

Abu al-Hasan Khan Ghaffari Kashani's Miniatures: Visual Documents for the Overt and Covert Aspects of Woven Products in the Zand Period

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Introduction

Abu al-Hasan Khan Ghaffari Kashani, known as Sani' al-Mulk, was an Iranian painter and historiographer in the Zand court. Ghaffari Kashani's visual works hold significance in multiple spheres. First, they bridge the gap in visual sources on woven products of the Zand period. Second, some of his works link the visual history of the Zand era with the visual arts of Kashan in the second half of the 12th century AH (17th century AD). Third, the combination of the written and the visual, rooted in Ghaffari Kashani's expertise in both historiography and painting and his reason for choosing historical themes, is one of the many characteristics that highlight the significance of studying his paintings. Given that Ghaffari Kashani's paintings are marked with *raqam* (signatures), studying his works can reveal an array of information on the original woven products of the Zand period. As a number of his works showcase the designs of the woven products in the Zand era, this study aims to explore the designs and motifs of woven products in the Zand period in Kashani's artworks. Accordingly, the designs and motifs of non-clothing textiles in Ghaffari Kashani's works were categorized and analyzed. The main research questions are: What are the designs and motifs of woven products in Ghaffari Kashani's miniatures? How can Ghaffari Kashani's works contribute to identifying the designs and motifs of Persian rugs in the Zand period?

Research Method

This theoretical basic research sought to explore the overt and covert layers of non-clothing textiles in Ghaffari Kashani's works in order to determine the characteristics of these woven products. In this descriptive-analytical study that a part of Zand art in its historical context was explored, the written and visual data were collected through library and documentary research. The observational field research was conducted

online and at the Malek National Museum and Library in Tehran. A total of eight works by Ghaffari Kashani were selected through purposeful sampling, based on the criterion of non-clothing textiles. Accordingly, the miniatures selected for analysis were *Karim Khan Zand with the Ottoman Ambassador Vehbi Effendi*, *Mirza Moez ad-Din, Abbas II of Persia and the Mughal Ambassador*, *Qazi Abd al-Mutallib, Karim Khan Zand with His Horse and Groom*, *Karim Khan Zand on Horseback*, *The Investiture of the Crown Prince Reza Qoli Mirza, by his Father, Nader Shah Afshar*, and *Portrait de Qazi Ahmad Ghaffari*.

Research Findings

Ghaffari Kashani's works have a crucial role in identifying the traditional woven products of the Zand period. Designs, motifs, sizes, applications, and colors are among the characteristics that can be studied. Woven products in his works are depicted as cultural media similar to other visual elements in the paintings. The analysis revealed the following designs and motifs on woven products, excluding clothing, in the Zand period in Ghaffari Kashani's works. There are two instances of *lachak and toranj* [medallion and corner] designs, befitting the theme of court. There are two instances of *zarbaft jol* [gold brocade cherry laurel] designs for the two high-level officials, namely Qazi Abd al-Mutallib and Karim Khan Zand. There is one instance of a *ghayeshesh* with arabesque design, appropriate for the historical context of Naqsh-e Jahan Square and Rashti-style crochet, and Hamedan rug design in *The Investiture of the Crown Prince Reza Qoli Mirza, by his Father, Nader Shah Afshar*. Finally, there is a *mehrab* design, fit for the mystical atmosphere, in *Portrait de Qazi Ahmad Ghaffari*.

Two instances of side carpets, a rug, two jols, a ghayeshesh, and a prayer rug were half visible in the selected works. The woven works in miniatures of *Mirza Moez al-Din* and *The Investiture of the Crown Prince Reza Qoli Mirza, by his Father, Nader Shah Afshar* may have been parts of the margins of rugs.

The color of the rug in *Abbas II of Persia and the Mughal Ambassador* is reminiscent of the colorful pattern of Polish rugs. The yellow color on the jols in the miniatures of *Qazi Abd al-Mutallib and Karim Khan Zand* represents gold brocades. Moreover, the color of the ghayeshesh in *Karim Khan Zand and his Groom* typifies the color fit for the historical context of Naqsh-e Jahan. The margins of the rug in *The Investiture of the Crown Prince Reza Qoli Mirza, by his Father, Nader Shah Afshar* indicate the colors of Hamedan's rugs. The prayer rug in *Portrait de Qazi Ahmad Ghaffari* has its natural color--i.e., its fabric is not dyed.

The themes and woven products seem interrelated. The themes were linked with the figures or the historical events illustrated in the miniatures. They demonstrate Ghaffari Kashani's both roles as a court secretary (*mustawfi*) and a painter. This also indicates a meaningful relationship between the designs of the rugs and the themes of the works.

The design styles of Kashan, Rasht (crochet), and Hamedan were observed in *Abbas II of Persia and the Mughal Ambassador*, *Karim Khan Zand with His Horse and Groom*, and *The Investiture of the Crown Prince Reza Qoli Mirza, by his Father, Nader Shah Afshar*. Overall, four of the selected works depict designs and motifs found on loom-made woven products: *Mirza Moez al-Din*, *Portrait de Qazi Ahmad*

Ghaffari, Abbas II of Persia and the Mughal Ambassador and *The Investiture of the Crown Prince Reza Qoli Mirza, by his Father, Nader Shah Afshar*. From a historical viewpoint, the subject matter of these miniatures was selected from the Safavid, the Afsharid, and the Zand periods.

Conclusion

Like other visual elements in Ghaffari Kashani's works, woven products function as media conveying historical concepts. In addition to the meaningful relationship of the woven products and the themes of the works, the relationship of the woven products with certain occupations in the Zand period was another finding in this study. This notion was evident in *Karim Khan Zand with His Horse and Groom* as the designed ghayeshe portrays the occupation of *ghayeshchbari* during Karim Khan Zand's rule. The woven products depicted in the works of Ghaffari Kashani varied in designs and motifs, sizes, applications, and colors. The results showed that although Ghaffari Kashani was more reputed as the court secretary (*mustawfi*), he attempted to incorporate history in his paintings. The historical figures and events, as the subject matters of his works, along with addition of written descriptions on his paintings, indicated the link between his official profession (historiography) and his side job (painting). To sum up, the analysis of Ghaffari Kashani's works revealed useful information about the designs, motifs, applications, sizes, and the colors of woven products and non-clothing textiles in the Zand period. Moreover, it shed light on the place of origin of the woven products during the Zand era: Kashan and Hamedan for loom-made products and Rasht for crochet. The Safavid, the Afsharid, and the Zand periods were the historical periods and Kashan, Isfahan, Shiraz, the environs of Kabul, and the route to the Mughan Plain were the geographical centers in the selected paintings.

Keywords: the Zand period, Abu'l Hasan Ghaffari Kashani, Kashan textiles, designs and motifs in non-clothing textiles.