

Boteh Jegheh (Paisley): A media from national cultural discourse to international one: Semiotics of culture

[Boteh Jegheh (Paisley): Ulusal kültürel söylemden uluslararası söyleme medya: Kültür göstergebilimi]

[Boteh Jegheh (Paisley): Un média du discours culturel national au discours international: Sémiotique de la culture]

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Abstract

Today, Boteh Jegheh is a symbol found in Iran's and some other countries' artistic discourse. There are controversies about the origin of this symbol. It has been said that it is derived from cedar, pine, fire, Simurgh, etc. Boteh Jegheh has gone to culture, and it has produced discourse and expressed identity in culture. Today, this symbol has penetrated the borders and has been drawn from the national cultural discourse to the international one. Boteh Jegheh belongs to cultural and mythological experiences; in other words, when it is studied from the narration point of view, it is clear that Boteh Jegheh has a mythological origin and creates narration. By producing a narrative, it can create a discourse. The problem is that how Boteh Jegheh has gained its discourse legitimacy, which has caused its development within the narration that make it possible to transfer to other cultures in addition to preserving its identity during the time passage. Based on the research problem, the questions are: How has Boteh Jegheh preserved its narration position within the discourses? How has it developed its discourse role and function? How has it been able to reach from the national discourse to the international one throughout history? In order to answer the questions, the semiotic approach of discourse was chosen to show the value position of Boteh Jegheh, as well as analyzing the conditions of its narration development within multiple discourses. The results indicated that in artistic social systems, Boteh Jegheh preserves its value by movement and rebirth. Boteh Jegheh achieves its identity and permanence not by stability but by change. Through imaginary system, Boteh Jegheh makes a dialogue between nature and culture, in this way it links its value with myth and imagination. As a result, it breaks the boundaries and gradually moves from a national position to an international one.

Keywords: Narration, semiotics of culture, Boteh Jegheh, myth, Paisley

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Özet

Günümüzde Boteh Jegheh, İran'ın ve diğer bazı ülkelerin sanatsal söylemlerinde yer alan bir simgedir. Bu simgenin kökeni üzerinde tartışmalar bulunmaktadır. Sedir, çam, ateş, Simurg vb. sözcüklerden türetildiği söylenmiştir. Boteh Jegheh kültüre girmiş, kültürde söylem üretmiş ve kimliğ dile getirmiştir. Bugün bu simge sınırları aşmış ve ulusal kültürel söylemden uluslararası söyleme doğru çekilmiştir. Boteh Jegheh yetişim ve söylembilimsel deneyimlerle ilgilidir; başka bir deyişle, anlatı açısından incelendiğinde Boteh Jegheh'in söylembilimsel bir kökene sahip olduğu ve anlatı yarattığı açıktır. Bir anlatı üreterek bir söylem oluşturabilir. Sorun, Boteh Jegheh'in zaman içerisinde kimliğini korumanın yanı sıra başka kültürlerle aktarımını da mümkün kılan anlatım içerisinde gelişmesine neden olan söylem doğruluğunu nasıl kazandığıdır. Araştırma sorunsalına dayalı olarak şu sorular sorulmaktadır: Boteh Jegheh söylemlerindeki anlatı konumunu nasıl korumuştur? Söylemdeki görev ve işlevini nasıl geliştirmiştir? Tarih boyunca ulusal söylemden uluslararası söyleme nasıl varmıştır. Soruları yanıtlamak amacıyla, Boteh Jegheh'in değer konumunu göstermenin yanı sıra çoklu söylemler içindeki anlatı gelişiminin koşullarını çözümlenmek amacıyla söylemin göstergebilimsel yaklaşımı seçilmiştir. Sonuçlar, sanatsal toplumsal düzeneklerde Boteh Jegheh'in eylem ve yeniden doğuş yoluyla değerini koruduğunu göstermiştir. Boteh Jegheh kimliğini ve kalıcılığını durağanlıkla değil değişimle elde eder. Boteh Jegheh, hayali sistem aracılığıyla doğa ve kültür arasında bir iletişim kurar, bu biçimde değerini söylence ve hayal gücüyle ilişkilendirir. Sonuç olarak sınırları aşar ve giderek ulusal bir konumdan uluslararası bir konuma geçer.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Anlatı, kültür göstergebilimi, Boteh Jegheh, söylence, Paisley

Résumé

Aujourd'hui, Boteh Jegheh est un symbole présent dans le discours artistique de l'Iran et de certains autres pays. L'origine de ce symbole est controversée. On dit qu'il est dérivé du cèdre, du pin, du feu, de Simurgh, etc. Boteh Jegheh est allé à la culture, et il a produit un discours et exprimé une identité dans la culture. Aujourd'hui, ce symbole a pénétré les frontières et est passé du discours culturel national au discours international. Boteh Jegheh appartient aux expériences culturelles et mythologiques; en d'autres termes, lorsqu'il est étudié du point de vue de la narration, il est clair que Boteh Jegheh a une origine mythologique et crée une narration. En produisant un récit, il peut créer un discours. Le problème est de savoir comment Boteh Jegheh a gagné sa légitimité discursive, ce qui a entraîné son développement au sein de la narration qui lui permet de se transférer à d'autres cultures tout en préservant son identité au fil du temps. Sur la base du problème de recherche, les questions sont les suivantes: Comment Boteh Jegheh a-t-il préservé sa position de narration dans les discours ? Comment a-t-elle développé son rôle et sa fonction discursive? Comment a-t-elle pu passer du discours national au discours international au cours de l'histoire? Afin de répondre à ces questions, l'approche sémiotique du discours a été choisie pour montrer la position de valeur de Boteh Jegheh, ainsi que pour analyser les conditions de son développement narratif au sein de multiples discours. Les résultats indiquent que dans les systèmes sociaux artistiques, le Boteh Jegheh préserve sa valeur par le mouvement et la renaissance. Le Boteh Jegheh atteint son identité et sa permanence non pas par la stabilité mais par le changement. Par le biais d'un système imaginaire, Boteh Jegheh établit un dialogue entre la nature et la culture, liant ainsi sa valeur au mythe et à l'imagination. En conséquence, elle franchit les frontières et passe progressivement d'une position nationale à une position internationale.

Mots-clés : Narration, sémiotique de la culture, Boteh Jegheh, mythe, Paisley

1. Introduction

Boteh Jegheh (Paisley)¹, an element of Eastern culture which has produced a lifestyle, has had a special presence in different discourse systems during the history. Although this cultural element has gone through numerous ups and downs, it has had a presence beyond a role or symbol and has caused cultural transmission as a media, because: a) It has been used in different discourses such as architecture, image, calligraphy, carpet, etc. b) It has had an active role (as production of movement, change of shape, passing from a broad form to a compact form, the possibility of adaptability to discourse platforms, formability, interaction and coexistence with many other discourses and narratives); so it can affect the process of meaning formation. c) It has had a very diverse rhetorical function (such as rhythm, diverse lines e.g. curves/ circles/ nested lines, static and moving state, different states according to discourse contexts, traditional and modern forms, different color tonality). Due to these characteristics, Boteh Jegheh plays a role as an agent influencing other actions. Now, adding culture as a factor to Boteh Jegheh's discourse, its presence in different layers of discourse can be realized as well as its effect on Eastern culture identity of many artistic spaces, including dishes, fabrics, carpets, architectural and decorative works, and

¹ The first place in the western world to imitate the design was the town of Paisley in Scotland, Europe's top producer of textiles at this time (Rundell, 2023). So, in Western culture Boteh Jegheh is called Paisley.

fashion. Therefore, it can be said that Boteh Jegheh plays a role both in narration and lifestyle production and in the development of cultural identity.

“What characteristics have caused the development of Boteh Jegheh’s role and function within different discourses over the centuries?” “How has Boteh Jegheh been able to establish its position as a national symbol beyond the borders?” These are the research questions that the researchers are going to answer them based on semiotics. In fact, the main goal of the research is to investigate the wide scope of Boteh Jegheh within multiple discourse spaces. Can it achieve its discourse legitimacy by producing movement, changing rhythm, creating distinct values, influencing artistic and cultural narratives? So, not only the value system of Boteh Jegheh is going to be studied, but also its narration development in multiple discourse spaces is going to be analyzed, to find out how it has passed over the national borders and got into international discourses. The research hypothesis is that in Boteh Jegheh’s discourse, imagination can create a dialogue between nature and culture and develop the domain of culture by connecting it to nature. For this reason, Boteh Jegheh’s value system is linked with myth and imagination.

2. Review of literature

In the early history of the Boteh Jegheh or Paisley motif, there are a lot of controversies. It would appear that it originated in Iran during the early first millennium AD. This motif became popular at the end of 17th century and was used by neighboring Mughal India (c. 1526-1857). It was used especially on the fine woolen shawls that were hand woven and sometimes embroidered in Kashmir in northern India. Now it is found throughout the world, used by men, women, children of all ages of many different ethnic and cultural backgrounds (Vogelsang Eastwood, 2021). Kallen (2018) also believes that Paisley is derived from Persia during Mughal rule and after that it has made rich contribution and evolution.

Based on the existing works of art, the pattern of Boteh Jegheh has a long history and can be seen in various forms, probably with the origin of decorative palm leaves and birds. In the Sassanid art in Iran, you can see the initial forms of this pattern with the origin of palm leaves. At the beginning of the Islamic period in Iran, many egg-shaped examples can be seen in the plasterwork of Nishabouri and the plasterwork of the Balkh New Mosque belonging to the 3rd and 4th AH. (Atrvash, 2006, p. 89).

By studying the structural features as well as the shape and decoration of the Boteh Jegheh motif, Dorjvar (2015) considers the existence of more than seventy different types of Boteh Jegheh patterns. It represents the deep and symbolic roots of this pattern in Eastern culture. Therefore, since Boteh Jegheh is a symbol of a valuable object, it can be considered as a mythic belief throughout the history. It was born as a living being, flourished and grew in the society, reached maturity, a maturity that did not end its life, did not decline, but remained in the culture and preserved its legendary position over the years and reproduced it. Since myths are valuable, and have a transcendental meaning formed in the people’s belief and thought; this symbol has been used on the crown of kings and the clothes of elders in the past. So, it has been creating an identity. The use of this role in architecture and mosques shows its sacredness, and because of its sacredness it is not appropriate to use it for carpets.

Zoyavar et al. (2015) believe that mythological motifs are not merely decorative, but they express higher concepts. Boteh Jegheh is a symbol of Iranian and other Eastern beliefs that its beauty and harmony have evolved internally and externally over time, and it has passed through different cultures, so the authors of the article (Zoyavar et al., 2015) have tried to study the original and true identity of it. Boteh Jegheh is in the form of a mother's figure. Boteh Jegheh represents an eternal symbolic role of circle, which is divided into two equal parts in the most beautiful way. Among other motifs, circle is somehow similar to *one* in numbers, and Boteh Jegheh similar to *two*, because it is obtained by dividing the circle, which other numbers are its multiples. Therefore, the beginning of existence is from Boteh Jegheh. At the end of the article, the authors make a similarity between Boteh Jegheh and the shining sun. Despite its imperceptible nature it has the ability to appear and multiply in different forms of art.

In her article, Vogelsang Eastwood (2021) asks the following question: Is Boteh Jegheh (Paisley) out of fashion? Then she refers to Famous figures such as Chuck Berry, Cliff Richard, and David Bowie which have worn paisley, while designers and designer firms, such as Yves Saint Laurent, Burberry, Gucci, and Dolce & Gabbana, as well as well-known textile groups such as Liberty’s of London, have all produced ranges of paisley fabrics. At the end she answers the above question as “No”, because for the last two hundred years, this originally Iranian/Indian motif has never gone out of fashion and is not likely to vanish in the near future.

3. Theoretical framework

Myth is a system of communication that is a message. So, imbedded signs within the signification systems expressed in communication are called myth. Studying these signs allows us to demonstrate how given social symbols can enter the collective consciousness (Barthes, 1957). For Barthes everything can be a myth because every object in the world can pass from a closed, silent existence to an oral state (Barthes, 1957). Today, we need myths to restore our lifestyle. All mythologizing tendencies have in common that discourse issues affect the life, form, weakness and strength of myths; just as myths affect collective behaviors and attitudes (Namvar Motlagh, 2018, pp. 48-49). A myth's origin is usually unknown. It is a description of an action, belief, natural phenomenon, etc. which is taken from traditions and narratives, rituals and religious beliefs. Its characters are usually sacred heroes, made up of supernatural beings. Sometimes it seems that Myths are narrating historical events, although their historical accuracy is not important. The importance is both in the meaning hidden in them and making a new perspective of the world and the creator for their believers (Haririan et al., 2006, pp. 53-54). The real meaning of myths causes the people to know themselves in the world they are living in. Myths should not be interpreted cosmologically, but anthropologically or rather ontologically.

Narration is not an absolute concept but refers to different phenomena from different perspectives. So, answering the question of "What is narration?" is a tricky task. The concept of narration is taken for granted within the linguistic tradition. As a result, although it is a controversial issue in other fields; it has never been a big theoretical issue in linguistics. Narration constitutes one of several rhetorical relations that relate two "elementary discourse units" or two propositions. So, it is an abstract discourse relation which has to be inferred by the listener (Asher & Lascarides, 2003). In narration, the underlying discourse mode has an essential effect on the usage of aspect, tense, and modal forms (Zeman, 2017). For the global semiotic approach, a narrative discourse is a self-organizing entity with a purposeful character to all its constituent parts. Through the reading/perception/interpretation process, it can turn a static text into a dynamic one (Sebeok, 2001).

Value is the relationship that arises between one (entity, phenomenon, form, etc.) and the other (entity, phenomenon, form, etc.). What makes it possible to construct the value of the statement, and discourse is the difference in these relationships. According to Saussure, the value of the form resides in the complex relationship among phonic unity, thought and meaning (Bedouret-Larraburu, 2022). She also quotes based on WGL. that although there is not any significant difference between the terms value, meaning, signification, function, or use of a form, it must be accepted that value expresses better than any other word the essence of this concept. It is not a meaning that a form has, but it is the value, and it is the crucial point. So, form has value, hence it implies the existence of other values (Bedouret-Larraburu, 2022). Shairi and Seyedebrahimi consider a branch of science as semiotics of value that we should focus on it. Semiotics of value teaches us that the world needs care, so in order to realize such care, it is necessary to be an interpreter and to participate in the creation of situations that open the way for interpretation (Shairi & Seyedebrahimi, 2021).

4. Data analysis: Boteh Jegheh from narration point of view

Narration is formed with the paradigmatic and syntagmatic systems. Most of the narrative characters are under the rules of the syntagmatic structure (Prince, 1981). In syntagmatic system, different Boteh Jeghehs can replace each other in terms of form, or appear in different shapes. Based on the traditional terms, they can come together to achieve a goal or value in the discourse. Boteh Jegheh can also be combined with different elements or shapes, colors, and forms to create new symbols through syntagmatic system which helps the supplementary system of the narration. For example, it can be placed inside a structure such as an architectural building, tile work, fashion, clothes and clothing, handicrafts, advertising, etc. Placing inside a new structure or shape make Boteh Jegheh go towards the evolutionary or perfectionist system and create the following narrations:

4.1. Boteh Jegheh and revolution narration

Boteh Jegheh produces a narrative called evolution, perfectionism, or addition. Narration can produce a decrease as well as an increase. So, as Boteh Jegheh is placed on a product, it can fill a cultural void. As an example, in a system such as clothing and fashion, it means producing added value, therefore, it has the role of a complementary perfectionist (Figure1). This value pushes the narrative towards perfection. Now this question raises that, how does Boteh Jegheh push the narrative towards perfectionism or elimination of deficiencies? The answer lies in another characteristic of narration: the power of flexibility and rebirth narration.



Figure 1: Boteh jegheh and Revolution Narration

4.2. Boteh Jegheh and rebirth narration

Boteh Jegheh has always been able to fit into different systems and produce new forms from its original form. So, as it rebirths, we are encountering new forms of Boteh Jeghehs. The rebirth narration means that Boteh Jeghehs are constantly expanding. This rebirth system relies on previous values to create a range of new values and, as a result, new narrations. Boteh Jegheh has the ability and flexibility to move from fixed and frozen species to modern ones. Although these species lose some of their stability, they preserve their original shape and structure (Figure 2).



Figure 2: Boteh Jegheh and Rebirth Narration

4.3. Boteh Jegheh and historical legitimacy

Narrations deal with structures and constructs whose values are fixed and can be referentially addressed to. In other words, since they have historical legitimacy, or in other words, they get their legitimacy from history, their structure is clear. Therefore, narratives take their legitimacy from different structures such as: history, a specific referential source, fundamental and fixed structures or even rituals. In addition to being a symbol, Boteh Jegheh is used as a sign in various discourses today; it is also connected to the ritual and mythological system and has a mythological history behind it. Therefore, this symbol is connected to several fundamental structures.

4.4. Boteh Jegheh and Rhythm Narration

Boteh Jegheh can produce rhythm narration. In some motifs, it is created in the form of three or four, in others, as the fish is moving, hence it has the power to produce movement. It can make a movement by multiplying. The movement creates rhythm. It should be noted that contrary to the created movement, sometimes Boteh Jegheh is completely static and fixed (Figure 3-4).



Figures 3-4: Boteh Jegheh and Rhythm Narration

4.5. *Boteh Jegheh and imagination narration*

Imagination narration is the other one that is created by Boteh Jegheh. In some images, Boteh Jegheh is in an iconic relationship and so closed to its reference, like a pear or almond; but in some others, it can be the farthest from its reference and thus it is in the imagination narration. So, the cognitive procedures experience the imaginary system and magic occurs. In other words, it is connected to magical realism which has a zero point or beginning called nature (Figure 5).



Figure 5: Boteh Jegheh and imagination narration

4.6. *Boteh Jegheh and tension narration*

The crowded patterns inside a Boteh Jegheh, or the emptiness of it creates density and emptiness which make tension for the viewer. In some cases, Boteh Jegheh is filled with lots of patterns and only a small space is left, but in some others it is partially or completely empty (Figure 6).



Figure 6: Boteh Jegheh and Tension Narration

4.7. *Boteh Jegheh and culture-nature narration*

Boteh Jegheh has different natural shapes such as pear, almond, teardrop, pine fruit, cedar, etc. This variety of shapes are referring to nature. Besides, as multiple forms, colors and shapes accompany it, it is a host for cultural elements that draw us towards culture. A host that accepts shapes, circles, colors, rings, geometric forms, and even beads. Therefore, it is connected to the nature on the one hand and to the culture on the other hand. It is constantly moving from culture to nature or vice versa. When it shows its natural face and is free from pattern and color, it is drawn towards nature, and when it is involved in pattern, color and art, it approaches culture.

4.8. *Boteh Jegheh and holiness narration:*

Being its head up or down creates another narration. If the head is down, it makes a fall and pull towards the ground, but if the head is up, it leads towards the sky. Therefore, from the narration meaning point of view, it finds a mythological relationship with the sanctity system and heaven. Its holiness narration can also be created through color. White color links Boteh Jegheh with holiness, however the colored ones refer to historical forms left from the cultural heritage.

5. Boteh Jegheh: From national discourse to international one

Boteh Jegheh is one of the ancient motifs. Although some researchers attribute its birth to motifs such as the pattern of the tree of life or the curled and twisted wings of Sassanid art creatures, its history and origin is not clear. Some semiologists consider it as a symbol of the tree of life or cypress. The concepts of immortality and youth which are hidden in the meaning of cypress did have influence in Boteh Jegheh's formation (Dorjvar, 2015).

Boteh Jegheh was born from religion and society. It has left behind the narratives, crossed religion and reached beyond religion and culture. Currently, it can be seen that this motif is used in the products of brands such as Dior, Chanel, Zara, etc. In this situation, we are not talking about something above religion and ideology that is crossing borders. How does Boteh Jegheh break the national borders and play a role in the international discourses? Boteh Jegheh has the ability to accept different forms of nature and culture, such as: a written cultural or religious phrase inside it, a printed shape of a Simorgh or a bird on the top of its head, full of patterns and tension, emptiness surrounded it, being white or black, etc. Therefore, we face a multi-icon, and multi-media system, having no control over it because it is not static anywhere. Boteh Jegheh is evolving, its identity is based on changes and exchanges, not on stability. In its discourse system, the dynamicity can be considered as its most important feature. Boteh Jegheh means growth, transformation, evolution and development. These are the features that develop it and make it a living flexible being. These features have made Boteh Jegheh move from nature to culture, from culture to imagination, from imagination to knowledge, from knowledge to thought, to reach to the point of crossing from one culture to another one and enter other cultural layers. Today, it can be seen on the products of world famous brands (Figure 7).

Therefore, it can be said that Boteh Jegheh shows various aspects, including history, culture, imagination, myth and tension. It creates a contrast between nature and culture, in other words, it has the ability to accommodate multiple elements. Despite preserving its static shape, it has the flexibility to change a lot and creates new shapes.



Figure 7: Boteh Jegheh and Famous Brands

6. Conclusion

At present, Boteh Jegheh is in motion and dynamicity, producing various natural and cultural forms within itself. It indicates that Boteh Jegheh derives its value through changes, not stasis. By imaginary system, it connects the domain of culture with nature and goes from nature to culture and from culture to imagination and produces a value system linked to myth and imagination. Boteh Jegheh enters other cultural layers by moving from imagination to knowledge and from knowledge to thought. At the end by its adaptability in social and cultural systems throughout history, it preserves its narration position and receives its national identity and value.

Boteh Jegheh has influenced the culture, belief, thought, religion, ideology, art, and lifestyle of people over time and has become a part of culture. The key of Boteh Jegheh's eternity is its evolution and dynamicity. This feature increases Boteh Jegheh's role and function in discourse. So, architecture, carpets, clothes, etc., can benefit from Boteh Jegheh's process of meaning formation. In addition, its rhetorical function affects its narration actions.

Boteh Jegheh's presence in our cultural layers and its effect on the discourse identity help it go over the national spaces. In this way, in addition to narration, it also creates a lifestyle to expand and develop cultural identity. Finally, its flexibility breaks the national borders and let it enter other cultures.

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