

Traditional Arts of “Al Ajami - Kinnala” A Comparison

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Abstract:

Though a Globalization is a relatively recent term, its meaning has existed for hundreds or even thousands of years. When trade, and sometimes conquests helped the geographical spread of ideas and social norms. People knew and tried other cultures. These interaction and communication were the beginnings of the civilization. We are not surprised that there is a similarity between what a person- in east - eat or wear, or even practice, with what a person does in west. We will not also surprise by the emergence or practice of the same art in two completely different places and times in this big but little world. This is exactly what this research wants to say, when noticed, that some Indian artisans practice an art that is very similar and almost identical in technique and shape to a Syrian craft. This research- including the definition and description of two traditional arts (Kinnala and Al Ajami) which differ in name but similar in content - is clear evidence of intermingling and cultural exchange throughout the ages. It provides a historical overview of both arts, then as a descriptive approach it defines and describes each of them. As an analytical approach the research addresses the similarities and differences through a comparison between them. The subjects depicted by the Indian artist differ from those depicted by the Syrian artist, as well as the colors and tools used in the artwork. This because of the differences in the environment, surroundings, thoughts and beliefs of each.

This research also diversifies to shed light on the sculpture in Kinnala art, its forms, tools and materials. This was through interviews conducted personally with Indian artists and craftsmen in Karnataka, the original home of Kinnala art. Then it concludes with results and tips for reviving and developing these crafts and arts in line with the spirit of the new age, as they represent part of a long-standing heritage and history passed on from generation to generation and through the ages.

Keywords: Kinnala, Al Ajami, Traditional, Globalisation, Technique, Arts artisans, Subjects, tools, colours, Karnataka.

Received: 12/8/2023
Accepted: 14/12/2023



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مقارنة بين فنين تقليديين: الكينالا الهندي والعجمي السوري

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الملخص:

بالرغم من أن مصطلح العولمة حديث العهد نسبياً، إلا أن تاريخها عميق يرجع لمئات بل آلاف السنين. عندما ساعدت التجارة والفتوحات في الانتشار الجغرافي للأفكار والأعراف الاجتماعية. عرف الناس ثقافات أخرى وجربوها وكان هذا التفاعل والتواصل هو بداية للحضارات. لن نستغرب من وجود تشابه بين ما يأكله أو يرتديه أو حتى يمارسه شخص ما في الشرق بما يفعله آخر في الغرب. لن نتفاجأ أيضاً بظهور أو ممارسة فنون واحدة متشابهة في مكانين وزمانين مختلفين تماماً. هذا ما يسعى البحث هنا لإيضاحه، من خلال التعريف بفينين تقليديين مختلفين بالتسمية لكن متشابهين إلى حد كبير في التقنية والشكل العام. فن الكينالا الهندي وفن العجمي الدمشقي السوري، دليل واضح على الاختلاط والتبادل الثقافي على مر العصور.

يقدم هذا البحث لمحة تاريخية عن كلا الفنين، ثم كمنهج وصفي يعرف ويصف كل منهما، وكمنهج تحليلي يتطرق لأوجه التشابه والاختلاف من خلال المقارنه بينهما. فالمواضيع التي يصورها الفنان أو الحرفي الهندي مثلاً تختلف عما يصوره الفنان السوري، كذلك الألوان والأدوات المستخدمة في العمل الفني التي تختلف تبعاً لاختلاف بيئة ومحيط وفكر وعقيدة كل منهما.

يتشعب هذا البحث أيضاً لإلقاء الضوء على فن النحت في الكينالا، أشكاله و أدواته ومواده، من خلال مقابلات أجريت وبشكل شخصي مع فنانين وحرفيين هنود من ولاية كارناتاكا، الموطن الأصلي لفن الكينالا. ثم يختتم البحث ببعض النتائج والأفكار لإحياء هذه الحرف والفنون وتطويرها بما يتناسب مع روح العصر الجديد، كونها تمثل جزء من تراث وتاريخ عريق ينتقل من جيل إلى جيل وعبر العصور.

الكلمات المفتاحية: كينالا، العجمي، تقليدي، عولمة، تقنية، فنون، حرفي، مواضيع، أدوات، ألوان، كارناتاكا.

تاريخ الإيداع: 2023/8/12

تاريخ القبول: 2023/12/14



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Damascus, commonly known as Al-Sham (Arabic: الشام) in Syria, is lovingly called as the City of Jasmine by its people. It is the major cultural and religious hub in the Levant always having significant importance throughout history. It was chosen as the capital of Umayyad Caliphate in the 7th and 8th century. History sheds light on the conquerors of Damascus like Assyrians, Romans, Ottoman, The French.. depicting the great influence it went through. These invasions have constantly molded the cultural activities which existed during its time like music, art, dance, architecture etc. One of the art forms which flourished amidst these strong influences was Al Ajami (Arabic: العجمي).

About 1400 years ago, The Ajami originated during Umayyad period (the second of the four major caliphates, established after the death of Muhammed the prophet (662-750) and whose capital was the largest city Damascus.

Caliph Al-Walid bin Abd al-Malik brought in a group of artistic workers from the Persians and asked them to decorate the ceilings and walls of the Great Umayyad Mosque in Damascus.^{R2} These technicians opened new horizons to the Damascene workers at that time that they had not known about. The Damascene workers who participated in decorating the walls and ceilings of the mosque were able to quote many of the secrets of the profession to the point that they were later able to add a lot to it and introduce many innovative arts, such as geometric Arabic calligraphy in all its forms, which is based in principle on painting on wood so that embossed geometric and curved lines appear on its surface, characterized by many Accuracy and mastery. Later, Damascene artisans were able to accomplish some wonderful works of

Introduction:

Art essentially means ‘expression’. It is an expression of thoughts, emotions, beliefs, ideas, culture etc.

The historical paintings, sculptures, archeological sites and ruins are the only access we have to be able to see into the past. Art from the past gives us deeper insight of who we are and where we stand in this changing modern world. It is keeping the traditions alive for the people to seek, learn, savour and acquire value of the past.

Here an attempt has been made to understand the deeper meaning and beauty behind the two traditional art forms from two distant lands - India and Syria. These two art forms though originated in two entirely different cultural backgrounds, had the similar approach to their art. These art forms were nourished and preserved by its people for as long as possible. They speak the unsung stories of their culture.

Al- AJAMI

The term Ajami comes from the Arabic root for «Persian». This art form was evolved by hand and made with great passion and skill.^{R1}

R1 Shihabi, K. “Ornaments of Islamic Architecture in Damascus”. Ministry of Culture publications. Syria. 1996. p. 215

1. Historical context

Life prevailed on the banks of the ancient river of Barada since 9000 BC, with the Aramaeans entering the settlement to build the new capital, the city of Damascus, which went ahead to become one of the largest and the most important city of Syria holding the title of ‘The Oldest and continuously inhabited city in the world’.

loss in the country.



Fig(2)Nizam House, Damascus, Syria

“Metropolitan”, the world’s famous museum has a room within, named as “Damascus” decorated with Al Ajami.^{R3}



Fig (3) Damascus Room at Metropolitan Museum, New York, USA

R3: (www.metmuseum.org)

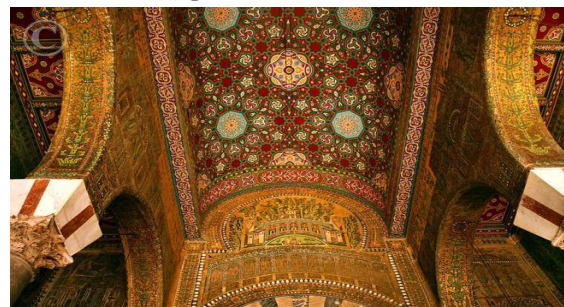
3. Al Ajami Handcraft process:^{R4,R5}

3.1. Preparing the wood:

Different sizes of polished veneer wood are used by the artists. Artists usually use it varnished by a primary material called Tarsh (Arabic: طرش) to reserve its heat and moisture and to make it an easy surface to work on. Out of the many varieties of wood available Poplar, pine and Cyprus are the usual ones used for this particular art form.

art that rose to a level that surpassed the works made by non-Arab masters of the profession, which preserved for us a unique heritage of these masterpieces that has remained in much of its splendor despite the passage of years.

R2 Al Aasi, Arabi. Junaidi, Lamia. “Heritage crafts from Damascus, an introduction to studying the history of the craft”. Cooperative printing press. Damascus. 1985. p. 89



Fig(1) Umyyad Mosque, Internal view, Syria

It can be observed that throughout the history, Aniconism which is a proscription against the creation of images of sentient beings has led to art being dominated by Islamic geometric patterns, calligraphy, and foliage patterns which can be seen on Ajami art.

2. Al Ajami as Décor

Al Ajami decorations became very prominent throughout the Ottoman Empire (1435-1923). It rose to sophisticated levels in Syria. This art was not just seen in grand mosques but also in the interior adornment of Syrian Palaces and houses prominently during the seventeenth and eighteenth century. It is dejecting to realize that this beautiful painting technique is slowly becoming extinct and is being forgotten by the modern generation and will soon be lost into history. The loss of this great art which has such a rich history will be a massive

b. Nabati Material^{R6}: A paste is prepared consisting of chalk powder, glue and water. This to be applied to the embossed part of the design. This material is called “Nabati” .



Fig(6)Applying Nabati

R6 Abouttab, Abdul Majeed. Crafts Secrets. Damascus press. Damascus. 1987.p.244

c. Colours: A mixture of colored powder (pigment) and glue is used to color the design, it is carefully brushed on the drawing using various types of brushes. Different colours are used in Al Ajami art but light colours of yellow, green and white are the most preferable. This phase is called Al Tabheeg (Arabic:التبهيج).

d . The Gilding: The Gold or silver foil is applied on certain portions of the drawing, especially that covered by Nabati material. These are pasted by synthetic resin adhesive. Gold and silver powder is also used in coloring. This is considered to be the the most important optical elements.



Fig(7)
Al Katea
(Arabic:القطع)

e. Outline of black: A black outline is used to define the forms in the created pattern using a long thin brush. This stage is called “Al Katea (Arabic:القطع)”.



Fig(4) “Metropolitan”, the world’s famous museum has a room within, named as “Damascus” decorated with Al Ajami.^{R3}

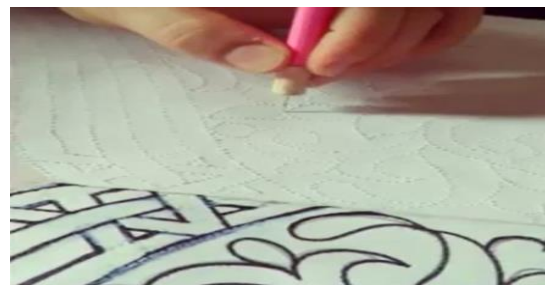
3.2. Preparing the putty:

Unique putty is prepared which is made up of zinc, ceruse and glue, this paste is then spread on a flat wooden surface and a cutter tool is used to flatten the surface and have accurate thickness. This putty is then left to dry for about one or two days and then it is ready to absorb the colours.

3.3. Drawing Process:

a. Tracing paper: Artisans draw the desired pattern using a fine tracing paper that allows the artist to make accurate shapes. A pin is used to make holes

in the paper and then charcoal powder is applied on these holes to effectively print the design on the dried putty. Some drawings are done freehand to make any minor changes showing the skills of the artist.



Fig(5)



Fig.(9)
Geometric
Motifs

b. Geometric motifs: Artisans used active and dynamic lines that give a sense of movement, consistency, tranquility to stimulate the geometric patterns like the square, circle and triangle...

c. Calligraphy: Calligraphy and Qur’anic verses (آيات قرآنية) are extensively used in Al Ajami artwork.



Fig(10) Calligraphy and Qur’anic versus

R4: Al Aasi, Arabi. Junaidi, Lamia. “Heritage crafts from Damascus, an introduction to studying the history of the craft”. Cooperative printing press. Damascus. 1985. p. 88

R5: (Researcher, interviews with Syrian artisans at Al Tkeyeh Al Sulaymaniyah التكية السليمانية, 2017).

KINNALA ART

f. A vintage look: The final phase in Al Ajami process is to apply a hazel oil on the painting, then wipe it with a cloth to give a vintage colour.

3.4. The Patterns

Al Ajami is an Islamic art which was essentially practiced by Muslims. They had a strong belief in their religion which was against the depiction of god, prophets or any human being. This had large impact on Al Ajami. The subjects and motifs which were painted, were against any depiction of human forms and animals. *Look p.9*

a. Floral motifs: Artisans were inspired by the nature. They uniquely took inspiration from forms like flowers, leaves, stems etc. and had the ability to give it an abstract form. The most indispensable flowers which were applied through Al Ajami art are Lotus, Tulip, Arabian Jasmin, and Carnation flower which refers to elegance, kindness, and love.

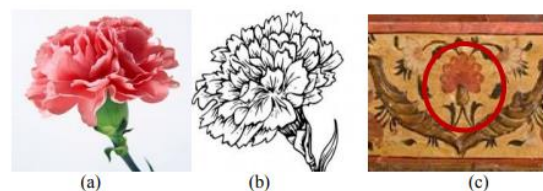


Fig (8) Carnation flower with compound petals, (a) real picture of Carnation, (b) the outline of Carnation, (c) Ajami paneling showing Carnation flower
Ajami paneling showing Carnation flower



Fig(11) Krishna* Enthroned, Northern Deccan, c.1650

Fig(12) Floral Motifs in Northern Deccan paintings, Lalita Ragini, c. 1650



Fig(13) Traditional dolls and Fruits done by Kinnala artisans- workshop at Karnataka Chitrakala Parisheth. 2016. (Researcher)

Far from Syria towards the east in the southern part of India exist a small village named Kinnhal, famous for its art form called Kinnala.

1. Historical context

In India, the arts were influenced by many trends coming from different places. Islamic influences that came with the Persians and Mughal had actually the big impact on the Indian arts. Understanding the basic change which had occurred in India during 12th and 13th centuries is necessary. Muslim rulers, mainly Turkish speakers from Iran, Central Asia and Afghanistan dominated most of northern India establishing governmental institutions and artistic traditions which were closely linked to the civilization of the eastern Islamic world, ruling from Delhi, and subdued the Deccan (South India), which until then had been ruled by Hindu Kings^{R7}. There was also the influence of the Arab world because of the commercial links between the Arab countries and southern India in addition to the political affects which were the source of forming various ethnic groups.

R7 Zebrowski, Mark. Deccani Painting, University of California Press. 1983. pp.8-9

The strong cultural links with the Middle East especially Iran have led to sensitive, highly integrated blend of indigenous and foreign art forms. Islamic elements became obvious in south India arts such as what we see in Deccani miniature paintings in 16th century which had the big influences on Kinnala Art. Look p.8

Kinnala art didn't develop into a distinctive style but remained a mere painting and retained its rustic flavor; one of the reasons is that chitragaras lacked the academic art education of the British.

The Kinnal craft process is delicate and time consuming. To truly appreciate the skills and time put into each of these craft pieces, it is important to understand the process of the craft.



Fig(15) The Gilding

2. Kinnala Handcraft process ^{R8}

2.1. Preparing the wood:

Kinnal art painting is done on the wooden piece which is cut into different shapes and sizes like square, circle, octagon and hexagon. The shape of it is decided by the request of people wanting the art. Light “Polaki” wood is used by kinnal artisans. They smoothen it and paint with a wood primary to prepare for painting.

2.2. Drawing Process

The small village called Kinnhal located in a town in Koppal district of North Karnataka* in India. This town is essentially famous for Kinnhal art. Historically the growth of Kinnal style can be traced from 1500 onwards. The elaborate and intricate

Krishna* is a major deity in Hinduism.

Karnataka* is a state in southwest India.

Hampi* is an ancient village in Karnataka.

Kinnal paintings that adorn the numerous temples of Karnataka stand as testimony to the land's timeless love for arts and crafts. It can be said that Kinnala art have evolved primarily from the murals. Kinnala artists are also known for their exquisite carvings in wood. The intricate work on the wooden chariot at Hampi* was said to be the works of their ancestors, whom their common patronage led to a mellow blend of Hindu and Islamic art forms that is a signature feature of the Kinnal art. The artisans who were called the Chitragara (literally means one who draws/paints) did multiple jobs of cutting, polishing, painting and ornamentation.

Kinnala artists have now come a long way from decorating temples and adapted themselves to the changing times and taste incorporating new designs and forms. They began over the period of time creating the sculpture by making the traditional dolls, cradles, fruits, and animals like horses, tigers and lions.



Fig(14) Drawing the border(Researcher)

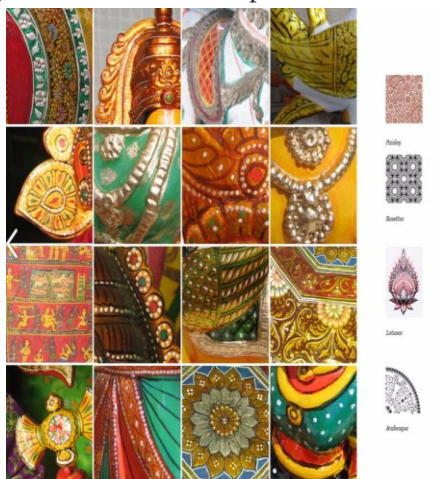
applied to preserve the picture and keep the colors gloss.



Fig.(16)The Gilding

2.3. The Patterns

Different types of patterns are used to decorate the painting. A floral such as lotuses, roses, leaves and buds, geometric as basic stripes, diamonds, dots...



Fig(17) Kinnala motifs

R8: (Researcher, interviews with Kinnala artisans, conducted in CKP-Karnataka Chitrakala Parishath during a workshop in 2016).

3. Sculpture in Kinnala art ^{R9}

It would not do justice to this art form if we do not mention the sculpture part and making dolls.

a. Carbon copy sheet: Kinnala artisans usually use the carbon copy sheet to trace the patterns. Some areas are painted freehand by the master artisan without marking. The process started by drawing the borders using a paint which is a mixture of chalk powder, local adhesive and pigment. The inner patterns are drawn after the completion of the borders. The characters of mythology like mudras, deities, birds and animals are drawn in the centre to enhance the beauty of the painting

b. Adding Gesso: A paste is prepared consisting of chalk powder, gum and water. This to be applied to the embossed part of the design, to make it prominent.

c. Colours: Vibrant colors are filled in the Gaps between the inner and outer border to give an attractive look. In recent days, the synthetic paints are used by most of kinnala artisans, few of them are striving hard to use natural dyes which are difficult and time-consuming to make, they prepare white from limestone and various colors from plants and tin, they also use red earth and carbon black (lamp black). These colors are mixed with watery gum.

d. The Gilding: Aluminum foil is pasted on the embossed area, traditionally pure silver or gold sheet were used for the Kinnal painting, even those days it's used if the budget allows. Golden color is applied over the aluminum foil. This is obtained by mixing yellow color (dye), water and wooden polish.

e. Outline of black: Outlines are drawn using black color to highlight the embossed work over aluminum foil.

Marble stone is used to run on the work for shine. After the colors dry up a thin layer of varnish is



Fig(20) Tamarind paste (Researcher)

- Sculpting the details such as the facial features after applying the tamarind paste again.
- Priming the surface with the tamarind gum then it is coated twice with the white chalk powder as a preparation for painting.
- Before painting, gold areas are highlighted with aluminum foil or gold leaf.
- In the recent times we can observe how the dolls are painted with a modern color palette using synthetic paints giving it a unique shine to reach out to the current market and make it popular. Previously artisans were using the natural colors which were prepared by them.
- Figures which were commonly sculpted in the kinnal art were the religious and traditional figures such like Gods and Goddesses. Fruits and animals were also sculpted.

R9: (Researcher, interviews with Kinnala artisans,



Fig.(18) (Researcher)

- The Chitragara (artist) use the light weight wood for making traditional dolls and sculptural piece. For each part of the figure a core made up of strong wood is used.
- The wooden parts are assembled using tamarind paste which is efficiently made from tamarind seeds and saw dust.
- A layer of cloth is applied on the tamarind paste to prevent cracks; it is pasted also with tamarind gum



Fig(19) (Researcher)

R10 Najat, Navina. Sardar, Marika. "Sultans of the South Arts of India's Deccan Courts 1323-1687". Metropolitan Museum of Art. New York. 2008. p.2



Fig(21)

Similarities in floral motifs between Islamic and Kinnala arts: long leafy vine bearing blossoms.

Fig.(right): A central illuminated vase motif on the colophon page of the khalillullah Kitab-i Nauras manuscript, Bijapur, late 16th century.

R11: Najat, Navina. Sardar, Marika. "Sultans of the South Arts of India's Deccan Courts 1323-1687". Metropolitan Museum of Art. New York. 2008.p.40



Fig (22) painted wooden art of Kinnal

Similarities in floral motifs between Islamic and Kinnala arts

Fig.(right): Border of Deccan carpet, Victoria and Albert Museum.

R12: Najat, Navina. Sardar, Marika. "Sultans of the South Arts of India's Deccan Courts 1323-1687". Metropolitan Museum of Art. New York. 2008.p.116.

done in CKP-Karnataka Chitrakala Parishath during a workshop in 2016).

THE COMPARISON BETWEEN KINNALA AND AI AJAMI ART (DIFFERENCES & SIMILARITIES)

1- HISTORY:

Al Ajami dates back to the 7th century AD, while Kinnala dates back to the 16th century AD.

2- INFLUENCE OF ISLAMIC ART:

Both Al Ajami and Kinnala arts are influenced by Islamic art.

The influence of Kinnala by Islamic art:

The influence of Islamic art on Kinnal art can be attributed to the historical interactions and cultural exchanges that took place in the region. During the medieval period in India, the Deccan region, where Kinnal is located, witnessed the presence of various Islamic dynasties, including the Bahmani Sultanate and later the Deccan Sultanates (1323-1687).^{R10}

Islamic art, with its rich traditions of calligraphy, geometric patterns, and intricate designs that can be seen in Deccan miniatures, embroidered textiles and metalworks, had a considerable impact on artistic practices in the region^{R10}. The patronage and influence of Islamic rulers and their courts likely contributed to the assimilation of certain artistic elements into the local art forms, including Kinnal art.

This influence can be observed in the intricate designs, geometric patterns, and motifs found in Kinnal art. The use of repetitive patterns, floral motifs, and intricate detailing by Kinnal artisans bears resemblance to the artistic aesthetics found in Islamic art.

R13 Dhiyab Hindi, Saleh. Khaled Al-Kilani, Khaleda. “Islamic Art: Its Concept and Standards”, Faculty of Educational Sciences, Hashemite University, Jordan, 2018. p. 499.

R14 Hammoud, Majed. Al Fayyad, Mohammad. “Traditional Crafts in Syria”, The General Union of Craftsmen-Culture and Media office, Syria, 2010. p. 235. 269.

R15 Hammoud, Majed. Al Fayyad, Mohammad. “Traditional Crafts in Syria”, The General Union of Craftsmen-Culture and Media office, Syria, 2010. p. 261



**Fig(23) Braids and floral motifs (curved, circular and twisted lines)
painted wooden art of Ajami**

R16: Shihabi, K. “Ornaments of Islamic Architecture in Damascus”. Ministry of Culture publications. Syria. 1996. p. 216



Fig. 24, Kinnala Chitragara,(Researcher)

3- SUBJECTS:

Al Ajami was largely practiced by Muslims as mentioned, so the subjects and motifs that painted

Fig.(left): painted wooden art of Kinnal

The influence of Al Ajami by Islamic art:

Historically, Damascus was a major urban center in the Islamic world and a center for art and culture. The city has many mosques, schools and palaces that reflect the prominent influence of Islamic art on architecture and decoration.

In our research related to Al Ajami craft, we can see the characteristics of Islamic art^{R13} clearly evident in the craft, as consistent and certain evidence of Al Ajami influence by this art. This can be seen through the dislike of depicting living creatures in order to preserve the integrity of the Islamic faith and staying away from imitating the Creator in his creation, turning away from anthropomorphism and imitating nature. In all elements of Islamic decoration, as well as in floral and geometric elements in particular, there is a tendency towards abstraction and non-adherence to natural forms through the use of geometric units such as adjacent circles, braids, broken and interlaced lines, as well as geometric shapes such as the triangle, square, pentagonal rhombus and hexagon. Even plants moved away from their natural shape and appeared abstract, so that nothing remained of the stem and leaves except curved, circular, or twisted lines connected to each other Fig. ..Muslims were particularly interested in calligraphy associated with Qur’anic verses for the sake of blessing and purification, in which the Kufic script was the most widely used.^{R14}

In general, we can say that during the Umayyad era and beyond, the Damascene wooden crafts including Al Ajami were inspired by many elements of Islamic art and incorporated them into its techniques and designs, giving this unique artistic craft its own identity and beauty.^{R15}

“This point is also considered to be part of the religious doctrine which forbids the killing of animals in Hindu religion while it’s permissible in other religions”

- **Colours:** Earlier natural dyes were used in both arts to paint the artworks. These dyes were derived from plants like vegetables, wood or from minerals. In the recent days artisans use the chemical pigments to make the colors and varnish.

- **Brushes:** Delicate and smooth brushes are used by both artists. In Kinnala, brushes for the finer details are made up of bamboo stick, thread and squirrel tail.



Fig.(27)

- **Gilding:** In both, Kinnal and Al Ajami gold or silver foil is applied on some portions of the drawing using synthetic resin adhesive to stick it. Sometimes gold and silver powder is used also.



Fig(28) Gilding

- **Final touch:** Last step and before fixing the work with varnish, a vintage color is given to Al Ajami

were against the depiction of Gods, Human forms and animals which were proscribed. Hence we observe a lot of floral and geometric patterns and calligraphy, where as in Kinnala we can notice the blend of both Hindu and Islamic influences so in addition to the nature and floral and geometric patterns, the subjects are inspired by Hindu mythology, Gods, Goddesses, animals and religious symbols, because they are not restricted in the Hindu religion.

4- PRACTISE:

Both Kinnala and Al Ajami are handmade process. They are completely made by hands at all stages. Mass production or machines are not used, that is why these artworks last for more than 60 years.

Al Ajami and Kinnal arts are artistic practices within the family; they are decorative arts that traditionally are defined by their relationship to functional and utilitarian products.

In both Kinnal and Ajami, the art is practiced by independent artists working alone or in small groups.

Both Kinnala and Al Ajami paintings are rarely dated or inscribed with the names of artists.

Kinnala art is a painting and sculpture practice, whereas Al Ajami is only painting.

5- TECHNIQUES

The prominent material: The paste which is applied to some portions of the painting to make it prominent is called “Nabati” in Al Ajami; the gum which is used to make this paste is derived from the animals and called red glue. In Kinnal art, the paste is called “Gesso”, the gum which is used here to make the paste is derived from plants and trees called the tree gum.



Fig(31) Al Ajami

Adding prominent material:



Fig(32) Kinnala

artwork, by applying a Hazel oil color on the painting and then wiping it by a cloth.

In Kinnal the artist uses a kind of stone to rub the surface to give a shine look.



Fig (29) The Vintage color in Al Ajami decoration

The Comparison in pictures:

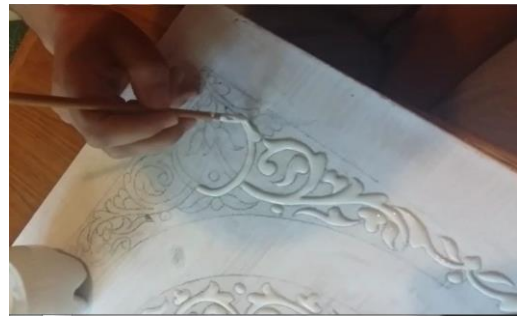
Drawing:



Fig. 30 Kinnala artwork



Fig(35) Al Ajami



Fig(33) Al Ajami



Fig (36)Depicting spiritual entities in Kinnala art.
The detail: For Lakshmi, the Goddess of wealth and good fortune.

The philosophy of Kinnala and Al Ajami arts:

The Philosophy of Kinnala Art:

Kinnala art is an integral part of the cultural and

Gilding:
Final work:



Fig. 34 Kinnala

Al-Ajami craft carries a deep philosophy that is connected to Arab culture and heritage. It reflects the spiritual and cultural values of Arab nations and enhances Arabic ornamentation as a means of artistic expression and communication. Here are some philosophical aspects of this craft:

1-Beauty and Harmony: Beauty is considered one of the fundamental values in Arab culture. Al-Ajami aims to showcase the beauty and harmony in Arabic ornamentation and calligraphy through the balanced and harmonious arranging of geometric and curved shapes and intricate patterns.

2-The link to religion Al-Ajami is closely linked to Islamic culture. It is used to decorate mosques, religious schools and houses, and depict the continuity.

3-Unity, diversity and preserving of heritage.

Recommendations:

Advices to develop and keep such crafts alive:

Al Ajami and Kinnala arts have been passed down from generation to generation. Though they are still practiced, their existence does not mean they are not endangered. Revivalism and documentation are the most fundamental elements to preserve and protect the crafts.

Revivalism project include workshops and camps at both urban and rural areas to spread of knowledge about these art forms. It should focus on how to introduce these arts and crafts to the new generations. This will help them to explore new avenues in this field and see potential in these unique crafts to take it to the next level.

-Workshops with foreigners can also provide inspiration and innovation in techniques from different cultural background, this will help the growth of any art form.

-Training the women of low income to learn, practice and continue the craft; this empowers them

artistic heritage of the Kannada region, characterized by its philosophical and spiritual depth, reflecting the profound aesthetic of Kannada culture. Kinnala artists aim to embody beauty and spirituality in their works, enhancing artistic and emotional expression. The colors and motifs used in Kinnala are also part of the region's symbols and cultural heritage.

Here are some important philosophical aspects associated with this traditional art form:

1-Spirituality and Religion: Kinnala art heavily focuses on expressing religious stories and myths. It serves as a means of communication with the spiritual and supernatural entities, conveying reverence and veneration for deities, saints, and spiritual thinkers. Spirituality is reflected in the intricate details and distinctive choice of religious symbols in the paintings and designs.

2-Hindu Philosophy: Kinnala art is greatly influenced by Hindu philosophy, incorporating concepts such as Darshana (eternal truths), Dharma (moral duty), and Karma (actions and destiny). Kinnala serves as a medium to embody these concepts in the artwork, utilizing symbols and motifs to express profound philosophical ideas and spiritual equilibrium that affects the energy present within the artwork, contributing to harmony and inner peace.

3-Inner Communication and Contemplation: Kinnala art provides an opportunity for inner communication and contemplation. Immersion in envisioning and creating the paintings is a part of the spiritual process, enabling the artist to connect with oneself and express deep emotions and thoughts. Contemplating the paintings also allows viewers to engage with the spirituality and philosophy embedded in the artwork.

The Philosophy of Al Ajami Art:

and Al Ajami arts are good examples of these mixtures and blend, that's why we find many similarities between these two arts.

Understanding these two art forms in such detail gives an insight to think about all the art forms and how rich their cultural background is to make the art what it is. It is mesmerizing to observe how the art forms are closely related and has major influence from the place it comes from and also its geographic location. Having seen all this and understanding its importance, it is very important for us as artists to take a stand and protect these endangered art forms which have so much to offer to the society. We need to create a social responsibility amongst people and ask them to look at art and crafts much more than its beauty. This will not be easy and we have to constantly keep working towards it with a hope that art will be

Funding: This Research is funded by Damascus University-Funder no (501100020595).

in earning a stable livelihood and also keeps the art alive.

- Generating appreciations for the cultural heritage and restoring dignity in craft practices which is very important.

- Craft can survive when it is made utilitarian; by creating the possibilities for including the craft in architecture and public spaces as installations.

- Promote the talents of local artisans through giving them a platform to exhibit their art and crafts through exhibitions, open theatres and stalls.

- At a certain point, ideas were exhausted so the challenge is to bring in a design intervention that suits our contemporary life styles and desires. Innovation in design and its utility is fundamental.

Craftsmanship and Technology:

Nowadays, the whole world is becoming over-technological. Everything is getting kind of very hectic and technological focused. But we have to keep a balanced approach, by using something handmade and handcrafted. Yet not being opposed to the use of technology but combining with technology. We need and have to use technology but in collaboration, or in communication with something kind of handmade and artistic. And this is the future of the world of lighting and design.

Conclusion

The similarity of some arts between West and East is an indication to the mix in cultures and civilizations that sometimes comes with occupation and colonization. The Mughal and the Persians have entered India as well as the Arab countries. They influenced and were influenced by the people and civilizations they occupied. This fusion led to the emergence of new arts which are a combination of the country's original arts and the foreign arts. With the preservation of the character of the place and the country in which these arts appear. Kinnala

-With Kinnala artisans: Karnataka Chitrakala Parishath; Bangalore; India; conducted by researcher; September 2016.

Photo credits:

-Books: Figures: 11-12, 21-23

-Researcher: Figures: 13-14, 18-20, 24, 31.

-Internet: Figures: 1-10, 15-17, 25-30, 32-36.

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