Continuity of Decoration Sketches of Live Tree in Sassanid and Safavid Periods

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ABSTRACT

Plant sketches are originated in nature. Tree is the most important decoration in Iranian architect. The decoration sketches are used in ancient Iranian and they are continues to be sued until Safavid empire. In this article we are going to investigate the concept of life tree and its continuity in Sassanid architect until Safavid Era.

INTRODUCTION

Trees have been very respectful from ancient time in Iran. It is mentioned in Bahar [3] that ancient and primary people thought that the trees are like human has soul. Trees are compact and complex symbol and complete of the all world around which we are living in. As stated in Javani [5], the relevant noted can be considered relevant to this concept: tree, creation symbol, universe, death and life, paradise and ever life, birth, growth, evolution, virginity, originate, majority, stability, new born, ancestors and finally the connection between the universe components.

The life tree is one of the oldest human symbols which have much attention throughout history. It is a symbol of ever-live and freshness. With the entrance of the Islam in Iran, the Iranian civilization was divided in two eras but many of ancient symbols have not been eliminated and they continued with different definitions. In this study, the continuity and evolution of this symbol in Iran before Islam, Sassanid, and Iran after Islam, Safavid, is investigated.

Trees in Sassanid and Safavid Periods:

As discussed in Doboko [4], trees can appear in different shapes. Tree which is the symbol of the universe is the column and foundation of the universe and connect the earth to heaven and witness the jealousy and loneliness of fortune that earth and heaven had been close first. The secret of the universe which connect the earth to heaven, almost they can be found in any holy places. Towers with pyramid shapes with bells, church columns, Muslim mosque minaret and towers with pyramid shape.

Fig. 1: two mythical creatures and live tree between them

As stated in Yahangi [7], trees have special place in Persian language. For example, in Shahnameh, many of the heroes are considered similar to trees. In Oor stamps, the trees are like a very light over a walking stick and their branches with tooth shape similar to hand fan or big flags over a tree trunks, is the first real sketch of the “embryo tree”. Bagheri [2] reported that this sketch has been used in Mesopotamia until the end of Assyrian period.

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The first plant samples in Ancient Persia were found over clay, stamps and stones. Javani [5] reported that Elam world in fact was an Iranian world with several plant sketches which are the roots and source of tree (Figure 1). From 3000 BC till 1000 BC, Mah-darakht (Moon-Tree) had been respected in Iran and they were protected by holy creatures. As reported in Pope [6] In 2000 BC till 500 BC, Mah-Darakht is the cosmetic palm tree.

Aliad [1] mentioned that the cosmetic tree symbol can be found in Indian literature and art of India and Mesopotamia, and in Iran Achaemenes and Sassanid Empires, cypress trees were considered live trees and palm, fig, apple, vine and pomegranate trees were considered as paradise trees. Pope [6] stated that one of the best choices of these trees is depicted on Darrius palace walls in Susa which is merged with morning gloryflower.

**Fig. 2:** mythical trees in Sassanid period

The Sassanid period is a special period in world history and herited the ancient traditions and costumes. For example, Mani, Zoroastrian and Mehri religious ceremonies which trees were played an important role.

Pope [6] stated that the cosmetic tree of this picture is clear. Miss Pekerman has written that “in this period, the heaven symbols are evolved and transfer to different shapes. The cosmetic tree is transferred to acanthus leaves and it is combined. On these several splices of sun or moon or even more on moon crescent, it is added.

Many of Sassanid trees are depicted along one of the sun symbols such as morning glory flower (Figure 2 and 3). On the entrance door and over the columns of TaghBostan, these symbols and sketches appear.

**Fig. 3:** decoration of columns in Tagh-Bustan with mythical tree

Tree sketches are repeated at a circle in Sassanid seals, metalworking and cloth waving. Most of the animals among these circles or wheels would be placed in symmetric or in series are protected. Most of the time, the holy trees are grown from vessels and sketch to sky. The sample of this work can be seen in Mesopotamia art and they came to the Islamic art as a decoration.

In altars plasterwork, first the tree sketches are emphasized. In Egyptian mosque, they have been with the style of Sassanid. A tree or morning glory flower or a moon crescent are recognizable in the decoration of sultanah dome. The sketches of cosmetic tree were appeared in plasterwork, tile-work and stonecutting works. In Safavid stone plinth in Isfahan mosque, a vessel with cosmic tree in four main porches can be seen. Also, the tree sketches have been used for most of the decoration and filling of spores (Figure 4-a).
This sketch which is repeated many times in Sassanid style consists of a vessel which from inside a twisted tree would come out and are decorated with sun flowers (Figure 4-b). This sketch is repeated in the walls of Alighapu Palace. Sun birds are flying between its branches (Figure 4-c). This tree which is in Sassanid style is protected symmetric by paradise birds. This approach is repeated in decoration of Safavid palace, shah mosque, Shaikh Lotfollah Mosque and Vank church.

**Conclusion:**

Image of tree if used from a long time ago and it is a mirror which shows whole body and the deepest request of human. This image is extraction and mystery which is extended in unlimited branches and it is continued in religions, myths, arts and literature. Tree is one of the most plant decoration used in the Iranian architect from ancient time till Safavid period which is presented in several ways and continued. This tree is always green and it is a symbol of liveliness and face of paradise in Persian art.

**REFERENCES**