To Study Icons and Concepts of the Holy Shrines of Guilan Province

Ahmad Montazeri Roudbaraki *1 and Rasoul Parvari Moghadam 2

*1Department of Painting, Faculty of Arts and Architecture, University of Guilan, Rasht, Iran
2Department of Graphic Communication, Faculty of Arts and Architecture, University of Guilan, Rasht, Iran

*Corresponding Author Email: shahrad_mon@yahoo.com

Abstract
Guilan province has many holy shrines which have been designed religious paintings and icons of many of the Qajar era on them and to study symbolic elements with respect to the status of the symbols and how to apply them in the shrines of Guilan province is remarkable. Thus, this research aims to examine the structure features paintings and symbols in the shrines of Guilan province emphasizing visual values of them achieved and while enumerating these features, they are analyzed and evaluated. The research method used in this research is based on survey and historical documentary cited to library resources with descriptive and analytical approach. In this way, first, historical and geographical resources available and relevant researches have been investigated and then attending the tombs of saints, the image of the paintings and images taken were photographed and analyzed.

Keywords: Gilan, tombs of saints, painting, symbol

Introduction
Undoubtedly, the works of the remaining of different periods are precious documents that should be tried in preserving, protecting and valuing them. So far, Guilan province with the old traditional has many visual works of various ancient periods, but for various reasons including climate degradation that is the most important has led to destroying. Tombs of saints are not exempt from this, and every day after another they are renewed. No matter traditional architecture or painting used in the shrines, knowingly or unknowingly are destroyed. Despite nearly 1000 monument in the province, the number of 46 tombs has the image that 13
of them are graffiti which in the Qajar period and then continually depicted and now some of them have been destroyed or are so-called modernization. Due to the climate of the humidity of the province, a large number of tombs with drawings used in them are destroyed and due to lack of proper monitoring and following-up for the restoration of shrines and images, new buildings with different characteristics and without the context of traditional regional climate are built. These works are valid document the events and beliefs of people in the territory of Guilan. Symbols and signs on the walls of the holy places mentioned in the guide and helper researchers and political culture and religious beliefs are considered different historical periods. In addition, the symbols and signs used to reflect the values and artistic motifs and elements used, in the paintings contain valuable information about the traditions and customs and culture, political and social conditions and also religions.

Research history
The studies in this field are very limited and are as follows: Course notes as "manifestations of folk art" in 1977 written by the Sima Kouban briefly has mentioned on Guilan Province's holy shrines. The book of "the paintings in the Iranian holy shrines" in 2007, diffusion of culture and art, is written by Ali Asghar Mirzaeemehr that in the book as a whole, the tombs of saints in Iran have graffiti are presented.

Guilan over time
Iran is located geographically at the end of the Fertile Crescent of the Middle East, the cradle of civilization and nurtures the ancient world (Negahban, 1997: 317). Works from the coastal territories of the South of the Caspian Sea belong to the period before the last frost which it's time is estimated between 50 thousand to 150 thousand years ago. It seems that in this area, after the formation of the sea and fertile area, the lives of people living in Gilan were formed (Sadreddin Qorbani, 1996: 27), although, to be precise, experts of nomadic tribes in small populations in previously period of the Iron Age (1979-2076), they were considered the residents of Gilan (Khalatbari, 2004: 32).

The evolution of religion in Guilan
Guilan residents before Zoroastrianism had no special religious; As far as monuments and historical evidence show, residents of Guilan have been in the Achaemenes era Zoroastrianism in the 6th century BC and they also believed in gods and the majority of the people of Guilan were Zoroastrian in Sassanid era. At the beginning of the seventh century and in the year 31 AD, the Sassanid government ended, but the Arabs for various reasons, including the existence of mountains, dense forests, as well as brave and warlike people of this region, the mid-third century AD, more than 250 years have been able to dominate the region. The history of the people of Guilan by Alawites (a Shiite) who had come to their country for fear of caliphs were familiar with Islam, and the famous Alavi who took refuge in Guilan was Yahya bin Abdullah, grandson of Imam Hassan (AS), which was settled in Gilan in 176 AD; Most historians believe that the spread of Islam in the mid-third century AD was begun in Guilan and Deylaman and this date coincided with the time when the ideological leadership of the movement of the Iranian people was in the possession of Shiites. Throughout in Guilan in the early 11th century Hijri was captured by forces of Shah Abbas and independence of Gilan where was begun from the beginning of local governments in the second half Hijri ended. The main reasons for tombs of saints and holy have been the entry to the territory's opposition in Baghdad as a result of that, these works have remained of them.
Coffee house painting
The painter known as coffee shops, a kind of narrative painting that coincides with the constitutional movement based on folk art and religious traditions and the influence of nature writing called that time, was not emerged by the school artists. Iran's religious painting history goes back to Safavid era and when Shiism spread, it is concerned and thus, drawing national aspirations and interests of specific cultural and religious beliefs and the spirit of the middle layers of society are reflected (Kheiri, p 35).

The artist created themes in his works used to be that most audiences are familiar with narrative mode species and affected this approach works by national and religious imagery and characterization of the hero follows contractual signs so that it can be realized through the image of their identity.

Composition in painting tombs of saints
In the creation of the works remained in Guilan tombs of saints, we see the composition of the authority, as if the artist except presenting his kind of composition in bringing his work had no another solution, because in the visual narrative there is often his innocent personality at odds with the enemy to the disbelievers and evil. This type of composition (authorities) in cultures makes sense that they have a religious approach and conviction. So, the artist to render the image refers to the traditional symbol or to the value and importance of characters, large or small images and more valued to his audience; this trend can be expected in most religious cultures clearly.

The artist with views of the people and the sanctity of holy shrines of this kind of composition to better use the space and so much has taken effect; in addition, the use of color is also of particular importance in people's work more accurate expression; this sensitivity has been to observe in detail in the sacred personalities and in contrast, the enemies of the images were shown a simpler and more limited. But it is obvious that stronger reason for such enthusiasm and faith visual expression can be an artist and painter of religious shrines to know the characters and narrative.

Paintings themes of tombs of saints
In paintings of Guilan province tombs of saints, religious themes are depicted on the walls of tombs; these themes that are the narration of various religious themes, they have placed in succession and side by side to the image accordingly and have been painted that sometimes separation of the themes are very difficult from each other. From the themes of narrations, it can be referred to the Ascension of the Prophet (Figure 1), the sacrifice of Ishmael, the torment of Hell, crossing the bridge of the path etc. Important images in the painting used are as follows: Imams, the Prophet (less than Imams), shrine, women, innocent girls, supporters and friends, enemies and infidels, a variety of animals, such as horses, camels, pigeons, peacocks, scorpion, sheep and mythical creatures can be mentioned.
The concept of color semiotics has always been associated with the principles of color. Over long periods, in touching with nature, culture, religious beliefs, experiences of life, human has given to colors a symbolic concept. These concepts have been different among peoples and nations. Although there are some similarities, for example, in most societies of the West and East, the color of black is considered the color of mourning, in East African civilizations and civilizations, white is the sign of mourning, and in contrast of black, is considered a symbol of joy (Aqakhani, Montazeri Roudbaraki, 2008, 28).

The color in drawings of tombs of saints is widely used and has been applied because the color alone indicates the conditions and circumstances of the scene charged emotional and narrative motifs and images are used in the shrines. Color is the most important, most essential and most profound effect in the artistic dimension; also the colors have their own language in any text field of the paintings; this means that if we study multiple boards in multiple shrines, we will see that in all the holy painting, color is not the same meaning. For example, the red in some cases is the symbol of power and glory and elsewhere is a symbol of oppression. Another illustration can be used for multi-head or multi-head dragon has been noted in several joint tombs which are painted with the red color and over time, due to the red oxidation extracted from ferrous ores which has become to brown color and the color in the work is an indication of God's wrath as if the word hell reminded the mind of every person in hot and fiery red color.

The yellow color symbolizes the sun and is a sign of spirituality and divinity. This color is traditionally seen in the authorities and the representatives of God in all religions, which is the root of Iran and Zoroastrianism, as If in the religion of Zoroaster the light source was used as the Qibla. In the Quran, God of the Sun (yellow symbol is emitted from it) is named and in evangelism and scare people, this color is used. Yellow color is the images of lion alone and also with the sun points to a symbol of Islamic Iran; as the lion is the symbol of Asadollah (Lion of God, as Imam Ali (AS) and the sun is a symbol of the summer that happened on Ashura at that time). It is also a symbol of guard and patrol can be seen in many pictures of tombs.

**Figure 1:** Painting images Ascension of the Prophet Muhammad - the tomb of Aqa Syed Kazim located in the highlands Amlsh- photographer, author, summer 2007
Azure or dark blue color is a symbol of peace and pleasing. Thus, in many pictures painted on the tombs of saints are seen on an apostle of God, and blue represent the two dominant elements in the world as well; the sky and water both of which refer to God's mercy. Blue shirt of the prophets is a sign of their heavenly signing flying as well. Using the blue color in the horse is a sign of readiness for martyrdom, and the flight is to the Lord (Figure 2).

Figure 2: The tomb of Aqa Seyyed Kazem in Babajan valley situated in the highlands of Amlsh-photographer, author, summer 2007

Black color in some buildings (paintings of Shrines) is a great sign of indifference to material life (Figure 3). In this work, the Prophets are wearing clothes in black color, which is a sign of mourning and a sign of their great.

Figure 3: House painters of prisoners of Karbala, the tomb of Aqa Seyyed Mohammad located in the village of Lycha’- photographer, author, summer 2007
Green color is a sign of perseverance and stability, purity, holiness and faith (Lusher, 2010, p 87). It is also one of the dominant colors among the statues of saints in the pictures tombs of saints. The remarkable thing is the color of Imam Hussein’s shirt (AS) and his companions in some of the paintings in the tombs of saints which it is painted before Ashura with green or cobalt blue color but in some of the images it is red which this color indicates the time of day associated with the Ashura and martyrdom.

Symbol on the tombs of saints
Throughout the history, the symbol is a single beacon visual identity, used as a means of visual communication. Different roles, signs and writings on the wall can be all as an attempt to express feelings, communication and attempt to assert (Goshayesh, 1995: p 7). Universal symbol is part of the essence of spiritual life. It is an icon of truth of transcendental and it is one of the means of communication of facts which made obscure limits of their language, so, the icon cannot be just as a form. In any case, the symbol is discussed in this image; a symbol that has always been and will be with humans. We know that primitive man expressed his entire desired end in the form of symbol and allegory and were trying to achieve perfection by symbolic rituals. In general, the field of culture or supernaturalism in which a symbol creates and the symbol is a key to enter to wider territory from him and wider than a human using it (Elyadeh, 2005, p 96).

In the holy shrines, where it is the field of culture and religious beliefs of Iranian society, it is the best places for an icon image. Icon image rooted in ideology and the community remained as a genuine cultural. Sacred art is based on the ontological structure of human nature and the divine religion is fascinated by the religious community, this language is based on the capabilities of the human being having the characters of a variety of fledgling his own and the manifestation which is joined in the sacred in mythology and places of holy temple, artwork, tools and performing religious ceremonies and rituals into the realization, these works reveal the type and form of holiness as an expression of the spiritual world as and also make clear the position of humanity to the sanctity of the moment of history (Elyadeh, 1993, p 22). Therefore, each sacred art is based on knowledge and form recognition, or in other words, the knowledge of esoteric rituals is an integral part of forms (Bourkhart, 2000, 150).

But what we receive from shapes and images engraved on the tombs of saints, through ourselves and according to our beliefs, we interpret them. In other words, forms of expression of religious art and sacred art, accept those interpretations. In explaining the esoteric meaning and symbolic interpretation of such artwork is trying to frontend and backend work has been reconciled and try to show unity and centrality acquired as a result of the interpretation the art; religious backgrounds of human knowledge shape art forms in a way that implies those sacred realms, Such interpretations discuss such works of art necessarily through the views of religious knowledge to interpret the work of art (Norouzi Talab, Quarterly of Art, spring 2007, 1999).

The concepts of visual symbols painted on the tombs of saints

**Horse:** A horse is a position indicator in the myths and rituals (Hal, 2001, 24). The fate of it is inseparable from human destiny. White Horse is the sun chariot belonging to stars and because the reign of the spirit (the chariot) on all sides, turns to the imaginary beauty. Its brilliant white is a symbol of Ahura gay. Often, the person who is riding on the "Faithful and True" is the iconic image of the White Horse royal compound heroes, saints and spiritual leaders during the ascension (Knight, 2005, vol 1, 135).
**Dragon:** In general, the dragon is a symbol of Satan and evil, especially in the West (Hal, 2001, 123). Basically, the dragon such strict guard or as a symbol of evil and evil tendencies (Figure 4). In fact, it is as a symbol of evil matched with a snake (Knight, 2005, vol 1, 123).

![Figure 4: painting, bridge and hell, photographer of author, summer 2007](image)

**Wings:** Wings on the human body or animal is a divine sign and a symbol of power protection (Figure 5), also it is a flight symbol, a symbol of lightness and freedom, spirit and spiritual material (Knight, 2005, Vol. 2, 57).

![Figure 5: Saqakhaneh in Langerud, photographer, author, summer 2007](image)

**Bird:** a symbol of widespread soul ascends to heaven after death, especially when the (Hall, 2001, 39). It is a symbol that the birds are obtained in connection with the heavens and the earth. In general, a bird symbol of the spiritual, symbolizing angels is superior stage (Knight, 2005, Volume 2, 197).

**Bridge:** Bridge is a path from earth to heaven, from stage to stage superhuman man, from realm to realm beyond the senses (Figure 6).
Crown: Crown royal is a symbol of power, victory and achievement to proud (Hall, 1380, 233). After an exam, crown as the crown of the gods, is the promise of an eternal life (Knight, 2005, Volume 2, 293).

Balance: it is a symbol judgments, particularly the judgment of the soul after death (Hall, 1380, 122). It has also been recognized as a symbol of justice and balance measure (Knight, 2005, Volume 2, 338).

Tree: the tree because of its perpetual change is the symbol of life and by flying to heaven is the epitome of Qaemiyat. The tree is a symbol that indicates the status of cosmic changes, especially its leaves, which are a sign of death and rebirth.

Rainbow: it is the road and mediator between earth and sky. It is a bridge that has been drawn by helping Gods and heroes among the world. In Islamic mysticism for the rainbow has been considered seven colors and not five colors and it is a sign of the image of symbolic attributes that is reflected in the universe. In the art of Mesopotamia, it is also closeness to the seven heavens (Hall, 2005, 360).

String: The string is associated with the rise of symbolism, such as trees, ladders or cobwebs. In the Qur'an, it is also by the rise and rise of the symbol. Twine knotted cord and connects all forms of symbol and sign of someone who is hidden virtues or magical powers at its disposal (the same page, 420).

Camel: it is the example of moderation and humility (Hall, 2001, 61) (Figure 7).
Whiplash: it is a symbol of certain acts which forces repel or inhibit fertility demons that are material or spiritual growth (Knight, 2005, vol. 4, 78).

Sword: a symbol of power, strength and Justice (Hall, 1380, 155). In other words, more than anything, the sword is a symbol of the military situation and its virtue is courage (Knight, 2005, vol. 4, 84).

Candles: It is widely used as a symbol of the formalities, especially at funerals in many religions (Hall, 2001, 157).

Lion: a symbol of the sun and are extremely bright, Sultan and full of virtues. However, the symbol of power, wisdom and justice, but at the same time it is a sign of extreme pride (the same, 111) (Figure 8).

Figure 8: Lion and Sun, the tomb of Aqa Seyyed Mohammad Located in 15 km from Lahijan, photographer of writer, fall 2008

Satan: it highlights all the disturbing, dark and poorly enhancing awareness; Satan is to fall in uncertainty and ambiguity. It is in the center of the night and placed in front of God, the embodiment of light (the same, 121).

Arch: Arch is dependent on the square and circle symbol, and like the altar connects two cubic volumes and the dome, the arch is to overcome the banality of physical as well as a permanent symbol of victory (the 205).

Peacock: Peacock in some ancient was to worship ceremonies there. A pair of peacocks on both sides of the tree was sacred and sometimes every one of them was a snake in the beak. This bird is associated with the sun of gods (Hall, 2001, 66) Figure 9.

Figure 9: The tomb of Aqa Seyyed Hussain located in Lahijan, photographer of writer, fall 2008
PM or Noon: it is a sign of sacred moment, stop in a circular motion, balance of very short moment; it is also a sign of the shift in consumer inertia. The only moment of eternity is without a shadow image (Knight, 2006, Volume 4, 238).

**Nakedness:** a sign of falling to a lower level.

**Angels:** The Angels are creatures of spirit and just the merely casual-face may be able to become human. Angels are God's ministers warrant (Knight, 2006, Volume 4, 383).

**Sacrifice:** sacrificing is an act of separating from the person who is offering the sacrifice, something or someone that vow is sacred, whether a victim or an object property or one's own life. Posts and darkness separating the victim from around the world and will be presented to the Lord (Knight, 2006, Volume 4, 430).

**Resurrection:** Resurrection or Awakening the dead is to return objects, the end of the experiment, forgiveness, restitution or error correction, restoration of dignity (the same, 491).

**Child:** it is a symbol of innocence, peaceful and focused (the same, 624).

**Flowers:** Semiotics of flowers in different cultures varies, but in general, the characteristics of flowers are used for spring, autumn, youth, saying, piety (the same 743).

**Plant:** it is a dense and visible symbol of the sun. The fiery forces of Earth and the solar power plant will be received. Therapeutic or toxic power or magic power for itself has been accumulated.

**Conclusion**

Whatever remained of the distant past is cultural background, political, economic value that has countless achievements. In addition to thousands of books left in the history of culture and civilization of Iran, Guilan region with its rich historical past has been very influential in the culture and civilization of this country. The study of the symbolic elements with respect to the status of the symbols and how to apply them in the holy shrines of province of Guilan are impressive.

The history of this region is associated with the construction of numerous works of art which in terms of climate and natural moisture of the region, monuments and other artistic achievements Guilan than in other regions soon have been worn out and destroyed. In the meantime, although painting tombs of saints in Guilan are not beyond more than a century-old, most of them have been worn out and destroyed by human factors. Tradition of playing role and using the video icon at the tombs of saints Guilan has a direct relationship with ritual and religious beliefs that these places in the paintings created by the artist are evident. These symbols both in form and color and its meaning were revealed. A painter to his liking or with science and knowledge and skills as well as mastering in the concepts and symbols according to the capacity of various religious stories brought into the picture, looking at the simple, improvised journalism. In these images with colors and forms, positive and negative characters and stories they are conveyed to penetrate in the minds of the audience. By examining what has been obtained in the paper, it seems such that images used according to the traditions are often with the composition of the officials and it seems that painter of painters of the holy shrine affected coffee shop painting and in this respect, there are many similarities between painting tombs of saints and drawing coffee shop in Guilan province.

**References**

6. Kheiri, Maryam (2008), to study writing in coffee shop drawings, bimonthly of research, mirror of fantasy, No 10.
7. Jean Chevalier and Alain Gerber (2005), cultural symbols, S virtues, the first volume, Jeihun publishing, Tehran.