

## Wall Drawings of the Shrines of Pinchah Village in Guilan and Analysis of the Contents Comparative study of wall drawings of the shrines of Hazrat Ghasem (Peace Be upon Him) and Hazrat Aliakbar (Peace Be upon Him)

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### Abstract

The few existing shrines with wall drawings are being reined or have been ruined completely. This problem creates double necessity of protection of these works. The holy shrine of Pinchah Village at Astaneh Ashrafieh with the religious wall drawings is one of them. This question is propounded: Do the wall drawings of the mentioned shrine have the visual concepts of good and evil? From the research findings we can mention numerous visual similarities in recreation of good personalities, visual differences of good and evil contents and also creation of native wall drawings by the drawer.

The data were collected by field method and compiled by descriptive- analytic method.

### Keywords

Holy Shrines, Wall Drawings, Religious Drawings, Good and Evil, Pinchah.

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## Introduction

Drawing is human's first language fully adhered to its visual communication role. The primitive man found that he is very weak for attraction of the supports of the rebellious nature. In order to mix with unknown forces and affecting on and domination over them he turned to drawing on caves walls. He thought that with drawing, which generally enjoyed a narrative theme, he can enslave the powerful soul of these creatures and through this way eliminate his primary needs such as food, defending against enemies and tribal life requirements. The place of wall drawings among tribes was gradually changed and without lowering its importance immersed in different forms. In the first years after entrance of Islam to Iran with a view to prohibition of drawing people's faces the wall drawings were changed in such a way that human was replaced by plants in drawings. In spite of that before Centuries 10 and 11 A.H. the drawings were generally designed on the walls of palaces with the contents such as victories of kings and rulers. But after that and for different reasons such as prevalence of Shia, wall drawing with different contents found its way in people's lives and shrines to play its role gradually in retrieval of the historical and religious narratives in people's hearts and souls.

Existence of high relative humidity in the province of Guilan created a very bad condition for the historical monuments of the area. Therefore searching buildings with oldness of several hundred years has often no result. On the other hand the cultural deterrent factors such as writing mementos and ruining for making profit are the important factors for consecutive renewal of wall drawings. In this article first the history of Guilan and importance of the holy shrines for people and then explanation of one of the shrines of Astaneh Ashrafieh Area, which includes wall drawings are presented. Whereas information search method in the research was field method, unfortunately during writing the article and in the next visitation it was observed that in repairs and creation of general changes in the shrines, all the wall drawings were ruined.

## Literature review

Dr. Manouchehr Sotoudeh in his book, from Astara to Astarabad, conducted an expanded research about the historical monuments of Guilan and Mazandaran during the years 1970 to 1972 including a brief explanation of the mentioned shrine. Jalil Ziapour in an article in the name of "Guilan drawers" in 1995 in his book in the name of "Guilan" and Ahmad Mahmoudinejad in his book in the name of "wall drawings of Guilan Shrines" in 2009 described this shrine and all of its wall drawings. One of the other resources was the book of "drawings of holy shrines in Iran" written by Aliasghar Mirzaeimehr published by Academy of Arts in 2007. The writer in this book explained the wall drawings

of shrines of Iran and the drawers in a documented manner. One of the reasons that makes this research completely different with others is stress of the writers on analysis of the contents of the two wall drawings of Hazrat Ghasem (peace be upon him) in battlefield and farewell of Hazrat Aliakbar with his family at Pinchah Shrine at Astaneh that finally resulted in comparative study of the two wall drawing. In other words this research is the first scientific attempt in relation to this shrine performed with use of field studies.

## Entrance of Islam to the area

The residents of the northern area of Iran accepted Islam from the second half of Century 2 AH and after domination of Arabs over the area and supported Alevis against Abbasids. In the next centuries Alevid's political and religious movement found some disciples and gradually immigration of Sadat Alavi was accelerated in such a way that Deilamian with helps of Shiite thinking and also helps of the grandchildren of Ahle-Beit (Imam's family) such a Yahyebne Abdollah, Imam Hassan's grandson (PBUH) created local governments. These governments resisted against the governments of Saffarids and also Samanids in such a way that after sometimes, the Guil and Deilam commanders decided to achieve independent powers. These movements were the beginning of establishment of the government of Ziarids and Bouyuids and their extension to the other points of Iran. They know themselves as the predecessors of the ancient Iran's kings tried to reconcile Iranian kingship and Islamic Caliphate (Fakhte, 2007: 40). Among them Hassan- Ebne-Ali Atroush (entitled to Naser Kabir) more than others tried to make people accept Islam and after him the other Zeidi Imams were his substitutes.

After defeat of Iranians at Ghadesie four thousand of Deilam soldiers accepted Islam and joined Kufa Moslems. After that the individuals who were under torture and wanted by Caliph of Baghdad could be received in Guilan. In 250 AH with propaganda of the great motive, Hassan-Enbe- Zeid a lot of Zoroastrians in Deilam accepted Islam. In the year 300 AH Hassan Ebne Ali Naser Alhagh from Alevis resided in the southern coast of the Caspian Sea and a lot of people of Tabarestan and Deilam accepted Islam (Rabino, 1995: 26).

## The importance of Imamzadehs (imams' children and grandchildren) in Guilan

Shrine is a religious place, which is the tomb of an Imamzadeh, a reformer or a master. It is a holy place for the people converted as a shrine for public (Khakpour, 2014: 84). There are a lot of holy shrines in Guilan and the local people seek help from the holy shrines and know them as the reason of their tranquility against the problems and believe that with creation of the role of Imamzadehs and narration of their life stories on

the body of the shrines make it possible to resort to them for intercession in this world and the future world. Appearance of the shrines walls drawings is related to the beginning of Safavid Shia. It is evident that prohibition of drawing on the walls of mosque, which is one of the religious places, is one of the reasons of drawing on the walls of imamzadeh's shrines by people. Drawing of shrines walls is more frequent in the east of Guilan as compared with the west.

### **Contents of the wall drawings of Guilan holy shrines**

The figurative subjects drawn on the walls of the holy shrines of Guilan are not related to the buried persons and the people's narrations about him, but are generally related to the historical events of early Islam such as ascension of the Holy prophet (peace be upon him), Ghadir ceremonies and appointment of Imam Ali (PBUH) by the Holy Prophet, events of the year 61 A.H in Karbala or the events related to the next years such as the events related Mokhtar and his vendetta. It is evident that with a view to importance of symbolism in Shia selection of subject matters from this type with the area of consecration in Shiite areas is very common.

#### **• Execution method**

With a view to the humid climate of Guilan and the method of these drawings, they are executed on a thin layer of chalk and colored powders mixed with egg (Tampira). Their oldness is rarely more than two hundred years. (Kouban, 2009: 10).

Reza Souratgar Naghash was one of the famous painters of Lahijan. His son explains the method of preparation of base as follows: "In all drawings, the work ground was totally chalked and the drawers had role in the ground plaster work. Even they prepared chalk. They cooked chalk stone in furnace and pounded with Padang (1). After sieving the chalk was ready for work" (Mahmoudinejad, 2009: 32). In relation to paint making method he explains: "the activities were as follows respectively that some individuals from villages or someone who had vows referred to us and ordered drawing. We first plastered the shrine wall to prepare a smooth and ready surface, and then prepared the purchased designs. For sufficient availability and transfer on the wall, which is approximately equal to the wall area, first we stained the paper with kerosene to make it semitransparent like parchment paper or tracing paper. Then we transferred the design on the paper and created tiny holes with needle on the design and then transferred the design on the wall with coal powder. At that time we used pencil and paint. In the last stage we determined around the images with black lines" (Mahmoudinejad, 2009: 34). From their statement we can conclude that the drawers did not design the pictures and purchased it from itinerant designers and executed designs proportionate

to vows and the walls surfaces. In continuation he mentioned brushes with horse mane and tail hair, cat hair and goose feathers as work tools.

#### **• Proportions**

The method of decoration of the wall drawings contents in the holy shrines of Guilan is central in such a way that with moving eyes from the center toward the margins, the importance of individuals and designs is decreased. The propounded individuals, which are usually the holy Imams or their families, were drawn with greater dimensions usually at the center and the individuals drawn in margins are smaller. The importance is shown with difference in dimensions and also painting in such a way that they used lower quality and quantity for horses and war tools of the less important individuals.

#### **• Color**

The most specification of presentation of these drawings is color. The main individuals of the story, on which the drawing is based (positive personalities), are shown with holy and divine colors in peoples belief, such as green and blue, and with more details in their faces, bodies and cloths and the enemies (the negative personalities) are generally drawn with hot colors (Mirzaeimehr, 2007: 92). In the Iranian culture, blue is the symbol of holiness and red is the symbol of violence and blood. Therefore this color spectrum is used for the details of the enemies. In all parts the drawing paints are shining and color clarity is not decreased for the marginal characters. Brushing of the colored surfaces is one of the specifications of this type of drawing.

### **Shrine location**

Agha Seyed Mohammad shrine is located in the distance of five kilometers from Astaneh Ashrafieh in the southern side and the family tree exiting in the shrine introduces him as one of the sons of Imam Jafar Sadegh (peace be upon him) and arises from Shia religion. According to the picture presented by Manouchehr Sotoudeh, the building roof was made from earthenware with four mounds (2) and there is a veranda in the western side with the entrance door in it (Sotoudeh, 1972: 188). The entrance doors have simple inscriptions and some fine carvings. The internal and external walls of the shrine include drawings of the different religious meetings (Ziapour, 2001: 561). On the sides of the shrine western wall Karbala Desert, Imam Hossein (peace be upon him) with Aliasghar in his arms in the battlefield, Zafarjani behind him, Arab Darwish and mail carrier and also Abolfazl-Al-Abbas (peace be upon him) with Mared Ebne Sedif on the northern wall, Aliakbar (peace be upon him), Ommeleili, Aliasghar's cradle and Robab, Imam



Zeinolabedin (peace be upon him), Hazrat Ghasem (peace be upon him) with Arzagh Shami and his sons, and on the southern wall of the shrine, the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) in his ascension and the dead bodies of Karbala Desert were drawn. This picture was drawn by Mashhadi Aghajan Lahijani in 1954. In the sides of the main entrance door of the shrine, two ensigns and two pheasants were drawn.

The story of Hazrat Mohammad's Ascension was drawn in the shrine and enjoys unique specifications. On this drawing, the holy prophet with a mask on his face sits on a feathered mare having peacock's crown, necklace and tail and is flying toward the sky. The tail of this mythical animal has 44 feathers. In this drawing he has a blue suit with a green robe with a halo around his head like a leaf and a ring in his right hand's finger. The two front feet of the horse is toward the sky and the horse neck has a drawn collar. The horse's eyes are looking at the sky trying to induce the feeling of ascension and Gabriel is drawn as a man with blue cloths and bent knees. In the right side of the angel there are the sun and the moon showing flight in the height. Under the sun, the profile of a lion has been drawn. This lion exists in the most drawings related to ascension and is related to Asadollah (God's Lion) and his gift to lion in the fourth sky.

In another wall drawing, Imam Hassan (peace be upon him) on horseback with Aliasghar in his arms has his head on a spear and looks at the Darwish, who offers water of a pitcher to him. In the western side of the upper part of the picture the Imam's family members and under their feet, the armed corps of enemies was drawn. The Imam's horse is white and has decorations on its lace and an adorned tail.

On another part of the shrine wall there is a drawing with the content of Hazrat Abolfazl (peace be upon him) on horseback with an Islamic flag in one hand and a sword in his other hand attacking toward Mareb Ebne Sedif. According to narratives Mareb Ebne Sedif was one of the sturdy individuals in the enemy's corps. With this assumption the larger size of Mareb as compared with Abolfazl is reasonable. In this drawing Abolfazl splits Mareb off with one sword impact. The red horse of Mareb is smaller than Abolfazl's horse and it seems that there is no pressure on Abolfazl (PBUH) and his horse, which shows his physical and psychical domination over the enemy.

In another wall drawing, a perfect image of Hazrat Ghasem (PBUH) in battlefield has been presented. At the center of the drawing he is on horseback taking the hair of Arzagh Shami's son on his right hand and is rotating him in the air. At the same time in the right side of the image, the enemy's corps is in rows and Arzagh Shami with a worried face is tearing his cloths in front of them. His companions' faces are full of fear. Their cloths are generally grey and have smaller sizes. The horses have approximately

identical decorations and different proportions (Fig.1). At the center of another drawing of this wall there is an image of Hazrat Aliakbar with a halo around his head. His mother, Ommeleila, is on the right side of the image and Imam Sajjad (PBUH) in the left side is ill and in bed. Aliasghar's cradle is from the style common in Guilan. In the lower part of the wall drawing and in front of the horse, which has bent his feet in trot position, Imam Hossein is on horseback and points him. On the upper margins there are the images of tents and in the lower margins women with covered faces with bowls of water in there hands.

In spite of tranquility of Aliakbar's face a wave of worry and sadness is observed in the image. One of the clear specifications of this drawing is the ultramarine paint of Aliakbar's horse. As it was said before this color has a spiritual concept in the Iranian Culture (Fig. 2).

### Comparative study of wall drawings of Hazrat Ghasem (PBUH) and Aliakbar (PBUH) in the shrine

In all images of this shrine, continuity and sequence is observed in the story in such a way that the spectator can narrate stories in relation to the wall drawings. The type of painting of the faces of Hazrat Ghasem (PBUH) and Aliakbar (PBUH) such as big eyes, continuity of eyebrows and small lips, which were signs of beauty, colored cloths and similar compounds, handkerchief, bracelet and also the halo around the head are some similarities of the two drawings. But the head covering of the two personalities are not similar. The difference is probably because Hazrat Ghasem is in helmet and armor and is older, robust and warrior and the decorations around him have a family texture with farewell (Figs. 3 & 4).

In the drawings the horses have similar decorations and laces and except in color there is no difference between them. In both images the drawer's seal in on the horseman and the horse's head, which is generally attended by the spectators. (Figs. 5 & 6). In the two following images, the



Fig.1. wall drawing of Hazrat-e Ghasem with purpose of war. Photo: Mino Khakpour, 2007.





Fig. 2. wall drawing of Hazrat-e Aliakbar with purpose of family. Photo: Minoo Khakpour, 2007.



Figs. 3&4. Face drawing of Hazrat-e Ghasem & Hazrat-e Aliakbar with similarity. Photo: Minoo Khakpour, 2007.

saddles and the laces of the horses have been compared and as it is observed the shapes and colors of the two saddles are very similar. (Figs. 7 & 8).

#### Comparative study of the manifestations of good and evil in the wall drawing of Hazrat Ghasem (PBUH)

In spite of the low clearness in drawing of the face of Hazrat Ghasem and Arzagh Shami's son, the image of Ghasem (PBUH) as the manifestation of good enjoys more movement and details in drawing; one of the reasons is more attention by the people to the manifestations of good as compared with evil. In this image, with a view to the cool face of Ghasem, the exaggerative action of rotating Arzagh's son in the air shows his power. Ghasem (PBUH) put on armor and a helmet with two feathers on his head. But Arzagh Shami's son does not have such details in appearance. (Figs. 9 & 10). In comparison of the two horses, Ghasem's horse is bigger and consciousness and full readiness for attack is seen in its eyes (Mirzaei, Oct. 2007, 85). In contrast there is the horse of Arzagh's son, which is red and in spite of

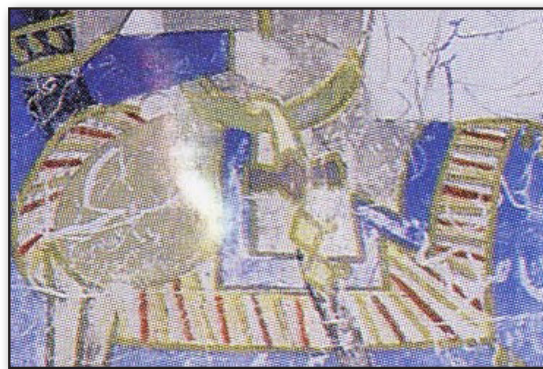
being in the same level is smaller than Ghasem's horse. (Fig. 11). One of the other differences is drawing of the saddle of the 'good personality' horse with details and with abundant decorations, but the evil personality has less decorations.

#### Discussion

With a view to the necessity of analysis of the contents and the comparative study of the two wall drawings of the shrine of Pinchah village, it is necessary to mention the specifications of the two wall drawings as follows: In these wall drawings in spite of not using shade, perspective and special lighting depth is only based on

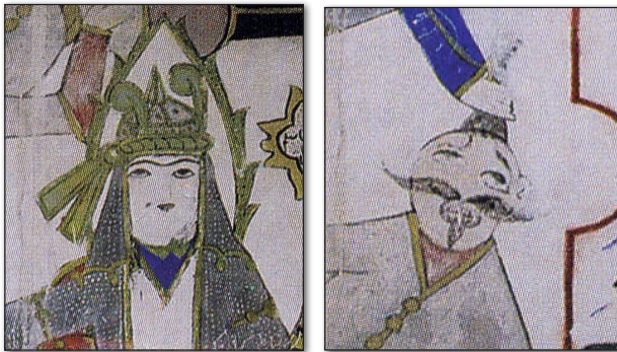


Fig. 5&6. Head drawing of Hazrat-e Ghasem & Hazrat-e Aliakbar's horses. Photo: Minoo Khakpour, 2007.



Figs. 7&8. saddle drawing of Hazrat-e Ghasem & Hazrat-e Aliakbar with similarity. Photo: Minoo Khakpour, 2007.





Figs. 9&10. Face drawing of Hazrat-e Ghasem & son of arzagh shami with details. Photo: Minoo Khakpour, 2007.



Fig. 11. comparing between horses. Photo: Minoo Khakpour, 2007.

the importance of the individuals of the story. No one of the good and evil creatures enjoy anatomical proportions and exaggeration in drawing and also painting for excitement of religious emotions is common in such a way that the drawer for drawing the holy faces insists on existence of their extraordinary force arising from public belief. The drawer believes that beautiful painting of good personalities and ugly painting of evil personalities and exaggeration in this contradiction creates visual movement and helps in

perception of the concepts of good and evil and creates visual and semantic linkage between content and form and therefore promotion of the visual perception of the spectator from the main story. Among this he authorized himself to use the other aesthetic factors such as using conceptual and symbolic colors (using cold colors that have religious value for the public) and also balance of the visual lines for the personalities with identical historical value and imbalance of lines for showing peak and trough of personalities.

## Conclusion

The wall drawings of Pinchah Village in the province of Guilan include the contents of good and evil with a view to the events of early Islam from the viewpoint of Shia. The drawer in drawing of the good personalities clones and exaggerates in using repetitive patterns in such a way that the spectator in comparing these characters with each other distinct their identity only through the differences in details. It seems that in visual perception of wall drawings, such details are very important in such a way that the public spectator feels passing of time in the image stories and with imagination of the whole story. Also the wall drawings includes details arising from the cultural origin of the local people including the role of pheasant in the wall drawings of Imam Hossein (PBUH) and Abolfazl (PBUH) and also the cradle style as common in Guilan in the wall drawings of Aliakbar (PBUH). Therefore the drawer localized a story received from miles away and for better communication with the spectator gave local status to it.

## Endnote

1. Padang in a wooden tool including a lever, which moves around a vertical axis, upward and downward. There are tools such as nail and iron in one of the ends to make it heavy. The motive force is water or human. The device working with foot is called Padang and the device working with water is called Abdang (Mahmoudinejad, 2009: 32)
2. Stratum of the roof palisade with wood is called mound. In this method every stratum is in the front of the former stratum. This technology except lengthening the wooden beam of the roof covering and also increase of the length of roof jut for creation of a deeper shade, prevents contact of rain water with walls.
3. Pheasant is one of the birds of the humid areas and forests and has especial value for the people of the province of Guilan.
4. According to the narratives in the fourth sky a lion appeared in front of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) and he gifted his ring to the lion and after returning to the ground saw that the ring is in Imam Ali's finger.

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