

Historical and Technical Investigation of Canvas-Marouflaged Murals in Iranian Churches

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ABSTRACT

There are specific forms of mural paintings in some Iranian Churches that are different from other usual wall paintings in materials, methods as well as Implementation techniques. Unfortunately, these mural paintings are not studied certainly until now. The aim of this research is the identification of history of development, and used materials and techniques in these historic paintings by field and literature investigation. Regarding limited literature in this field (especially in Persian language), the first stage of this study has focused on European Canvas-Marouflaged Murals and in the second stage, Canvas-Marouflaged Murals of Vank Cathedral, Mary Church in Isfahan and Mary Church in Tabriz are investigated. The research subject and case studies are studied in a qualitative and descriptive research method and the subject is considered with two historical and theoretical aspects. According to the literature, some technical changes were occurred in operation process of large wall paintings and ceiling paintings at the Renaissance period that finally led to a new and different type of wall painting that is noticed as Maroufage in this paper. These paintings are executed on the layer of cloth (canvas) and then installed on the wall that is known as a part of the architecture arrays. In this paper, the process of formation of this type of wall painting in Europe was studied and present examples of this method in Iranian Churches are introduced and explained.

Keywords: Canvas-Marouflaged Mural; Painting; Historical Monuments; Iranian Churches

INTRODUCTION

Every object that is in front of man is a subject of recognition for him, it is possible that this object also has features that distinguish it externally and internally of the surrounding objects, thus, the value of recognition is multiplied.

In some Iranian churches, there is a type of mural paintings that different from others in terms of materials, as well as methods of execution, and in general in terms of nature; Usually in studies, some researchers put these works in the painting on the canvas group, and other researchers also put these works in the mural paintings group, while these works are in fact a combination of paintings on the canvas and murals, which There is not enough knowledge in this area, and so far not specifically addressed to these paintings, henceforth called Canvas-Marouflaged Murals.

The purpose of this research is to know the Canvas-Marouflaged Murals of Iranian churches in a technical way, as well as to know the

evolution of the historical evolution of such works, which required the cognition of technical and evolutionary connection of paintings on the Canvas, painting on the board and wall paintings in the European monuments and Churches in Iran.

The importance and necessity of this research are entity of remarkable works with different nature from paintings on Canvas and mural paintings that have been implemented in different ways, The lack of a comprehensive research in the field of recognition of the Canvas-Marouflaged Murals in Iranian Churches and comparing them with similar works outside of Iran, As well as the unknown values of the Canvas-Marouflaged Murals. Unfortunately, So far no special study has been done in the case of, recognition of works, features and values of Canvas-Marouflaged Murals in Iranian Churches, and only in some Persian texts, it has become a temporary reference to the Canvas-Marouflaged Murals. In the field of technology studies of Iranian Canvas-Marouflaged Murals, and only some

research has been done in the Soltanieh dome of Zanjan (Aslani 2012; Heydari 2012; Rahmani 1999; Bozorgmehri and Khodadadi 2011).

There are also references to Canvas-Marouflaged Murals in the Churches of the European countries, such as: the Mary with members of the Pesaro family (Gombrich 1971), Basilica di Santa Maria Gloriosa in Venice, dating back to the early sixteenth century (fig 1), The Burial of Count Orgaz at Santo Tome's Church in Toledo (Croix et al, 1975), performed by Dominicos Theotokopoulos, called El Greco (Janson 1964)(fig 2), 10 works in the Mary del Orto church performed by Tintoretto (Plesters and Lazarini, 1976: 7), Works on the ceiling of the Church of Michel from the early eighteenth century(Bradshaw, Bush; 1996: 9), Performing a work on the roof of the first Notre Dame Church in Montreal by William Berczy from the early nineteenth century(Roberge, Forest; 2010: 16).



Fig.1. Canvas-Marouflaged Mural in Basilica Di Santa Maria Gloriosa in Venice



Fig.2. Canvas-Marouflaged Mural in Santo Tome's Church in Toledo

In this research, data and initial information are collected using study, observation and interviewing methods and so on and analyzed

using statistical methods and techniques and accepted criteria. Considering the type and necessity of the present research, two theoretical and historical approaches can be introduced.

CANVAS-MAROUFFLAGED MURALS

In this research, the term "canvas-Marouflaged Murals" refers to those paintings that have been performed on a canvas that is attached on the wall, so that painting on the canvas is part of the architecture and separating from the original location, makes the integrity and authenticity of the work compromising (Hamzavi et al 2016). The minimum layers of canvas-Marouflaged Murals, which is in fact a combination of wall painting and paintings on canvas, is as follows: a: support (wall) b: scratch coat (arriccio) c: fine coat (intonaco) d:textile support e: Color layer. Generally, in order to improve the quality of these works, other layers such as adhesive layer, primary layer on canvas and varnish are added (Hamzavi et al 2017) (Fig. 3).

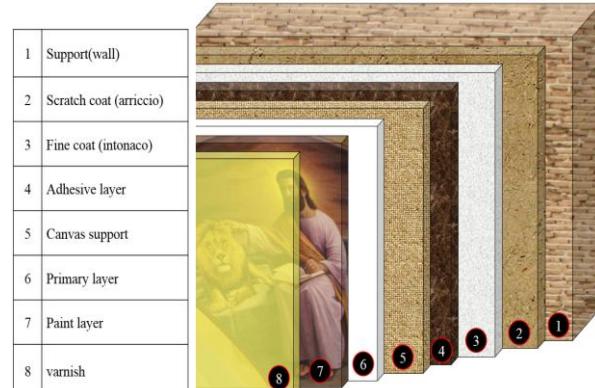


Fig.3. Layers of Canvas-Marouflaged Mural

According to studies carried out, in Latin texts, a term or a certain name is not used for such mural-painting, and in some cases it is a definition of the work.

Because this painting is a kind of camouflage, in the English translation of this term, the term camouflage will be used in this study. This technique has been implemented in different countries in a few centuries and in various sources mentioned how it is implemented. These include: The technique is to paint on a canvas, mounted on hard surfaces such as walls and wood. Bleaching of lead in oil is a sample of the traditional adhesive used to attach these paintings to the wall (Turner, 1996: 461; Ward, 2008: 362; Clarke&Clarke, 2013). A technique for installing a canvas or something similar with a kind of adhesive on the wall (García, 2010; Harris, 2006: 617; Bucher, 1996: 285). In essence, it refers to mural-paintings on canvas,

which is bound to the wall by white lead as a sticky material (Clarke and Clarke, 2013). Attaching the canvas on the wall can be done before and after performing the painting, in other words, it is sometimes done by painting the canvas, then attaching it on the wall surface, and sometimes the canvas attach onto the wall surface and then painting on it (Osborne, 1975: 695; Moss, 1994: 107) And most of the time, it was used in this way for the execution of large mural-paintings (Chilvers, 2004). This method of painting is not like Fresco way, but in this way, a pigment with a buckle runs on the canvas and then mounted on the wall surface (Pocobene, 2000: 9). Sometimes, when they want to attach a painting fabric on the surface of the wall, moisturize dielectric the back of canvas by using wax, this also prevents air and dust from penetrating the back (Carlyle, 2002: 179).

Before this technique (canvas-Marouflaged Murals) was created, in the late 14th century, In order to prepare the background of the painting on the wood, the fabric was also used, and was usually used for the fabric of the pieces that were sewn together and a large fabric was used, And were usually used for fabric from pieces that were tied up and made up a large fabric (Uzielli, 1995: 113). During the Renaissance, before the gesso ground was added, they adhered a piece of canvas to the wooden board (Dawson and Leonard, 1992). Although reinforcing materials, such as flax or hemp, with or without jesso, are known in all European painting school, these materials were most often used in Spanish panels. The appearance of a perfectly flat surface on the panel will be normal, when these fabrics are executed on the panel (Veliz, 1995: 140). Of course, the choice of fabric to stick on the wood had reasons: for instance, to avoid the painting movement due to moving wood, fabric was used in wood layering, so that the layers of painting did not collide with the movement of the wood, and Stay seamless (Uzielli, 1995: 113).

The most famous paintings on the wood which fabric used to layer it can be noted: the birth of the Venus effect of Botticelli on fabric that was clad on the board, was executed in 1485 and is mounted on the wall (Gombrich, 1971: 192; Hartt, 1989: 555), The Descent from the cross of Rosso Fiorentino on a board layered with canvas, in 1521, executed In the Pinacoteca Volterra Gallery (Andres et al, 1994: 1108). It should also be noted that in Venice, due to high humidity, the mural-painting was not durable, so

the painting on the fabric was replaced the mural-painting. Canvas was used as a durable and inexpensive replacement to cover the large surfaces of the walls adorned with colored arrays. Also, lightweight fabric staddle was a substitute for heavy wooden boards (Dawson and Leonard, 1992).

So, first, the painting was done on the wall, then painting on the wood, in the subsequent periods, laying the surface of the wood with a fabric and installing it on the wall, and finally removing the wood and pasting the painted fabric on the wall, which is actually at this stage canvas-Marouflaged Murals comes up.

CANVAS-MAROUFFLAGED MURALS IN IRANIAN CHURCHES

In the history of Iranian culture, cultural partnership of other nations should not be ignored in other areas such as arts and literature. If we take into account the activities of other nations living in Iran in the history and from the viewpoint of belonging to the history of Iran, then the history of cultural and artistic spheres can be seen in terms of time and place more widely. Therefore, the history of Iran's art and culture should be broader than the history of culture and art of the Persian speaking nations, and recognized the cultural and artistic achievements of other nations living in Iran. One of these cultures is the Armenians culture in Iran, which influenced Iranian Islamic art during the Safavid era as well as they have been effective in this area. Among the arts that Armenians living in Iran had at high levels, was the art of drawing as an Architectural array. The wall paintings of the churches are very valuable in terms of subject matter, technology, aesthetics and history, and are in fact part of the history of painting in Iran. The wall painting is meaningless regardless of the visual features of the wall, the dominant atmosphere of the wall and the audience's culture, In other words, if any of the qualitative visual and semantic relationships between the wall and the wall painting are removed or weakened, In the same way, the wall painting distances itself from its harmonic quality with the wall, environment, and audience and from this perspective if you look at the wall paintings of the churches in Iran, there should be a distinction between some wall painting. The paintings, which differ from other wall paintings, actually have a different mode of execution and nature, these works are Canvas-Marouflaged Murals that are painted in a different place on the canvas, and then are

attached in these buildings for display and are in fact presented as wall paintings.

Vank Cathedral in Isfahan

The Vank cathedral was built between 1655 and 1664 under the direction of David the Great Caliph and the religious leader of the Armenian in Julfa (Qokasian, 1968). According to the discovery of the inscriptions in this building in 2008, it became clear that the pastiglia and gilding of the roof of the dome of the church has been implemented in 1667 (Hamzavi, 2014). The entire inner surface of the courtyard walls of the church under the vault of the dome walls is decorated with oil paintings. This church from the period of Shah Abbas II is considered to be the masterpieces of art in Isfahan. Most of the paintings of the churches were created by the famous painters of the Armenian from Jolfa of Isfahan, such as Minass, Hovaness Mrquze, and Bogdan Saltanove (Hoyan, 2009), the interior of this church and all the walls and its



Fig4. Canvas-Marouflaged Mural in Vank cathedral in Isfahan, Iran

The fact that the work by which painter and in which country is being performed is unclear, which can be concluded in future studies with a structural comparative study. Painting technique is oil paint, which is executed in the European way. With a closer look at this work, it seems that the painting on the canvas is larger and more complete than it is now seen, which may have to cut off parts of the work, in order to paste it in the arc above the port. Comparing this work with European Canvas-Marouflaged Murals, it is worth noting that the size of European Canvas-Marouflaged Murals is usually larger and is used in this way for ease of work (that is, in a painting workshop, the artist paints on a canvas and, in the building, Attached

surroundings and aspects are covered with Iranian decorations and the drawings that are perceived by the influence of Italian painting and represent the life of Christ (Honarfar, 1971). At the top of the entrance to the northern side of the church and below the brick arch, there is a beautiful painting with the theme "Virgin Mary hug child Jesus", which is part of the architecture. With a field survey, we found that this work was actually a Canvas-Marouflaged Mural, it mean that, at the time of the creation of the work, the painting was executed on the canvas (now the edges of the bead are carefully seen), and then nailed to the wooden board and the surface of the wall, which is seen as a part of the architecture (Fig 4), as a result of the work, the narrow and long pieces of wood were pinned as a frame on the work, making the edge of the canvas not visible.



to the wall surface). For example, in the end wall of the hall of the Council in Palazzo Ducale of Venice, there is a mural-painting of the Jacopo Tintoretto, which length is 25 meters (Croix et al, 1975: 531).

Two Canvas-Marouflaged Murals are executed on the pillars of the north of the chapel, with glass mounted on them. The image of Khajeh Petros Valijanian is executed on a canvas and is adorned on the north pillar, and the margin is decorated with a geometric Moaraq (mosaic) tile technique. This oil on canvas becomes a mural-painting and is part of the architecture (Fig. 5). Also, the image of the Khajeh Audik Stepan Mardirosian drawn on a canvas and is adhered

to the surface of the southern pillar in the same porch (Fig. 6).



Fig5. Canvas-Marouflaged Mural in Vank cathedral, image of Khajeh Petros Valijanian



Fig6. Canvas-Marouflaged Mural in Vank cathedral, Khajeh Audik Stepan Mardirousian



Around the paintings are decorated in a Europe archetype stucco and the technique of performing both works is oil paint. Unfortunately, there is no information on the date of implementation as well as the identity of the artists of these paintings.

Khajeh Petros Valiganian, founder of the Church of the Holy Bethlehem, in 1628 (Qokasian, 1968), and Khajeh Audik Stepan Mardirousian, paid the Cost of Architectural Paintings and Arrays of the Vank Church (Qokasian, 1972).

Mary Church in Isfahan

The Holy Mary Church was founded in 1613 (Safavid period) at the expense of Khajeh Audik Babakhani in the great Jolfa square in Isfahan (Hoyan, 2003). This building, according to old age, is the second church that was built and is now relatively well-kept. The interior surfaces of the church are covered with decorative mural-painting, and the plinth of the building is tiled (Howsepian, 2007). Four mural-paintings of this building, in terms of the theme of painting, as well as the manner of execution, are different from other mural-paintings. With field studies, we noticed the different layering of these four walls, which in fact the painting was executed on the canvas and was applied on the surface of the wall (Fig. 7).



Fig7. Canvas-Marouflaged Murals in Mary Church in Isfahan

To find out the history and artist of the work, library studies were carried out as follows: Two large paintings (work of Venice) were installed inside the church, which was the gift from Venice given to this church by an Armenian

businessman named Khajeh Gerak Agha (Mr. Gerak) from Venice (Honarfar, 1971). Drawing on the northern wall is Herod the king, and the story of the cutting off Baptism John's head, Mr. Grak kneels and prays, and the painting of the

southern wall is the gift of Jesus Christ to the temple, along with his sons and wife Gerak (Araklian, 2004). There are 4 Canvas-Marouflaged Murals in this building, two main paintings on the northern and southern side of the church hall, painted in Venice, and by Mr. Gerak in the early 18th century Donated to the church and two smaller paintings with skeleton theme, mounted on both sides of the eastern side of the church of Mary (Carswell, 1968: 41-42).

With field surveys, it was found that these paintings were glued to a wall surface with an organic adhesive (possibly adhesive of animal origin, such as gelatin), and at the same time or in the following periods, it has been nailing, The continuation of these paintings on the canvas has been drawn from around the wall and actually continues, which the viewer does not realize at first glance that these paintings are not directly drawn on the wall. Painting technique is oil paint, which is executed in the European way. Among the Canvas-Marouflaged Murals of Iranian churches, two drawings of the southern and northern sides of the Mary church are the largest in terms of dimensions and sizes. This four paintings are larger in comparison to the Canvas-Marouflaged Murals of Vanak church, and the other different is the lack of frames and decorations around the work, which the edge of painting is left free. One of the reasons for damage to the edge of the painting and tearing of the canvas at Mary's Church in Isfahan is its freedom and the framing the border and frame around the drawing is not implemented.



Fig8. Canvas-Marouflaged Murals in Mary Church in Tabriz

In fact, these four drawings, after being completed are pasted on the wall surface in the pendentive section in the dome, and it has become a Canvas-Marouflaged Mural. The Canvas-Marouflaged Murals of this church are

Mary Church in Tabriz

Tabriz Armenian in 1782 in the castle district, built the Church of the Holy Mary, and in 1785, completed it. This church is the largest and oldest Armenian Church in Tabriz, with a cruciate plan, with its central dome located on four columns of rock mass (Hoyan, 2003).

The first step of this building, according to the oldest tombstone in it, dates back to about 1500 to 1600. The church has a unique stone sill, by considering its decor, the type of arch and the architectural features used in it can be dating back to the 13th century and the period with the rule of the Mongol ilkhans in Iran. Out of the canvas painted inside the church, there are two paintings left of the four paintings below the dome and above the four main columns in the center of the dome can be mentioned, which are now located on the northern and southern walls, but the other two paintings have completely disappeared due to the moisture content of the ceiling. Miniature style of images belongs to the 1800s. And later in Iran (Goroyan, 1989). After the disappearance of the paintings upon the request of the Azerbaijani caliphate at the time of the deceased Caliph, Neshan Taupazian, a professional named Andranik Simbarian, was invited from Armenia to Iran, and from the old paintings, depicted the four new paintings of the present church, which are still in the church, and are placed under the dome in the center (Simounians, 2017) (Fig. 8).



drawn with oil paint technique, which the shape of the panel is in the form of a slim design, and is executed in a European manner. On the edge of the painting, a wooden strip is attached to the canvas for both the beauty of the work and

stability of the edge, which cannot easily be removed from the wall surface.

In a visit to the church by the author in 2014 and 2019, the church cleric pointed out that four of the original (historical) paintings that were previously in this section, were applied to the leather, and then was fastened over the wall surface. There are currently no paintings, and existing paintings that are not old enough, run on the canvas and are attached to the wall surface. The special feature of these four paintings, except the Canvas-Marouflaged Mural, is its shape. Usually, it's less likely that paintings on the canvas will be executed in this way. The wooden frame, which is nailed on the edge of the painting on the surface of the wall, is similar to the wooden wall frame of the Canvas-Marouflaged Mural of the Vank Cathedral of Isfahan. Also, the theme of paintings on each board is a man next to a lion, a goat, an eagle and a winged girl angel.

To perform the four Canvas-Marouflaged Murals in the Mary Church in Tabriz, an Armenian painter artist has come to this place and drawn to the shape on the canvas. Contrary to this, two Canvas-Marouflaged Murals in the Mary Church in Isfahan, painted in Venice (Italy), and has been moved to the building. In fact, the man who ordered painting wanted to have the paintings of a famous Italian artist at the Mary's Church, and the best way to reach the goal was to use the Canvas-Marouflaged Mural.

CONCLUSION

In the Renaissance period, some of the problems of mural-painting, such as the persistence of them for no long time, the difficult conditions of the place for the execution of paintings, such as the roof of the buildings, paying special attention to some artists and ordering a lot of work to them, Artists gradually changed the way in which the mural-paintings were executed, which eventually created a new style of mural paintings called Canvas-Marouflaged Mural. These paintings are introduced and known as paintings on the canvas when the artist finishes painting work. The difference begins when the painting curtains are installed on the wall to display, in a way that they become a part of the architecture and belongs to building.

These works, from now on, begin to live with a new identity. A dual identity that is both mural-painting and painting on canvas, and in some ways, differ with both mural paintings and paintings on the canvas. The evolution of this

style was as follows: first, if necessary, the painting was painted on the wood on the surface of the wall or installed on the altar of the churches, in the next step, painter artists concluded that the wooden support was based with fabric, after painting, the painted wood was pasted on the wall. In subsequent periods, the constraints and difficulties of the wooden support became more known, and painter artists removed the wooden support, and eventually the paintings on canvas were pasted on the surface of the wall. But with studies in Iran, it was concluded that the Canvas-Marouflaged Murals of churches in Iran have not changed in this way, and in this respect they are different from European works.

A Part of the history of painting art and Iranian mural painting is the paintings performed in historical periods in churches. The important point in this regard is the technique of drawing in the history of Iranian art. The first drawings with the oil paint technique in the history of Iranian architecture are related to the churches and, in fact, its mural paintings.

Among the mural paintings of the churches in Iran, there are works that differ from other mural paintings in terms of layering and how it is executed. Of the churches in Iran, in the Vanak Cathedral in Isfahan, the Mary Church in Isfahan and the Mary Church in Tabriz, there are a number of valuable works that were studied for the first time. The way of performing these paintings is worthy due to being specific. This arrangement of mural painting allows the work of a famous artist to be displayed in another city or country as an architecture array, such as the Canvas-Marouflaged Murals of the Mary Church in Isfahan, where the artist completed his work at his workshop in Venice, and Then was transferred to Isfahan, and was fastened in this church on the wall, which is seen as part of the architecture. The execution of Canvas-Marouflaged Murals can have many reasons, including the fact that the artist cannot be present at the architectural place.

Looking at the steps and layers of the Canvas-Marouflaged Murals of these three churches, it should be noted that the first support of the painted canvas in one of the works of the Vank Church is a wooden board (in all works, the canvas is directly adhered to the plaster surface of the wall). Also, the decorative frame of the two Canvas-Marouflaged Murals of Vank Church was executed in the form of a gypsum arrays and mosaic tile. The works in the Mary

Church in Tabriz, have a wooden frame that is nailed stretched neatly rounded around the painting. There are no frames in the Canvas-Marouflaged Murals of the Mary Church in Isfahan, and the painting continued on the canvas on the wall surface. This is probably the reason that these works are without frames.

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Historical and Technical Investigation of Canvas-Marouflaged Murals in Iranian Churches

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