

EARLY MEDIEVAL ART

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Abstract: This article analyzes the process of culture formation in the early Middle Ages, the stages of development of art, science and the education system, as well as the specific features of the aesthetic values of that period. The study highlights the interaction of the cultures of the Byzantine and Islamic worlds, the influence of religious ideas on art and science, as well as the cultural ties between Eastern and Western civilizations. The article interprets the culture of the early Middle Ages as a new stage in human thought - the period of the formation of an aesthetic worldview based on divinity and spiritual beauty.

Keywords: Early Middle Ages, culture, art, science, education system, aesthetic values, Byzantine art, Islamic culture, East and West, religious thought, spirituality, aesthetic ideal.

The Early Middle Ages (c. 5th century) were a period of fundamental change in human culture. This period was characterized by the mutual integration of the art of the ancient world and new aesthetic views that emerged under the influence of the newly emerging religious culture - in particular, Christianity, Islam and Buddhism. Therefore, the art of the Early Middle Ages, while preserving the classical heritage of previous centuries, developed on the basis of new religious and philosophical ideas.

While the art of antiquity focused mainly on the beauty of the human body, the harmony of nature, and realistic depiction, in the early Middle Ages divinity, symbolism, and spiritual meaning became the main criteria for art. This process is clearly manifested in Europe - in Byzantine art, which developed after the fall of the Roman Empire, and in the Muslim East - in architecture, miniatures, and decorative arts associated with early Islamic culture.

The early Middle Ages were a period that marked a new stage in human thought, during which a system of science and education was formed on the basis of religious worldviews. The scientific heritage created in antiquity - the scientific achievements of Greek, Roman, Indian and Iranian cultures - became the foundation of medieval thought. However, this knowledge now developed in harmony with religious ideas. Therefore, early medieval science, on the one hand, was the keeper of ancient knowledge, and on the other hand, it was formed as an expression of new religious and philosophical thought.

With the spread of Islam between the 7th and 10th centuries, the system of science and education in the Muslim East developed to a high level. The hadith that "seeking knowledge is obligatory upon every Muslim" strengthened belief in and respect for science during this period. Religious schools - mosques, madrasas, and libraries - began to function as scientific centers.

The first madrasas were established in such centers as Basra, Kufa, Baghdad, Damascus, Cairo, Bukhara, and Samarkand. The "Bayt al-Hikma" (House of Wisdom) in Baghdad became the largest scientific center of the East in the 9th century during the reign of Caliph al-Ma'mun. Here, scientific works from Greek, Indian, and Persian were translated into Arabic. As a result, the fields of mathematics, astronomy, medicine, philosophy, geography, literature, and linguistics reached a new level.

During this period, great scientists such as Al-Khwarizmi, Ferghani, Ibn Sina, Al-Biruni, Al-Farabi, Tabari, Ibn Rushd emerged. For example, Muhammad al-Khwarizmi is known as the founder of algebra, and his work "Al-Jabr wa al-Muqabala" influenced all of European science. Ahmad al-Farghani made major discoveries in astronomy, and his work "The Science of Celestial Movements and Stars" served as the main textbook in medieval Europe for many centuries. Abu Rayhan Al-Biruni stands out as a universal scientist who combined the fields of natural science, history, geography, and medicine.

Muslim scholars studied ancient Greek philosophy, Indian mathematics, and Persian astronomy, enriching it and developing new scientific methods. For this reason, this period is often called the "Islamic Renaissance."

In the Byzantine part of Europe, a certain part of ancient culture was preserved. Education in this region was mainly carried out in monasteries (monastic schools). There, along with religious subjects, grammar, rhetoric, and logic were taught. The Byzantine education system played an important role in preserving the Greek language, religious writings, and ancient philosophy.

In Western Europe, scientific activity was initially under the control of the church. There were periods when ancient works were considered "sinful philosophy." However, from the 8th-9th centuries, with the "Carolingian Renaissance", a renewal of the educational system took place. During the reign of the Carolingian emperor Charlemagne (Charlemagne), palace academies were opened alongside monastic schools, which was an important stage in the formation of medieval European education.

In the early Middle Ages, education in the East was aimed at the general public, and science developed on the basis of a combination of religious and secular knowledge. In Europe, education mainly served the needs of the religious circle - the clergy. Nevertheless, scientific contacts between the two civilizations later served as a basis for the European Renaissance.

Byzantine art is one of the greatest cultural phenomena of the early Middle Ages. During this period, art was seen as a spiritual medium for expressing divine ideas and creating images of God and saints. Mosaics, frescoes, and icons became the main forms of expression of Byzantine aesthetics. In particular, the Hagia Sophia (537) is a magnificent example of architecture, which had a great influence on the subsequent development of medieval domed structures.

Byzantine artists sought to express form and space through spiritual power rather than illusion. This led to art being based more on religious content, a system of symbolic colors and shapes. The gold background, blue, and red colors symbolized divinity, eternity, and spiritual purity.

The spread of Islam in the early medieval East gave rise to a completely new cultural space. Islamic art, in its own way, bypassed pictorial realism and formed an aesthetic system based on ornament, pattern, and Arabic script (Kufic script). During this period, architecture, pattern and decorative arts, calligraphy, and applied decorative arts developed to a high level.

For example, the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem (691) is one of the oldest monuments of early Islamic architecture, combining Byzantine architectural styles with Islamic symbolism. In Uzbekistan, Islamic architecture began to take shape in the early Middle Ages, continuing the cultural heritage of ancient Sogdiana and Khorezm. Later, this direction reached a high level during the Samanids in the 9th-10th centuries.

In early medieval Europe, after the fall of the Roman Empire, new artistic trends emerged based on the culture of the "barbarian tribes" (Goths, Franks, Anglo-Saxons). The art of this period was mainly associated with metalwork, jewelry, decorated manuscripts, and religious architecture. The so-called "Celtic art", "Anglo-Saxon ornamentation", and the "Carolingian revival" were formed during this period.

Medieval culture occupies a special place in the history of human thought, art and moral outlook. During this period, aesthetic values - namely, the ideas of beauty, goodness, spirituality, faith and moral perfection - came to the fore. In antiquity, the criterion of beauty was expressed through the human body, the harmony of nature and realistic forms, while in the Middle Ages aesthetic concepts were mainly religious and divine essence was interpreted in close connection with.

The main essence of medieval aesthetic thought is the pursuit of spiritual beauty, rather than material beauty. In the art of this period, rather than depicting the beauty of man or nature, the emphasis was on spiritual purity, divine light, the ideas of eternity and salvation. Christian, Islamic and Buddhist cultures created their own aesthetic ideal in this regard.

In Christian art, beauty was interpreted as a symbol of God's power and love. Byzantine mosaics, icons, and Gothic cathedrals were built in this spirit. For example, the Hagia Sophia (6th century) or the Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris are examples of divine beauty created by human hands - they show the reflection of spirituality in matter itself.

Islamic aesthetics, in its own way, abandoned anthropomorphic (based on human images) images and expressed divine beauty through patterns, arabesques, writing, symmetry and geometric harmony. The idea in the verses of the Quran that "Allah is beautiful, he loves beauty" determined the essence of Islamic aesthetic thought. Therefore, Islamic architecture, calligraphy and decorative arts became a system of forms that symbolized divine perfection. For example, the Shahi Zinda complex in Samarkand, the Kalon Tower in Bukhara or the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem, with its patterns and balanced forms, represents divine harmony.

Medieval aesthetics saw beauty not only as an external appearance, but also in harmony with moral purity, faith and honesty. This concept became a fundamental artistic criterion in both the East and the West. For example, in Eastern literature, beauty represented the divine light, and love represented the path leading a person to spiritual purity. Alisher Navoi, Rudaki, Hafiz, Sa'di, Jomi. For thinkers like him, beauty is a means of bringing man closer to his Creator.

In the West, philosophers such as Augustine and Thomas Aquinas interpreted beauty as a gift from God, a sign of spiritual perfection. In their view, the task of art was to lead the human soul to goodness, to show divine truth. Therefore, medieval art was far from realism, but rich in spiritual content.

The aesthetic values of medieval culture were expressed through symbolic systems. Colors, geometric shapes, sculptures, patterns, and inscriptions each had their own deep meaning.

- Gold is a symbol of eternity and divine light;
- Blue is a symbol of the sky, tranquility and spirituality;
- Green is a symbol of life, renewal, and paradise;
- The circle is a symbol of perfection and infinity;
- The eight-pointed star was used in Islamic art as a symbol of divine harmony.

These symbolic systems reflect the aesthetic thinking of medieval man, that is, the ability to perceive the spiritual content behind material form.

In medieval literature, aesthetic values were expressed as symbols of love, devotion, patience, wisdom, and faith. For example, "Farhad and Shirin", "Layli and Majnun", "Yusuf and Zulaikha" In epics such as "The Beauty of the World," beauty leads a person to perfection through spiritual trials. Expressed that aesthetic perfection for medieval man was not only external beauty, but also spiritual perfection and steadfastness of faith.

The aesthetic values of medieval culture laid the foundation for the formation of a spiritual, moral approach to beauty in human history. The art, literature and philosophy of this period served as a means of bringing man closer to divine truth, discovering inner beauty. It was these aesthetic views that laid a solid foundation for the art of the later Renaissance, new philosophical movements and, in general, the formation of the aesthetics of modern culture.

Early medieval art is a period in human history when spiritual values were prioritized over material beauty, and religious imagery became the main artistic content. Therefore, the art of this period was a complex system that embodied the philosophy, worldview, and aesthetic ideals of its time, creating a solid foundation for the subsequent Renaissance.

In the early Middle Ages, science and education were important processes that laid the foundation for the preservation and further development of human thought. During this period, the Muslim East became the center of world knowledge, while in Europe the religiously based education system gradually began to shift to a scientific direction. The scientific heritage of the East later became a decisive factor in the formation of the European Renaissance.

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