



## Woman in Culture and Arts

### An Iconological Approach to Study of Female Motifs in Themes of Graffiti in Saqanefar of Kijatekiyeh, Babol

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
<p><b>Article type:</b> Research Article</p> <p><b>Article history:</b> Received: 9 February 2023 Received in revised form: 16 June 2024 Accepted: 8 June 2024 Published online: 5 August 2024</p> <p><b>Keywords:</b> <i>Female Motifs,</i> <i>Graffiti,</i> <i>Iconology,</i> <i>Kijatekieh Babol,</i> <i>Saqanefar.</i></p>	<p><b>Introduction</b> Native and traditional architectural elements are exhibited in Saqanefars, which are traditional religious-ritual buildings from Iran's Qajar era (Kalantar, 2020). A prominent feature of Mazandaran's native architecture are these wooden structures, which typically consist of two stairs and feature a variety of embellishments (Rafiee, 2012). They are located in close proximity to holy sanctuaries such as Takiyeh and Imamzadeh. Kijatekieh Saqanefar is one of the most renowned murals, which emphasize the role of women in both human and non-human themes. The objective of this study was to assess the significance of woman motifs in Saqanefar, as well as the visual themes in the murals, and to determine their significance in relation to iconography. In the Qajar era, a clear distinction is evident between pre-existing and post-existing artworks. Historical, social, political, and cultural factors are among the reasons for this distinction. Artworks depicting scenes of heroism, everyday life, and the presence of women in private and public settings were produced as a result of the Qajar artists' awareness of the West, the change in the status of women, and the prevalence of photography in the art of the Qajar period. This was particularly evident in the use of women in painting. The Saqanefar of Kijatekiyeh Babol is characterized by the substantial representation of women in the murals of the structure. The images of women's attire are frequently depicted in a manner that is similar to the Qajar algorithm and is indicative of the type of activity, socio-economic status, and way of life of the people of Mazandaran region. Research questions: 1. Which motifs are evident in the murals of Saqanefar Kijatekiyeh Babol? 2. What are the causes for the prevalence and popularity of the feminine role in the murals of Saqanefar in Kijatekiyeh Babol? 3. Based on the iconographic approach, what is the semantic burden of the feminine role strata in Saqanefar of Kijatekiyeh Babol?</p> <p><b>Methodology</b> Employing Panofsky's iconography methodology, the investigation was conducted at Kijatekiyeh in Babol, Iran. Cameras and video documents were the primary instruments for information collection, and content analysis was employed to qualitatively analyze the data. The research was conducted in three stages: pre-iconography, iconography analysis, and iconography interpretation. The initial stage analyzed the primary form and primary meaning of visual themes that were centered on women. The second stage entailed the examination of the secondary purpose of female-centered themes and the identification of their intertextual relationships. The final stage was dedicated to the interpretation of concealed meanings and the description of themes in accordance with the role of women (Namazalizadeh &amp; Mousavilar, 2019).</p> <p><b>Results</b> The murals of Saqanefars in Mazandaran have always captivated researchers because of their association with religious and mythological concepts. These murals, which were executed during the Qajar period, exhibit a distinct style and visual themes that are distinct from those</p>

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of the preceding and subsequent periods. Historical, social, political, and cultural factors all contribute to this distinction. Saqanfars Kijatekiyeh Babol features many visual themes that emphasize women. By examining the semantic burden of these themes, one can gain a deeper understanding of the feminine role in Saqanfar's Kijatekiyeh Babol. The reinterpretation of the female element in Persian poetry was influenced by the societal perception of women, the poets' perspectives based on political and social changes during the Qajar era, and the involvement of women in poetry. Folk painting's prevalence in society may have hinted at its ceremonial significance by emphasizing women's attire. This underscores the socio-cultural influence/impact of the Qajar period on indigenous artists.

In Saqanfars, composite motifs, such as the woman-snake motif, are prominent mythological combinations. Women and snakes are frequently depicted as deceptive entities, with snakes occasionally being depicted with female heads. This coexistence highlights the intersection of these symbols from mythical and mystical works. The transformation of women into snakes in myths underscores their shared characteristics. The continuity of visual aesthetic principles is emphasized by the combination of feminine attractiveness based on Qajar aesthetics and the snake's role as a common mythical symbol. Spirituality is evoked by the ceiling of Saqanfars Kijatekiyeh Babol, which features supernatural concepts that emphasize women. The construction history of these structures and the illiteracy that prevailed during the Qajar era led to the depiction of beliefs as clear representations of women's motifs. The Safavid period's formalization of Shiite religion and the presence of Islam introduced new concepts to artistic works, resulting in the abundance of celestial motifs in Qajar imagery.

Additionally, the murals illustrate the shifting social status of women during the Qajar period by depicting their duties in household and extracurricular activities. This depiction of women as autonomous individuals participating in contemporary activities suggests a change in societal perspectives.

### Conclusion

The indigenous and ritualistic architecture of Mazandaran is the foundation of Saqanfars, which date back to the Qajar period. The murals of Saqanfars Kijatekiyeh Babol prominently display themes that emphasize women. This study endeavors to comprehend the significance of these visual themes by examining the semantic burden of these motifs using an iconographic approach. The Qajar era was the apex of the redefinition of women's roles in society, family, and art. Gender concepts in northern Iran were altered by the impact of geography and subsistence. The emergence of feminine motifs was influenced by historical, social, political, and cultural factors. The direct correlation between these motifs and socio-political developments is underscored by the historical context of Saqanfars' construction during the Qajar period, which was characterized by changes in social relationships, dress styles, and political status. Indigenous artists creatively reflected these conditions in their murals, which featured themes that echoed Qajar portraiture and adopted patterns from Qajar-era art. These themes were influenced by the era's historical, cultural, political, and social conditions.

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