolution is studied in the context of history. In thematic research, the researcher deals with a single subject in one or more cultural contexts (*ibid.*, 165-68).

• Mihrabi rugs

The word Mihrab in the Mihrabi rug is the Arabic form of the Persian word “Mehrabeh”, in which the suffix of “-abeh” after the word “Mehr”, in Iranian languages, means house, building, and sometimes a temple (Younesi, 1964, 433). Hosouri (2010, 55) believes that this design in Iranian














rugs is reminiscent of the art and ritual of Mehr worshippers and Islamic mosques have accepted the influence of Mehr temples, as they also have a Mihrab (altar). Also, according to Bolkhari (2019, 94), the Mihrab is basically the Mehrabeh of the Mehr religion, which was fought against hostilely during Zoroastrianism and Christianity, to the extent that its traces disappeared from the earth. But the Mehrabehs remained in the heart of the caves and underground, and today traces of them can be seen in some images and even rituals. In addition, Mihrab is rooted in the word “Harb”, Arabically rhymed as “Mif-Aal”, and means tools; And in Persian, its meaning is similar and also refers to tools (Shad, 1956, V. 6, 3869). Mihrab rhymes with “Mif-Aal”, from the root of “Harb”, meaning tools, i.e. weapon, and not a place, and after Islam, due to its use in mosques, it has also been referred to as a place. From Ragheb Esfahani’s point of view, the Mihrab is the place of war and jihad, and the Mihrab of the mosque is also considered the place of war with the devil, the self, and ego of the soul (Bolkhari, 2005, 35). In terms of application, Mihrab rugs are divided into two types of prayer rugs and decorative ones. The prayer Mihrabi rug is in 120×180 and 90×150 dimensions, which is used for prayer (Hajizadeh, Khaje-Ahmad Attari & Aziminejad, 2016, 53). Decorative Mihrabi rugs represented the direction of the qibla and were hung on the wall. In this group, the use of images such as humans, animals, and birds was not prohibited due to the lack of religious use (ibid., 54).

- Mihrabi rugs in the Safavid period

According to existing researches, the first fuzzy rugs with the Mihrab pattern date back to the 16th century. It seems that such carpets have been originated from Iran and over time have spread to other countries through cultural and political exchanges (Pope, 2008, 2679). Most rugs of this period can be categorized in the group of Salting carpets⁴. One of the prominent features of these rugs is the use of

inscriptions and calligraphy on the edges of the rug. Also, being brocaded and the use of silk in texture is another feature of theirs (Day, 1996, 138). Also, the verses of the Qur’an were usually woven in Nasta’liq, Kufi, and Naskh scripts in the margins and background (Hassan, 2009, 146), which was in line with the use of worship and common discourse at that time. In most Mihrabi rugs of the Safavid period, under the frontal part of the Mihrab, a verbal sign refers to an Islamic text. This text in most of the rugs of this period are “Allah-o Akbar/ Allah-o Akbar Kabira”, Sijda (prostration) dhikr, and the name of His Majesty Allah, Muhammad, and Ali, or there is a text that refers to Shiism. In these rugs, there is rarely a mention of the name of the designer and the customer (Table 1). However, in some rugs woven at the end of this period, a trace of the name of the customer or designer can be seen (Tables 1, Samples 6 & 7). These rugs are woven one in 1700, and another, according to research¹⁰, in about 1706. Therefore, they can be considered woven in the late Safavid period. Sample 6 in Table 1 is kept in Astan Quds Razavi Museum and in the first margin, the name of the designer or customer is woven in it as *Kamtarin* (The least). This shows that he has seen himself small in the divine presence of God. However, the name of Mohammad Amin Kermani can refer to the city of Kerman, which is also the place that the carpet was weaved in. In another rug that was woven about 10 years after this rug, the verbal text that can be seen on the frontal part of the Mihrab, mentions “1716” (Table 1, Sample 7) which indicates a materialistic date. Therefore, according to the above, the placement of this date in the rental part of the Mihrab can indicate distancing from the deep mystical foundations, because it tells the materialistic time and place. According to the existing samples, it seems that in the late Safavid period, the deep approach to mysticism and mystical foundations has diminished and it is almost from the late Safavid period that the name of the customer or

Table 1. Mihrabi rugs in Safavid period. Source: Authors.

No.	Safavid Mihrabi rug	Verbal text on the front of the Mihrab	Image of the verbal text on the front of the Mihrab	Description
1		Allahu Akbar ⁵		Prayer rug, the place of weaving in the central region of Iran, 16th century, residing in the Topkapi Palace Museum, 116 × 170 cm (Frances, 1999, 96)
2		Allahu Akbar		Prayer rug, enriched with Golabetoon ⁶ , (northwest of Iran, Kashan?), 1560-1580, residing in The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 161 × 107 cm (Frances, 1999, 81; Metmuseum.org)
3		Allah, Mohammad, Ali		Prayer rug, the place of weaving in the central region of Iran, 16th century, residing in the Topkapi Palace Museum, 119 × 116 cm (Frances, 1999, 97; Atlihan, 2011, 37)
4		Allah, Mohammad, Ali		Prayer rug with Mihrab design, woven in Isfahan or Kashan, 99 × 159 cm, 16th century AD, residing in the Carpet Museum of Iran (Frances, 1999, 80)
5		Subhaana rabbiyal a'ala wa Bi Hamdi hi ⁷		Prayer rug, the place of weaving in the central region of Iran, 16th century AD, residing in the Topkapi Palace Museum, 170 × 147 cm (Atlihan, 2011, 37)
6		Subhaana rabbiyal a'ala wa Bi Hamdi hi		Silk Mehrabi Baghi prayer carpet, Kerman, early 11th century AH, 140 × 111 cm, weaver: Mohammad Amin Kermani, residing in the Astan Quds Razavi Museum (Burkel & Burkel, 2010, 255)
7		Nisar An ⁸ Fi Aam Senah51128		Silk rug, 163 × 213 cm, residing in the Alameddin Sheikh Suleiman Gallery (Sabahi, 2014, 298)

designer can be seen in this type of Mihrabi rugs.

- Mihrabi rugs in the Qajar period

The Mihrabi rugs of the Qajar period, in comparison with the Safavid period, underwent many changes in themes and content. Kamandloo describes these

changes can be seen in changing the dimensions, enlarging the format of carpets, using Persian calligraphy and poetry instead of Arabic verses and hadiths, and using images of important religious, mythological, and national figures and people under

the Mihrabi-shaped pattern (Kamandloo, 2009, 38). But the main structure of the rugs -Several margins, Mihrab form, and the inscriptions around it-remained somewhat constant. Also, it seems that the verbal text on the frontal part of the Mihrab in the Qajar Mihrabi rugs, unlike the rugs of the Safavid period, is less composed of Islamic texts, and it consists more of phrases, such as “commanded by ...” and “ordered by ...”. In addition, in this period, the names of the mythical kings (Jamshid, Houshang, and Kaykhosrow) and historical kings (Muzaffar al-Din Shah) can be seen above the Qandil, and exactly where in the previous period was the place of the name of God. This shows the high position of the king in this period. In this period, in addition to placing the name of the king in the place of Qandil, the image of kings can also be seen in abundance in these rugs with the prevalence of pictorial rugs. Sometimes, next to the image of the king, his name is written in an inscription under the frontal part of the Mihrab. Also, in the late Qajar period, in addition to the images of kings, images of ordinary people and national heroes are seen in carpets, which sometimes, like the image of Mirza Kuchak Khan, also contain the name of the person next to the image inside the inscriptions (Table 2).

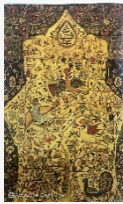













Influential discourse on the Mihrabi rugs of the Qajar and Safavid periods

What distinguishes each historical period from another is the thought structure of that period. Here, it is the logic and language that prevail in society in every era. Therefore, considering that this research examines the changes of the verbal text in the Qajar and Safavid periods, and due to the importance of the structure of thought and intellect in this change, first this discourse is addressed in the Safavid period, and then in the Qajar period. Among the prominent discourses in the Safavid period are mysticism and the defense of original Sufism. From the point of view of people like Noorullah Ghazi

Noorullah Shoushtari in this period, there is no gap between wisdom and mysticism, but one seeks to know the truth through the tool of reason, and the other through discovery and intuition. He introduces Shiism and Sufism as twins who are watered from one source (Jafarian, 2009, 6). Sheikh Baha’i also has tendencies towards mysticism, and in his book “Kashkool”, he has included a lot of mystical and Sufi content and the poems of many great mystics and Sufis (Tamimdari, 1993, 48).

Mir Mohammad Baqer Damad (Mirdamad) is one of the leading thinkers in the period of Shah Abbas I, whose “Al-Jadhawat wa al-mawaqit al-oloom” book, which is a complete outline of his philosophical views, is mixed with mystical aspects more than any of his other works (Manouchehri, 2001, 46-48). Mirdamad and Sadr al-Din Shirazi, known as Mulla Sadra, during this period, built a structure of thought and intellect, which was based on the teachings of Ibn Sina, Suhrawardi, and Ibn Arabi. They also perfected the special principles of Shiism, which are based on the Qur’an and the traditions and hadiths of the Prophet and the Imams (Jackson & Lockhart, 2010, 339). Mulla Sadra was a scholar who in this period created a harmony between the two ideas of wisdom and mysticism based on Twelver Shiism (Azhand, 2001, 136). His book “Asfar Arbaeh” is a mystical and philosophical masterpiece. According to Afrasiabpour (2006, 26), “it is the best evidence for the rise of mysticism and Sufism in the Safavid period”. In addition to mysticism and Sufism, by referring to the written texts in the Safavid period, it can be said that the Safavids created a new form of government under the influence of the three intellectual elements of Sufism, Shiism, and the monarchy (Seuri, 2001, 153-154). What sets the Safavids apart from previous periods is that they were “monolithic urban leaders who nurtured Sufi ideological foundations and teachings” (Sefatgol, 2002, 595). In this period, Sufism and Shiism in the Safavid era gradually become closer to each other

Table 2. Mihrabi rugs of the Qajar period. Source: Authors.

No.	Mihrabi rugs of the Qajar period	Verbal text on the frontal part of the Mihrab	Image of the verbal text on the frontal part of the Mihrab	Description
1		Commanded by Ismail Abu Musa Irani		Prayer rug with the tree of life, silk, and wool, 229×158 cm, 19th century, woven in 1956, private collection (Yasavoli Sani, 1995, 40)
2		Ordered by Qastelli		Kerman carpet, by order of Qastelli, 297×230 cm, late nineteenth century, Taher Sabahi collection (Sabahi, 2014, vol. 1, 469)
3		Sultan Ibn Muzaffaruddin Shah Qajar		Heriz rug, silk, 145×118 cm, 19th century, Adil Basim collection (Adil Basim collection)
4		Nader Shah Afshar		Early 20th century, Kashan, Nader Shah Afshar, wool-cotton (Sakhai, 2008, 98)
5		Houshang Shah		Houshang Shah, around Hamedan, Late 19th century, 113×81 cm, woolen (Tanavoli, 1990, 142)
6		Kaykhosrow, Siavash, Kavous, Kiqbadind, Ko Koz Farangis Afrasiabzad		Persian carpet, probably Sanandaj, 19th century, 175×127 cm (Harrow, 1987, 27)
7		Long live Kuchak Khan Jangali		Pictorial carpet of Mirza Kuchak Khan, Qajar period, 130×220 cm, probably Kashan, Tehran Carpet Museum (Authors)

than in previous eras (Jackson & Lockhart, 2010, 335-336). In the Safavid period, the religion, which was of secondary importance in previous periods, became a symbol of Iranian identity in the face of the challenges of the Sunni Ottoman Empire, the Sunni Turkic-speaking governments of Central Asia, and the Mongol Empire of India (*ibid.*, 534). Therefore, in the Safavid period, the idea of government based on a new language and logic was proposed and interpreted. This logic, which gradually arose from Sharia, was accompanied by an understanding of the Twelver Shiite religion and the beliefs of Sufism and Tariqa (Bahramnejad, 2019, 64).

The art of the Qajar period was largely dominated by the power of the king and the court and was a means of legitimizing the power of the dynasty to exert its power among the people and magnify its monarchy (Flor, Chelkovsky & Ekhtiar, 2002, 20). In addition, in this period, the tendency towards humanistic art has increased due to its connection with the West, along with individuality and anthropocentrism, which are among the main features of court iconography (Mohammadi Vakil, 2014, 269-272). The Qajar era is an intermediate period between the preservation of old values and new attractions (Cody, 2002, 9). Thus, extensive contact with the West and the influx of cultural manifestations, the emergence of “photography” and the “lithography industry” paved the way for major changes in various arts. Towards the end of this period, the new ideology of antiquity became popular. This ideology pursued certain goals and objectives, the most important of which can be considered to diminish and eliminate the current culture and religion of society as a factor of backwardness of society and the replacement of a new culture (Bigdelou, 2001, 20).

In the Qajar period, which itself is divided into several separate periods, a kind of discourse of constitutionalism, antiquity, and Iranian identity is formed. In this period, mythical kings and kings mentioned in Shahnameh can be seen in

many Mihrabi rugs. Because Shahnameh is a metaphorical example of the lost greatness of Iran, which is manifested in successive periods. In this period, the emphasis is on the Persian component by eliminating the Islamic components. As it was said, in the early Qajar period until the constitutional period, it is the king who is the main axis in the carpets, and the rest of the issues are also related to the king. However, during the constitutional period, with the hegemony of this discourse, in addition to the fact that the Shah’s body is placed in the center in rugs, in some works, the masses of people are gradually placed in the center and images of ordinary people and national heroes are seen on the rugs. According to some scholars, photography eliminated the distinction between the king and the peasants that used to be created by ancient power (Keshavarz Afshar, 2013, 238-240).

A comparative study of verbal signs according to the common discourse in each period

As mentioned in the previous discussions, in the Safavid period, the discourse is based on the Shiite religion. Also, the way of thought in this period is not unaffected by Sufism, so it seems that these two are the main and influential factors in the art of this period. Therefore, in the Mihrabi rugs of the Safavid period, the worshiper is a seeker who can attain higher status. Mystical allegories in the form of higher status, human attainment of perfection, annihilation, and immortality of God, are shown with numerous margins, and to reach the point of transcendence, one has to pass through them. One of the most important points where the seeker finally ascends is the inscription under the frontal part. Therefore, in the Mihrabi rugs of the Safavid period, a text is placed in this place to recount this important point. The texts in these rugs can be classified into three groups, all of which are Islamic texts. The first group represents one of the great names of God, the second group mentions the prostration dhikr, which

is the highest form of worship, and in the third group is a text that refers to Shiism (Table 3).

However, according to what has been said, there are some rugs in which the influence of humanistic thought can be seen. The Mihrabi rug that expressed the exaltation and annihilation and immortality of God, and did not have a place for expression of individuality or humanistic thoughts, was slowly changing in the late Safavid period. This change is evident in the Mihrabi-Baghi rugs, which can be seen more clearly according to the date of one rug and another document related to the second rug. In these rugs, by placing the weaver's name in the first margin, the change and presence of the subject are seen outside the Mihrab. However, in the other rug, in addition to the change in the verbal text, which is not Qur'an verses any more, the time has also entered the Mihrabi rug, and the rug is distancing from the way of mystical thought. This process continues until the Qajar period, and gradually this companionship is broken in the later period, and as the prevailing thinking in that period changes, the ruling thought of the Mihrabi rug also changes.

During the Qajar period, under the influence of the West, antiquity, anthropocentrism, and ..., rugs were created that no longer saw transcendence in the annihilation and immortality of God. In most of these rugs, in comparison with the rugs of the Safavid period, the great name of God does not appear under the front part, but according to the privileges of this place, it now belongs to a special person. Therefore, it is here that the customer is paid attention to, to the extent that his name is placed

under the front part of the Mihrab. Also, due to the tendency to antiquity, the names of ancient kings and sometimes even the name of the current king himself are placed inside the Qandil (lamp), where is a representation of the verse of light, and introduce him as the manifestation of transcendence. Finally, it can be said that this position is reserved for national heroes after the constitutional movement and revolution. Because they are also the manifestation of excellence according to the conditions of their society. According to what has been said, the verbal signs under the frontal part of the Mihrab in the Mihrabi rugs of the Qajar period can be placed in four groups. An indication that refers to A: The name of the client or designer; B: Mythical kings; C: Historical kings; D: heroes or famous people in the constitutional movement (Table 4).

Conclusion

The Safavid and Qajar periods are among the historical periods in which carpet weaving is widely observed, so the study of these arts can express the structure of thought of that period. In the Safavid period, which was based on a religious trend and thought and the change of religion is observed in the whole society, the kinds of arts were needed that express the thoughts of this period. Therefore, since in the Safavid period, the Shiite religion was chosen as the official religion, what was used in worship in this period, it seems, could better express the spirit of its time. Amongst all, the Mihrabi rugs have a special place because, in addition to the aesthetic use, they also had a religious use. Therefore, in the

Table 3. Verbal text on the frontal part of the Mihrab in the Safavid rugs. Source: Authors.

Verbal text reference	Inscriptions under the front parts of the Mihrabs	Inscriptions under the front parts of the Mihrabs
The great name of God	Allahu Akbar Kabria	Allahu Akbar
Refers to Shiism	Ya Allah, Muhammad, Ali	Allah, Muhammad, Ali
The prostration dhikr	Subhaana rabbiyal a'ala va Bi Hamdi hi	Subhaana rabbiyal a'ala va Bi Hamdi hi

Table 4. Verbal signs on the frontal part of the Mihrab in the Qajar Mihrabi rugs. Source: Authors.

Verbal text reference	Inscription under the frontal part of the Mihrab	Inscription under the front of the Mihrab
Client/ Customer	Ordered by Ismail Abu Musa Irani	Ordered by Qastelli
Mythical kings	Kaykhosrow, Siavash, Kavous, Kiqbadind, Ko Koz Farangis Afrasiabzad	Houshang Shah
Historical kings	Sultan Ibn Muzaffaruddin Shah Qajar	Nader Shah Afshar
National heroes	Long live Kuchak Khan Jangali	

written text, there is a reference to Islam. However, in the Qajar period, this space changed and more attention was paid to the world of sensations. Because in the Qajar period with the formation of new areas in thought and intellect, the Qajar society witnessed many changes. Therefore, fundamental changes occur in the text of the arts. The prayer uses of the Mihrabi rugs have decreased, and many rugs in this period distance themselves from the discourse of the Mihrab in the place of worship. The text of most Mihrabi rugs, which until now had been used to instill religious concepts and were devoid of human and animal motifs, became grounds for the emergence and manifestation of the subject, aristocracy, and images of historical and mythical kings. The role and importance of kings, such as Kaykhosrow (mythical king) and Muzaffar al-Din Shah (king of the Qajar period), become so great that they are placed on top of a Qandil (chandelier) hanging from the Mihrab - or in the same place of the chandelier or lamp. These cases indicate the replacement of designs with different meanings and themes instead of previous traditional designs. As mentioned, in the Mihrabi rug of the Qajar period, man and subject are of special importance. According to the existing samples, where the name of God was placed and the transcendence was in reaching him and perishing in him, became the place where the human name is written. The importance of the subject and anthropocentrism of the Qajar period is in contrast to the mysticism and mystical thought of

the Safavid period, which is best expressed in the Mihrabi rugs.

Endnote

1. "Allahu nooru alssamawati waalardi mathalu noorih kamishkatin feeha misbahun almisbahu fee zujajatin alzzujajatu kaannaha kawkabun durriyyun yooqadu min shajaratin mubarakatin zaytoonatin la sharqiyyatin wala gharbiyyatin" (Qur'an, Soorh-ye Noor, verse 35). God is the light of the heavens and the earth. God's light is like a chamber in which there is a lamp, and a lamp in a glass, a glass as if it were bright stars, and that lamp is lit with pure olive oil taken from the blessed olive tree (Holy Land), neither Eastern nor Western olive. As a result, it is so smooth and flammable that it is about to burn on its own, even if the fire does not reach it, and it is clear that such a lamp is twice as bright and is a light above light, God guides whoever He wants to His light, and God makes these parables for people who know God is all-knowing (Tabatabai, 1995, V. 15, 166).
2. Graber, Oleg
3. (The names of Allah)
4. Salting carpets were named after George Salting (1835-1909) who donated one of them to the Victoria Albert Museum of London (Island, 2000, 66). Salting carpets, at least those that are probably of Safavid nature, have a silky structure and in most of them, gold-wired yarns have been used (Yarshater, 1997, 80).
5. (Allah is the greatest)
6. (Braided gold)
7. (Glory and praise be to Allah, My Lord, the Most High)
8. (Unclear writing)
9. (In general year 1716)
10. According to the documents of the Astan Quds in the newspaper Jam' va Kharj, the owner of Jameh Sarkar Feyz Astan in 1706, in the seventh page of the document refers to the amount of money that Baba Mohammad Maragheh dedicates to the shrine. About 120 Safavid dinars, a rug and a copper candlestick are bought; The rug costs 800 dinars and the candlestick costs 220 dinars. The description of the rug reads as follows: "Mihrabi Jai-namaz (prayer rug) of the pond and the green garden on the edge of the red and blue entrances." Therefore, due to the very close similarity of this document with the carpet, it is likely that the carpet is almost woven in between (1704-1706). Mona Soltani's interview with Touraj Jouleh in 2020, entitled "The place of historical documents in carpet research based on two masterpieces of the Safavid era."

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