The Meaning of Order in Persian Painting (The Case Study of Mourning on the Death of Timur)

Mansour Hessami¹ & Soudabeh Safari¹

¹ Alzahra University, Iran

Correspondence: Mansour Hessami, Alzahra University, Iran. E-mail: m.hessami@alzahra.ac.ir

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Abstract

The Mourning on the death of Timur is adapted from the Timurid Zafar-Nameh (The Book of Victory), 935 AH - 1529 AD, which is authored by Sharaf al-Din Ali Yazdi. Painting Works in this book are attributed to Kamal al-Din Behzad. The structure of this image in this research is taken into account.

The aim of this study is to explore hidden and clear structures of the above image. Apart from displaying the painter's ability in using visual means to express the content better, the present paper proves arranging visual elements and the existence of a regular structure in this image. Also, symbolic secrets and meaning of numbers are used to create an order in infrastructure of the painting; four numbers are obtained that in many cases, they are repeated in arrangement of the image elements in addition to proving the existence of strong organization and composition in this artwork, symbols of death and eternal life are concerned with the image subject. This is another reason for non-random composition of the visual elements and the existence of its strong structure.

Keywords: Behzad, order, Persian painting, Timur (Tamerlane), Zafar-Nameh

1. Introduction

Iranian painting has endured multiple changes during history due to past civilizations, neighboring culture, time and social conditions and artist's preoccupations and thus, various works of art have been made.

Iranian painting with historical meaning is the main topic selected by Iranian artists and it has been a pretext for their artistic performances. The rich culture and traditions of the people in this era immersed in Iranian painting and provided the books with concinnity. This effect is individual, according to the personal style of each artist's artwork representing one united matter, but in the details, each one presented a distinct viewpoint. Among the most reputed artists of Iranian painting stands Kamal al-Ddin Behzad who led to innovations with transcendental ideas. Alongside the content, he tried to express his own thoughts and opinions on the subject. Behzad worked on social issues with a humanistic approach, a proceeding that was unprecedented before him. With delighted imaginary and special attention to the image, he represented some hidden parts of the story, hidden from other painters' view.

In the course of Iranian painting, some artists have illustrated the theme of mourning. Meanwhile, researches shown that the structure and the relevance between different elements of the image have less been considered. It must be said, one of the reasons for the persistence and beauty of Iranian painting is the existence of discursive principle beneath these works. They give the paintings enough consistency and aesthetic principles. Considering this fact, would help to enrich and enhance the understanding of these artworks. The results of the statistical analysis in this study will indicate that the painter is fully aware of the symbolic meaning of numbers he used to achieve the order meaning in the image. The present article after defining the terms "order" and "painting", introduces the Timurid Zafar Name 935 A.H in brief, explores the painter's solutions to reach a desirable image display, then studies the ruling elements in the selected miniature "The Mourning on the Death of Timur" considering the symbolic meaning of numbers.

2. Definitions

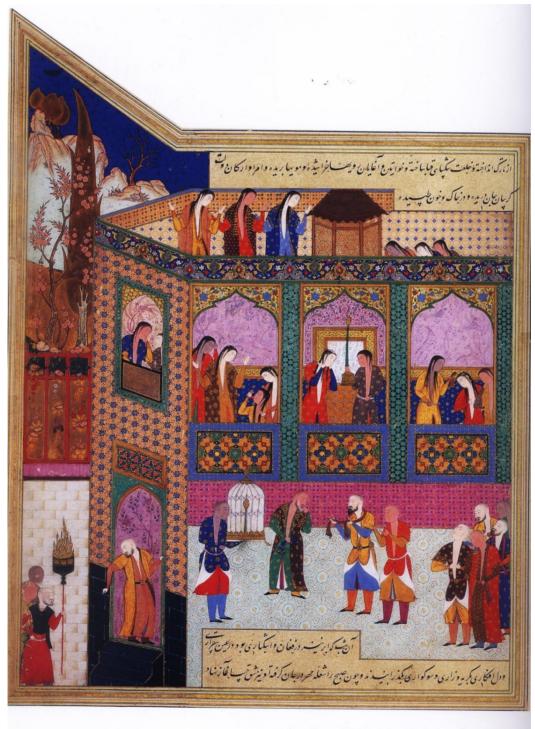
Order: "elements of the plan being regular and in order, meaning that all items are following the same way and are used by one single method. Contrariwise is the irregular layout mode." (Dondis, 1973:159)

Persian Painting: "Fine art illustrations with precious delicate design, alongside with decorative quality, which has long been used in various ways in the East." (Pakbaz, 2010:599)

Analyze: "Literally, analyzing is the differentiation of all components odf a composition in purpose of understanding the whole matter." (Barnett, 2012:63)

Positioning: The term in this article is meant to identify the positioning of each element in the painting and recognition of the meaningful relationship between one element with the other components of the composition. (Source: authors)

3. Timurid Zafar Name 935 AH – 1529 AD



مراسم سوگواری مرگ تیمور،ظفرنامهٔ تیموری، کمال الدین بهزاد، هرات



Zafar Name also known as Fath Name Saheb Gharani, Amir Timur Chronicle or Humayun Fath Name is a panegyric book about life, victories, battles and events of Timur's reign, <u>written</u> in 9 AH / 15 AD, which afterwards became source of many chronicle books.

Timur having special interest in history usually had scribes with him in his battles who were responsible to register the events. Zafar Nameh first was written by Nizamuddin Abdul Shami at the request of Timur. Sharaf al-Din Ali Yazdi compiled his own Zafar Nameh inspired by the prescription of Shami's Zafar Nameh which had been written in Uyghur. Yazdi was a reputed man among the historians and the writers of the second half of 8th and the first half of 9th century A.H, he's pseudonym in poetry was Sharaf. He was known to be virtuous and as an art lover, began writing the Zafar Nameh in Shiraz on the command of Sultan Ibrahim and finished it in 828 A.H. He also added some parts until the year of 831 A.H. He composed his work in Persian with eloquent prose and most of his own Persian poems, proverbs and Koranic evidences. This Edition contains 24 images and is being preserved in Golestan Palace (Norouzian, 2007:73-76; Aziz-Zadeh, 2011:56; Ahmadi, 2000:22).

This manuscript has been developed and implemented at the beginning of the rule of Shah Tahmasp Safavid. At the time Herat was the main Safavid manuscript production center and Behzad was the one presiding the atelier. Zafar Name was illustrated in the directorship of Behzad and his apprentices such as Sheikh Zadeh and Ghasem Ali (Pakbaz, 2009:87). Themes painted in Zafar Name in 935 AH includes, scenes of war, feasts and reception of Timur and also his death.

Mourn on the death of Timur is <u>one of the themes</u> in the manuscript, illustrated by Behzad. This edition of Zafar Nameh is registered as number 708 among the several other versions which is being preserved now at Golestan Palace Library. This edition is made with small folio cut (23 * 37 cm) and 750 pages (19 lines per page) and written in Nastaliq by Sultan Mohammad Noor on Dowlat Abadi paper and the 24 watercolor paintings are attributed to Kamal al-Din Behzad. The external cover is gold beat illustrated with Chinese clouds and the inside cover is decorated with wonderful burnt leather bound (Semsar, 2000:130).

4. An Analytic Approach towards the Timur's Death Mourn

As noted, this illustration's formal structural survey is an analysis using software in order to study the relation between elements and to discover the obvious and hidden rhymes between them:

Diameter: the intersection of the two rectangular picture's frame lines forms a lozenge-shape in the center of the image containing two mourning figures. The appearance of these two figures shows that they're the most influenced personage to hear the lamentation event and contribute greatly to transfer their feelings of sadness to the image. The diameters emphasize noticing the two characters.

Vertical symmetric line: This line drawing shows the figures right-side major density compared to the left side. The number of the figures on the right-side is 17 and on the left side of the image comes to 13. This means the bodies' movement from left to the right is increasing. Therefore, that part of the image with the main subject of the story contains more bodies, causing more attention to the Palace (mourning site) and as a result more emphasis on the content of the story. The numbers 13 and 17 are noticed highly in this analysis.

Feet Positioning: by connecting the feet positions, a crescent is formed at the bottom of the frame which reveals the hidden order among them. Feet locations show a decreasing density from left to right and an evolution in the order of 5, 4, 2, 2, 2. Meanwhile, every body's feet are in one direction except for the one with feet on both sides. In fact, this personage has the legs open to the sides. The figure is almost standing at the longitudinal axis of the image and the figures around turned to face him. Thus, in addition to causing symmetry in the asymmetry, it helps preserving the visual balance of the image just like a lever.

Hands positioning: The connection of hands to each other in every plan shows regular and gradual tapering of the line's length from the bottom of the plan to the top. The number of hands is 9 in the upper part, 17 in the middle and 16 at the bottom. The numbers 9 and 17 can be seen in this analysis again.

Heads positioning: The number of heads at the bottom of the plan is 13, 1 in the middle and 6 in the upper plan. By drawing the line of the heads, the order of the heads' location can be noticed. The connective lines in the lower part between heads are long then slowly shortened upward. We see number 13 in this analysis here again.

Heads, hands and feet positioning: By tracing a line connecting heads, hands and feet, a kind of relation between some of them can be noticed. Actually, the above mentioned lines crate parallel movements, which prove the ordering in their location. The arrangement in vertical, horizontal and diagonal lines is another marvel, expressing organized and hidden calculation in the composition.

Feet positioning: Horizontal lines of the feet positioning create four ordered parallel segments from the longest to the shortest.

Hands positioning: with interconnection of the hands location, parallel lines are created consisting horizontal, vertical and diagonal lines that can be a source of stability in the image above.

Heads positioning: through interconnection of the heads location, parallel lines are created consisting horizontal, vertical and diagonal lines proving the existent order of he heads.

Geometric divisions: By counting each half figure, as a full body, the numbers of bodies in each of the triangular intersection resulted from intersected diagonals diameters will be of 8, 10, 10 and 14 that are all multiples of 2.

Epigraph: The exclusivity, of Behzad's work is the themes and lyrics locations, are all chosen by himself. (Shirazi, 1382:92) One of the interesting points, is that epigraph's cadre is exactly the same as Zafar Nameh Timurid manuscript, written by Sharaf al-Din Ali Yazdi. The epigraph's cadre stays on, up and down, opposite each other and, helps the balance, order and stability of the image. If we omit the cadre from the image, we can assume their role in achieving stability and suitable composition toward the illustration. The painter has considered inducing vertical lines by putting fractures in the scrolls and with favorable placing elements, preserving the frame for the portion of the image holding the most personages in it, and thereby the main part of the work and storytelling has been emphasized. However, in the highest section of the building, an arrow is created guiding the eye outside of the building and the nature that is in the background. And in this way, elements such as scrolls are so masterly directed and elaborated that the viewer turns into a turning point with a rhythmic circulation that will not stop in one spot.

Figures: Deep looking and special attention to human and humanistic content are paid by Kamal al-Din Behzad art work features. His works reflect the emotions and human spirit such as, compassion, pity, anger and regret. "In Persian painting, faces are illustrated with the same state for young men and women and designed with a specific format. The painter shows older men faces with beard and younger men faces without beard" (Dadkhodayva, 1388:55; Rahim Abadi, 1392:41). In This image, each separate figure has a state of his own mourning that is different from the others. Figures in this painting are not concentrated at one point and are scattered all across the image. The eye is in circulation on the image surface, and no figure is separated or unrelated from the other personages. They are gathered in a way as if they dialogue with each other, with sad faces, presenting the tragic event of Timor's death mourn.

Kamal al-Din Behzad involves ordinary and poor people in his works and uses different groups of people according to social class, temperament, inner states, customs and spirits. In this picture people in civilian clothes appear out of the mansion. They seem to be placed there deliberately in order to be distinct from main mourners inside the mansion. Behzad in purpose of further emphasizing on differences and transmission of his idea has separated distinct classes inside the palace. He has drawn their clothing in a sumptuous, elegance and unique way with the consideration that the main event is happening inside the palace. Behzad has chosen the different skin tones of the figures very carefully dispersing them in the entire image as a result; he has achieved the image beauty and color harmony.

Figures features: on the outside space lower left part 3 figures are seen. At the entrance of the palace there is a figure that seems to draw the viewer's attention into the palace by the hand gesture. This body is the only figure both in the interior and exterior of the mansion, which can be a sort of emphasizing. This also creates a connection between the interior and the exterior space of the palace. And thus the eyes of viewers are directed from the bottom of the image to upward. Also among the figures of the first plan, 2 people are looking up as a result dragging the viewer's view upward. In the upper left part of the picture, the flash-like shape of the cadre rotates the view, from the figures to outside the palace and so the eye is easily rotated all over the scene, meanwhile, the figures density is more vast in the interior of the place where the main story occurs, it is more than the outside.

All figures of women are placed in the upper plan and all the figures of the men are placed in the lower plan or as said, the first plan. In general, there are 30 figures, 17 toward the left and 13 toward the right, among them 17 women and 13 men are seen in the painting. Numbers 13 and 17 are seen widely in this painting analysis. Among them there are 2 profile faces, 28 profile faces and 6 bearded men, and 7 without beard.

Structure and space display:

"Kamal al-Din Behzad has shown special attention to palaces and mosques in Timurid Zafar Nameh illustration." (Shirazi, 92:1382) Paying special attention to the elegance of the building, the rooms and floors and tiled, geometric design and arabesque decorations added to the charm of the image. In most Iranian painting, perspective is virtually nonexistent. Simultaneous display of place and space in Iranian painting made it closer to a narrative

story. The space is two-dimensional with spatial depth and so a supernatural place is created. This feature is mostly visible in Persian miniatures and it also enhances the space vastity. "The expansion occurred from the bottom to the top creating multiple areas." (Mozafari Khah, 1391: 4, 8; Khamenei, 44: 1388)

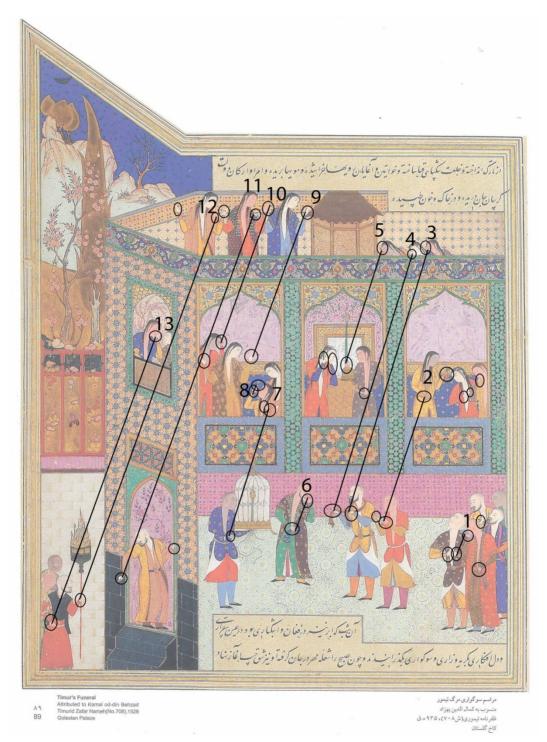


Figure 2. Parallel diagonal lines resulted from the hands positioning (source: idem)

Space viewing from both inside and outside the mansion is among the other features of the image. As mentioned above, Behzad has placed a figure at the palace's entry in purpose of connection between different spaces. Although the nature does not occupy much space in this image but the painter has not neglected attention to the

biodiversity. In order to enliven the space in the background, he has drawn mountains, sky and trees with dense blossoms, and has given a vivid and poetic expression to the landscape by painting them with certain elegance. Trees with coordinated color and unique material in the two different plans helped increasing the harmony in the picture. Diagonal lines used in the building induct the sense of unease and anxiety diffused from the subject of the story. The arrow located on the top left, along with the windows and doorways that are drawn in the lower parts, help decreasing the oblique line of the frame. And the oblique cadre itself emphasizes the tense view of the image with an atmosphere of troubling story of the Timor mourning. The fracture of the epigraph also helped the coordination of the frame with it. And it must be admitted that the compatibility of the composition together with the organization of the elements have well been understood and implemented by the artist.5

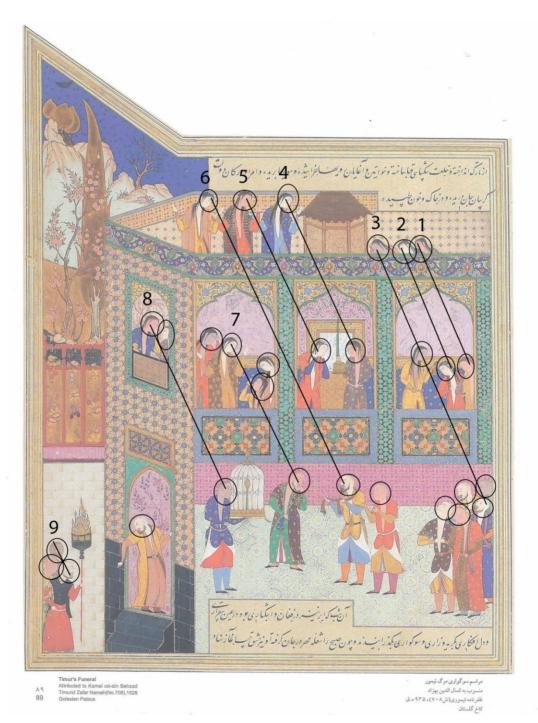


Figure 3. Parallel diagonal lines resulted from the heads positioning (source: idem)

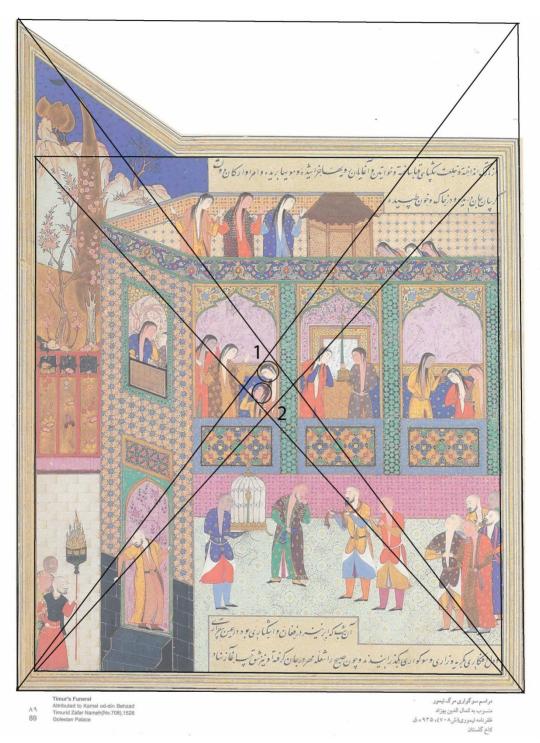


Figure 4. Number of figures in each of the triangle parts, resulted from the intersection hidden lines (source: idem)

Table 1. Summary analysis of the image

le 1. Summary analysis of the image			
The lozenge-shape frame in the center of the image has emphasized the two main mourning personages conveying the feeling of sadness.	The intersection of 2 rectangular cadre diameters		
Personage density in the main scene of the image attracts the viewer's attention. The number of bodies in each of two halves is 13 and 17.	Drawing a vertical symmetry		
By connecting the feet positions, a crescent is formed at the bottom of the frame revealing the hidden order among them. Feet location shows a gradual density from left to right, All bodies' feet are in one direction except for one figure with feet on both sides. Thus, causing a lack of symmetry in the symmetry, it has helped preserving the visual balance of the image like a lever.	Feet location		
Hands location shows regular and gradual tapering from the bottom to the top. The number of hands is 9 on the upper plan and 17 on the middle plan and 16 on the bottom plan.	Hands location		
The number of heads at the bottom of the plan is 13, and 1 on the middle plan, and 6 on the upper plan.	Heads location		
Regular communication between vertical and horizontal and diagonal lines that connect these areas to create strength and strong structure in the image and line in different directions for diversity.	Heads, hands and feet's location		
Parallel Lines in places above, in addition to image stability, with variety in different ways, causes variety of the image.	Horizontal-vertical-oblique parallel lines, hidden and visible		
4 pieces of horizontal parallel lines can be ordered from the largest to the smallest.	Feet location lines		
Three horizontal, vertical and diagonal lines create stability in the image. Parallel diagonal lines (left to right) contain two type lines with a lesser slope of 11, with a more pendant of 14. Parallel diagonal lines (from left to right) consist of two categories: with less pendant:12 / with more pendant: 13	Hand location lines		
parallel vertical lines: 13. Parallel horizontal lines: 12			
Diagonal, vertical and horizontal lines confirm heads positioning. Parallel horizontal lines: 12			
Parallel vertical lines: 8 Parallel diagonal lines (from left to right) consist of two categories: less pendant: 10 / more pendant : 11 Parallel diagonal lines (left to right) contain two	Heads location lines		
lines one with a less pendant that 8 and one more than 9 By connecting all location heads, forming a line			

in S-shape causing the eye movement from the bottom to the top of the image is formed.	
Conformity of the epigraph cadre in the image with the inscription hidden cadre in the original text of Zafar-Name, supplementing cadres to create stability, order and balance in the image;	epigraph
A frame is created by scrolls to emphasize the most important part of the image, by breaking box inscription the diagonal incline line of the image cadre is moderated	
Drawing a horizontal symmetric line: The number of bodies in each part, including half figures, as one whole body: 13 and 17 is achieved.	Geometric divisions
Vertical symmetric line: the number of bodies in each part, including half figures as mid body: 13 and 17	
The illustrative effect of colors, and the predominance of warm colors on cold colors in order to coordinate with the theme of the story and more influence correlation with outside with inside of the palace using pink and also colors flow throughout the scene.	color
At the entrance of the palace there is a figure that seems to draw the viewer's attention into the palace by his hands gesture. This body is the only figure both in the interior and exterior of the mansion. 2 people are looking upwards, as a result dragging the viewer's view upward. From the figures of the rear view and so the eye is easily rotated all over the scene. Harmony is achieved through the diversity in simple clothes of ordinary people out of the palace and luxurious clothes for people inside the palace. Different skin tones of the figures dispersed in the entire image regarding the different social classes in the picture. All figures of women are placed in the upper plan and all the men figures are placed in the lower plan or as said, the first plan. In general, there are 30 figures, 17 toward the left and 13 toward the right, among them 17 women and 13 men are seen in the painting.	figure
Although the nature does not occupy much space in this image but the painter has paid attention to the biodiversity. The main event in the palace, trees with coordinated color and unique material in the two different plans helped increasing the harmony in the picture. Diagonal lines in the sense of unease and anxiety handled from the subject of the story. The oblique cadre itself emphasizes the density of the image with an atmosphere of the Timor mourning. Arrow located on the top left, along with the windows and doorways drawn in the lower parts, help decreasing the oblique line of the frame.	Structure and space display

Table source: authors.

The image analysis in the table above proves the order in the location placement and visual elements showing location parallel lines and other arranged connections between them. Moreover, the painter has used the symbolic meaning of numbers for this organization. In conclusion, the results can be presented through the following table.

Table 2. S	Statistical	Results	of	Table	1
------------	-------------	---------	----	-------	---

17	
17	Number of hands in middle plan
17	Number of women figure in the image
17	Number of bodies facing left
17	Number of Figures up the horizontal symmetric line of hidden cadre
17	Number of figures on the right line of vertical symmetry (each half body=one mid body)
13	Number of figures on the left of vertical symmetric line (each half body=one mid body)
13	Number of bodies in the bottom horizontal symmetric line of hidden cadre
13	Number of bodies facing right
13	Number of male figures in image
13	Number of figures in the low plans
13	Number of parallel vertical line result of the hands positioning
13	Number of parallel diagonal lines result of the hands positioning
9	Number of parallel diagonal lines result of the heads positioning
9	Number of hands in upper plan
2	Number of bodies created in the place result of two rectangular cadre intersection
All multiples of 2	Number of bodies in each of the vertical symmetric line

Table Source: authors.

5. Numbers' Semiotics

Many examples testify the science of numbers in the nature, and each number is associated with a symbolic meaning from the past. The numbers are the effects of symbolism having special semantic complexity and in every religion and ethnic group with special meaning. "In the symbolism knowledge the numbers not only express the quantities, but also each number has its own pictorial concept and feature. We could say that the true numbers are only the external appearance" (Eduardo Serlo, 112: 1375). Therefore, based on this review, the symbolic meaning of the numbers found in the image will be shortly discussed.

Number 2: Jean Chevalier describes the number two as:" Earthly life, a place made of clay and dust, where there are two doors, one to entre and one to exit, therefore death". (Chevalier, 1388: 260) According to what was mentioned, the symbolic meaning of number two is interconnected with the image theme (death and eternal life).

Number 9: Jean Chevalier describes number 9 as a symbol of honor due to a creation (Chevalier, 1387: 472). He also describes the number 9 as a symbol of death. "The Aztec people believe, number 9 is in relation with the gods of the night, the deaths world, and is the number of fear and dread." (Same: 475) And also adds "9 is the last digit of series of numbers that witnesses the end and the beginning at the same time which mean being in a new area, and thus the concept of a new birth and a new rise, simultaneously with the meaning of death." (Idem: 480) Thereupon, the number 9 is associated with the painting's subject.

Number 13: Chevalier describes the number 13 like this:

"In the static area (still tens) and in the dynamism (three dynamic threes), thirteen marks are seen which mean changing from mortal to death and the end of a power." (Chevalier, 1388, 708 and 709) also Juan Eduardo Serlo, says about the true meaning of this number: "Symbol of death and rebirth and a new beginning. Therefore, it has unpleasant implications." (Eduardo Serlo, 1375: 299) The liaison of the painting theme of the mourning over the death of Timur and the use of the 13 in personage number can point the secret meaning of this number which lies in it, clearly referring to death.

Number 17: "In ancient Rome this number was sinister and unfavorable because it is constituted of letters VIXI, which means *I have lived* [therefore once I as the alive, now I as the dead]." (Chevalier, 581; 1387) Shiite mystics, from ancient times, have accorded special respect to the number 17; the origin of this respect is based on the conclusions made by Pythagorasin relation of the Greek Alphabets. 17 was the number of people who were resurrected, whom combined each of the 17 letters of the alphabet with the Greatest Name of God; It is not irrelevant with the Sura 17 page that symbolism the reminiscent of life and spirits return about which doctor Allende interprets as Karma freedom." (Idem; 580). Number 17, like the other three numbers, are symbols of death and rebirth that is associated with this image of Timur's death.

6. Conclusion

According to the analysis of the mourning on the death of Timur painted by Kamal al-Din Behzad, it can be said that the painter in purpose of visual expression of his image considered the following tips and deals: balance, harmony, lack of symmetry to create mobility, suitable composition and location of each of the components, carefully drawing epigraph cadre for more efficacy, emphasis in some of the most important figures in different ways, providing solutions to guide the viewer in the whole picture, using color to coordinate with the theme, using diagonal lines to instill a sense of uneasiness, the harmony of color, expression and communication within human feelings, and relation between personages and with the environment.

The results of the analysis in this study suggest that the figures above are arranged with the principles of the visual elements and the placement of elements of the painting has achieved an arranged structure. Moreover, with regard to the relationship between the content of the image and the concepts of numbers and the results obtained in this study it can be concluded that the painter, has used the symbolic meaning of numbers in order to achieve certain arrangement in this painting.

By analyzing this painting four numbers have been obtained, and in many cases these numbers are repeated in the arrangement of visual elements. In addition to proving order in this artwork, organization and composition has been provided firmly in Iranian painting. Also, these 4 numbers are eternal symbol of life and death and thus, totally relevant with the image subject. The other reason for absence of improvisation in the design is its strong structure. Generally, this study suggests that Iranian painting is created through the painter precision. Therefore, the regular structure in Persian painting surely exists and it has led to a tasteful painting in accordance with human nature.

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Endnotes:

1. Parallel horizontal lines: show the number 12. Parallel vertical lines: show the number 13 /. Number 13 is seen much in the analysis. Parallel diagonal lines (from left to right): two parallel lines due to positioning connection. Some lines with a slope of less than 12 / and some with more: 13 / and again the number 13 can be seen. Parallel diagonal lines (left to right): two parallel lines which are the result of positioning connection proving the order in this image. Some lines with a lesser slope: 11 / some lines with a more slope: 14

2. Parallel horizontal lines: 12 parallel vertical lines: 8 parallel diagonal lines (from left to right): two parallel lines result of positioning connection. Some lines with a lesser slope: 10 / some lines with a more slope: 11. Parallel diagonal lines (left to right): two parallel line result of positioning connection, some lines with a lesser slope: 8 / some lines with a more slope: 9 Number 9 is much seen in this analysis. Connecting all the heads positioning leads us to the integrity and the right establishment of them and the S-shaped line formed causes eye circulation and movement from the bottom to the top of the image.

3. If we draw a vertical symmetry lines, and count each half figure as a whole figure, the number of bodies in each of two halves is 14 and 18, which both are multiples of 2. If we draw a vertical symmetry lines on the image and count each half body as a mid-body, the number of bodies in each of two halves is 13 and 17. Number 13 and 17 are much seen in the analysis.

4. Perhaps this type of profile display is the first manifestation of face representation, especially in such situation, but this particular case requires further research in that matter.

5. Color is very important in Iranian painting. But because the main issue in the present article is the order and numbers and not colors, it cannot be covered with the chosen approach, not in this method at least. However it should be noted that in this painting, Behzad has used the effect of colors to emphasize on emotion. Warm colors are predominant on cool colors, which suit the theme of the story very cleverly. Connection created between interior and exterior by the color pinkin both space. The painter has diffused colors across the scene, which is the most important principles of beauty, and has helped to create harmony.

6. Notably, in the statistical result above, in some unmentioned cases, half figures (part of the body in geometric divisions), have been counted as a full body and half hands counted as full hands.

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