

Classification of Haft-Rang tilework of the Qajar Dynasty in the courtyards of the Holy Shrine of Imam Reza

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Abstract

The holy shrine of Imam Reza has become a valuable treasure in the Islamic world by having very beautiful tiles in different periods. The walls, entrances, and porches of the old and new courtyards located in the shrine complex are decorated with unique tiles from the Qajar era. Since so far, the motifs used in Qajar era tiling in the shrine have not been specifically addressed, so in this study, some collected samples of Qajar tiles in the shrine of Imam Reza with the aim of recognizing and categorizing the content of Haft-Rang (Cuerda Seca) tiling motifs in Atiq (old) and Azadi (new) courtyards have been studied. The questions are; First, what kind of designs are used in the decoration of the Haft-Rang tiles of this building? Second, what concepts do these motifs contain thematically? This article is a research achievement that has been explored in terms of nature and method, descriptive-analytical. The data amassment is based on library and field studies. To achieve the results and answer the questions, at the beginning, the characteristics of Qajar tiling are examined and then the selected designs on the tiles of the shrine are introduced. The results of this study show that the decorative motifs used in the tiles of the Qajar era in the shrine classified in herbal motifs (vase of flowers, Arabesque and Khatai), figural motifs (human, animals, birds, angels), landscape, inscriptions and finally geometric designs. In the meantime, the images of angels, the capture and tearing of man by lions, are images with a special discourse that, although limited, have higher meanings than a just visual image. Also, the high variety of designs in the shrine shows that the Qajar era tile painters used the features and capabilities of organic motifs with various designs and patterns for use in a sacred place to create a new identity in accordance with the evolutions in the Qajar world.

Keywords: Qajar Architectural Decorations, Persian Tile Working, Haft-Rang (Cuerda Seca), Imam Reza Holy Shrine.

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