

A Study of the Form, Role, and Application of Qajari Tabarzin

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Received: 12/08/2024

Accepted: 11/12/2024

Introduction

The use of metal in the manufacturing of weapons dates back to prehistoric times; however, over years, the technology used for their production and application has significantly changed. During the Qajar period, particularly due to the Industrial Revolution, firearms became more widespread, while cold weapons like Tabarzin were mainly used as symbolic, ceremonial tools. Tabarzin, as the emblem of power and social distinction, played an important role in the culture and art of this era. This article aims to examine the diversity of the forms and roles of Qajari Tabarzin and to classify their applications by studying sixteen samples of these artifacts housed in museums in Iran and around the world. The findings of this research revealed the variety of decorations, structures, and symbolic uses of Tabarzin, which can contribute to a better understanding of the cultural and social dynamics of that time while highlighting the importance of preserving and reviving this cultural heritage.

Research Method

This article is descriptive-analytic in nature and employs two methods for data collection: i.e., library study and field research. To this end, first information about Qajari Tabarzin were collected and organized from reputable sources. These sources included books, scholarly articles, and historical documents which contributed to the historical and artistic analyses of these artifacts. In the field part, sixteen Tabarzin samples from the Qajar era were purposefully gathered from museums in Iran and around the world. Data collection and observation of visual characteristics of these artifacts were conducted using note-taking tools. Additionally, the method of observing visual evidences, based on the construction techniques of these objects, was carried out in a precise and scientific manner. The combination of these approaches enabled a comprehensive analysis of the form, role, and applications of Qajari Tabarzin.

Research Findings

The findings of the examination of these samples of Qajari Tabarzin indicated that all the pieces examined in this study were made of steel. These tools, regarded as symbols of the art and culture of the era, typically employed various decorative techniques such as engraving, gold plating, carving, and hammering. The predominant method of production for most of these samples was casting, which reflected the adaptation of traditional techniques to the needs of that time and the advanced state of metallurgy during Qajar era. Based on the analyses conducted, these samples of Tabarzin can be classified into four main groups based on their form: 1) Tabarzins with double-edged blade; 2) Tabarzins with single-edged blade and a hammer-shaped end; 3) Tabarzins with single-edged blade and a dragon-shaped end; 4) Tabarzins with single-edged blade and a crown-shaped end. The data analysis revealed that the highest prevalence was associated with Tabarzin

featuring a single-edged blade and a hammer-shaped end. This design may indicate its significant utility and importance in daily life and social ceremonies. Additionally, the motifs on these samples of Tabarzin are often composite, incorporating various elements. These motifs included floral, geometric, inscriptional, human, and animal designs utilized simultaneously in a single piece. The diversity of these designs reflected the cultural and social influences of that time and showcased the artistic richness and aesthetics of Qajar art. Ultimately, the motifs of Qajari Tabarzin can be categorized into three main groups: 1) floral and geometric motifs, including flowers, leaves, complex patterns, and ornamental borders; 2) inscribed motifs, comprising Arabic phrases, Persian poetry, and the names of the commissioners; 3) human and animal motifs with the depictions of human figures and various animals such as lions and snakes. According to these findings, it can be concluded that the most prevalent motifs in the studied samples of Tabarzin belong to the floral and geometric categories, reflecting the artistic and cultural tastes of that time. These results highlight the close connection between art, culture, and society during the Qajar era.

Conclusion

Considering the artistic and social conditions of the Qajar period, this era is described as a transitional phase from tradition to modernity. Influenced by the Industrial Revolution in the West, traditional Iranian industries also underwent significant transformations. During this period, the use of firearms in warfare became prevalent; however, cold weapons, including Tabarzin, continued to be utilized as a symbolic weapon in various contexts. In this article, sixteen samples of Tabarzin from the Qajar period have been examined. All of these pieces are made of steel and were constructed using the casting method. Various techniques such as engraving, gold plating, and carving were typically employed for their adornment and decoration. These samples have been classified into four main groups: those with double-edged blade, with single-edged blade and hammer-shaped end, those with single-edged blade and dragon-shaped end, and finally those with single-edged blade and crown-shaped end. The motifs on these samples of Qajari Tabarzin can be categorized into three main groups: floral and geometric, inscribed motifs, and human and animal motifs. In these examples, floral and geometric motifs have been predominant, indicating a focus on decorative and artistic aspects in the creation of these works. By investigating the influence of Tabarzin in Iranian literature and its application as a weapon, we find that during the Qajar period, Tabarzin was regarded as a symbolic tool representing power and courage in the context of Sufism. Overall, the form and motifs of Tabarzin in this period have overshadowed their primary functional use, reflecting a transformation in the social and cultural significance of Tabarzin in Iran.

Keywords: Qajar metalwork, Qajari Tabarzins, Form and motif of Tabarzin, Cold weapon, Qajar weapons.