

The Relationship between Qajar Architecture and Art and Iranian Culture and the Effects of West and East on them

Javad Eiraji ¹, Ayub Nalbandy Boukani ² and Marjan Sabounchi ³

¹ Young Researchers Club, Tabriz Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tabriz, Iran

² Member of Architecture Scientific Association, Faculty of Architecture, Boukan Branch, Islamic Azad University, Boukan, Iran

³ Faculty of Architecture, Art University, Tehran, Iran

Abstract. This paper will concentrate on the relationship between Iranian architecture and art and the culture of this country and also the thoughts changes during the Qajar era (1781-1925), one of the latest dynasties of Iran which has a lot of effects on its culture, art and architecture after Islam causes the basic cultural changes in this country after ancient empires. The way of west and east effects on Iranian architecture, art and culture will be concentrated in this paper too and also it will be clear what a big cultural revolution happened in Iran to have their own traditional life and the new modern world beside each other during this era.

Keywords: Qajar era, architecture and art, Iran, culture

1. Introduction

After Islam came to Iran, the believes, the thoughts, the way of speech and even clothing and all the things which were related to culture changed basically and most of people were going to be more religious and that was the religion that created the new style of architecture and art in Iran and that caused some references use "Islamic Architecture and Art of Iran" instead of "Iranian Architecture and Art" and this means a huge change between Islamic period and empires periods before Islam. Qajar was a dynasty that even it came after Islam but as west and Europe had a lot of changes during this era and as these changes seemed so interesting to Qajar kings and Iranian business men of this era who were visiting Europe during those times, so the European culture, architecture and art had a lot of effects on Iran. In this paper we will focus on these effects on Iranian culture and its relationship with the architecture and art of this era.

2. Qajar Dynasty

The first king of Qajar or Aryan dynasty Agha Mohammad Khan started his kingdom in 1781 in Tehran and after 144 years the young and weak king Ahmad Shah gave the kingdom to Pahlavi dynasty in 1925. During Qajar era the world wars happens and Iran, because of weak management of kings in this era lost many parts of the country because of some treaties with Russia and England. Even though Qajar era was one of the worst periods of time for Iranian in political aspects, but in this time Iran had a cultural change and maybe this change in culture, architecture and art and the new world which they were coming in, made them forgetful about the country itself.

Kings of the Qajar dynasty ruled Iran for many years. Many Qajar kings were totally incompetent and unworthy. Even though the country was suffering from war and the Iranian people suffered from poverty, the Qajar kings were totally oblivious to the suffering of the Iranian people, the hardships they went through, and the social ills which plagued Iranian society throughout the Qajar years. The Qajar kings were vainglorious and fond of luxuries and the finer things in life – they spent enormous sums of money on

themselves, on the people around them, on building sumptuous palaces and mansions, totally ignoring the hardships that ordinary people had to endure. In order to show off, and to display their wealth, The Qajar kings ordered the construction of many ostentatious palaces in and around the capital city, Tehran, as well as other Iranian cities [8].

3. Iranian Culture During Qajar Era

Even though during Qajar period west, Europe and even some Eastern countries like China and Japan had some effects on Iranian culture, architecture and art and Iranian were going to be more interested in modern world but religious believes were the main idea and concepts for traditional designer, architects and artists for their designs in public places like mosques, bazaars and karvansaras. The main changes in culture, architecture and art were seen in their personal places like their own houses and even in these houses they wanted to have their own culture beside these new elements of west or east. In fact they wanted to have old and new beside together.

4. Architecture and Art in Qajar Era

The Qajar period marks a transition from traditional to modern architectural design in Iran. An allusion to a pre-Islamic, Iranian legacy with the incorporation of pre-Islam style was complemented with the rigorous lines of European neo-classical forms. This mixture of concepts, both referring to formative, classical periods culminated in an imperial style [1].

In fact in this era, because of Islamic believes of Iranian culture, the architects wanted to keep the old architectural elements in each building and also have the new west or east elements in the building according to the owners` interests [7].

4.1. Hashti and Tanabi, Two Different Architectural Elements and Two Opposite Cultural treatments

In the entrance of Qajar houses there were some special places called "Hashti" which were a place to have a pause at first and not coming directly to house. As it was possible that the women and girls inside the yards of the houses had no scarf because of that they didn`t want to let the guests to come directly to house. This architectural element is based completely on Iranian traditional culture [Fig. 1].



Fig. 1. Hashti, an Architectural Elements of Qajar Architecture for having a pause before coming in because of some cultural believes (Photo Taken by Author)

In the other hand, inside of Qajar houses we have another architectural element which is called "Tanabi", which is a place for the owner of the house and also for guests to have entertainment inside and also have dance and singing parties. Exactly the opposite meaning of Hashti is seen in this element. Not only the usage of this element but also the other artistic elements of inside show the new and modern aspects of these houses. Some paintings, mirror works and other elements show the difference between outside and inside of this architecture [Fig. 2].



Fig. 2. Tanabi, An Architectural Element of Qajar Architecture to have entertainment inside (Photo Taken by Author)

4.2. Paintings with Different Cultural Meanings

There are different arts inside of personal houses of Qajar era which show that the west and east cultures have huge effects on them but painting is the main art that you can see on walls and ceilings which exactly show the culture of eastern and western people and their stories and also the things that Iranian saw about them during their trips to these lands [Fig. 3].



Fig. 3. The Ceiling of a Qajar house with the Painting of Chinese People on it (Photo Taken by Author)

Also in some places you can find some paintings that the painters just wanted to show the cultural differences between Iranian and European culture and compare them [Fig. 4].



Fig. 4. Two Different Qajar Paintings Beside Each Other on the Ceiling of a Qajar House which Show the Eating, Clothing, Foods, Looks and Totally Cultural Differences and its Effect on Qajar Artists' Projects (Photos Taken by Author)

5. Conclusion :

Even though Qajar Dynasty was the weakest one in Iran history and had some bad effects on Iranian political aspects, but in this era Iran started to come to see and come to the modern world which was being

created in west and east. West and east had some cultural effects on Iranian Architecture and Art which some of them were positive and some others were negative, but anyway this cultural revolution in Qajar era helped Iran and Iranian to break their traditional shells and see the world as it was.

6. References

- [1] Bosworth, Clifford Edmund, *The New Islamic Dynasties*, Columbia University Press, 285-286 ; 1996.
- [2] Michell, George, *Architecture of the Islamic World: Its History and Social Meaning*. Thames and Hudson, 173 ; 1997
- [3] Diba, Layla S., with Maryam Ekhtiar. *Royal Persian Painting: The Qajar Epoch, 1785–1925*. Brooklyn, NY: Brooklyn Museum of Art with I.B. Tauris, 1998.
- [4] Raby, Julian. *Qajar Portraits : Figure Paintings from Nineteenth Century Persia*. Brooklyn, NY: I.B. Tauris, 1999.
- [5] Loukonine, Vladimir. *Lost Treasures of Persia: Persian Art in the Hermitage Museum*. Mage Publishers. 1996.
- [6] Ritter, Markus. *Moscheen und Madrasabauten in Iran 1785-1848: Architektur zwischen Rückgriff und Neuerung (Mosque and Madrasa Buildings in Iran 1785-1848: Architecture between re-adaptation and innovation)*. German, English summary. Brill Publishers: Leiden and Boston, 2005.
- [7] Uphan P.A. *Persian Architecture*, Tehran: Soroush Press; 1976.
- [8] Ghrishman R. *Iran, from the earliest time to the Islamic conquest*, New York: Penguin Books; 1987.
- [9] Bum Sazgan Consultor, *Tehran Strategic- structural Plan, The Architecture and Urban Planning Researches And Studies Center of Iran*; 2007.
- [10] Munasinghe M. *Sustainable Development In Practice*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge; 2009.