

Iconography on vehicles: A Case Study of Pakistani Trucks



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Abstract: *Truck-decoration is a significant art in the world in general and in Pakistan in particular and that is why various researchers from different backgrounds have carried out research on the Pakistani truck art. However, these studies could not systematically classify the various images painted on the trucks in Pakistan. The purpose of the present study was to classify the numerous images painted on the Pakistani trucks. The current research, after deploying qualitative content analysis, found that the numerous images painted on Pakistani trucks can be classified into five categories namely celebrities, animals, birds, sceneries and other means of transportations. The present study also found that these images were made with vibrant color, and contained floral designs, and geometrical patterns. It is expected that the present study will be helpful in understanding and classifying the various images on the Pakistani trucks.*

Keywords: Pakistani truck art, Iconography, popular imagery, identity, cultural context.

Introduction

There are various definitions of Iconography in the literature; however, the following three definitions by Van Straten, Eggler et al and Muller represent the whole literature on the meanings and scope of Iconography in the art. As Van Straten (1994) points out Iconology refers to elucidating the theme of a picture through the discovery of its cultural, social, and historical background (Van Straten 1994). According to Eggler (2006), Iconography is the branch of art history that is mainly concerned with the contents of a picture as opposed to its form, style, or design (Eggler et al. 2006). Likewise, Muller (2014) believes that iconography is a modern approach to ancient art

that deals with the identification, classification, and interpretation of the themes and motifs in all types of works (Müller, 2014). Iconography and symbolism. These definitions indicate some significant features of iconography which may be summed up in four points. First, iconography is all about examining the content of pictures ignoring the style, form, and design of images. Secondly, the purpose of iconography is to identify, classify, and interpret themes of pictures. Thirdly, the identification, classification, and interpretation of pictures are carried out by looking into the cultural, social and historical background. Iconography can be seen in architecture, design and art in various forms. In addition, the images that are the focus of iconography may be found on numerous

^{1*}The paper is based on PhD thesis titled "Truck Art of Pakistan from Traditional to Contemporary: A Comparative, Technological and Analytical study" by the first Author.

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platforms including walls, landmarks, monuments and even on vehicles. The vehicle refers to any self-propelled device which may be an aircraft, a car, a tank, or a truck, designed to transport people or goods from one place to another (Soanes, Stevenson, & Hawker, 2004). In the past, animals like horses, camels, donkeys, and bulls were used for carrying goods and human beings from one place to another. They were considered as engines and a cart driven away by them was designed for loading and cargo purposes.

The tradition of decorating vehicles is not a new thing; the people in the past not only used to color the bodies of animals in various ways but also, used to make designs and writings on their bodies. Likewise, the modern man also decorates vehicles including cars, trawlers, buses, taxis, rickshaws and trucks. As far as truck decoration is concerned, it is found internationally and nationally. Trucks are being decorated in Japan, India, Afghanistan, and South America (Stewart, 2018). The salient feature of truck art in these countries is the use of neon, ultraviolet lights, extravagant paints, and stainless or golden parts. Trucks are also decorated in Pakistan but this art has a higher level of art in Pakistan as compared to other countries where trucks are decorated. In Pakistan, the trucks are decorated by using vibrant colors, different designs, different materials, (Chamakpatti, steel, stickers and pendants) and writings in various national and vernacular languages. In addition to this, truck art in Pakistan involves the use of colorful floral patterns, depiction of human heroes with creative aspect ratios, calligraphy of poetic verses, and driver's words of wisdom (Kazi, 2010). Various analysts have studied and examined Pakistani truck art from different perspectives. For instance, Ali (2021) identified the reasons for portraying numerous images on the trucks (Ali, 2021). Likewise, Goel (2014) elaborated on the significance of Pakistani truck art by pointing out that Pakistani truck art has inspired gallery exhibitions abroad and prompted stores in Western cities to sell miniatures. (Goel, 2014). Ilyas (2011), on the other hand, discussed the significance, reasons

and employment of truck art in Pakistan by mentioning that Pakistani truck art is at a whole other level accommodating more than ten million people who are dedicated to this art which has become an industry in Pakistan. He added that truck drivers are willing to spend big money to ensure their truck is better than the rest. In addition to this, Kazi (2022) believes that the owners of the trucks decorate their trucks owning their belief that it is their second home and will attract more customers (Kazi, 2022). These studies are significant since they highlight the salient features of Pakistani truck art. However, these studies fail to discuss the identity of these images and how these images may be adjusted in the various classes. The analysis of the images to identify the content and their classification is very necessary to understand the truck art in Pakistan. The present study is the right step in this direction since its objective is to identify and classify the images painted on the trucks. It is necessary to mention that the present study is limited to the identification and classification of the images and it does not interpret the images. The current paper deals with the iconography on the Pakistani Trucks; it is a study of descriptions and identification of the images painted on them. The present study has five sections other than the introductory section. The second section analyses the existing literature on Pakistani truck art, the third section describes the methodology, the fourth section presents the findings and the last section concludes the study.

1. Review of the Literature

This section critically analyses the existing literature on Pakistani truck art with a focus on the methodology, findings and highlighting the gap in the existing state of affairs. Numerous researchers have explored various dimensions of truck art including the history of truck art, economic perspective, emotional reasons, its impact on people, and its importance. For instance, various researchers have explored the historical background of this art in Pakistan. The research work of Jamal J. Elias, Durriya Kazi, Farah Y. Ali, Fatima Zahra Hassan, Nadia Ahmed, Samina Zia Sheikh, George W. Rich and Shahid Khan may be cited as an example.

Elias (2011) points out the fact that this art has come to Pakistan from Afghanistan. On the other hand, Kazi (2022) believes that Pakistan inherited this art from undivided India. Elias does not agree with Kazi because of the concrete evidences, as they are oral evidences and also does not believe the links with the imperial courts and considers them as assumptions. Kazi has confidence in the claims of some of the truck artisans as their family backgrounds and the knowledge of this art. Elias also believes that this art was inspired by Islamic motifs and design, and practiced in Afghanistan and Greater India as currently practiced in Pakistan, because of the easy access of artisans to cross the borders. In the 1960s, truck art picked up momentum in the northwestern regions of Pakistan and then spread all over the country (Elias, 2011). On the contrary, Kazi (2022) states that truck art started with the import of Bedford trucks in the 1960s from England and these trucks were imported through the seaport of Karachi and started the journeys to deliver consignments throughout the region. At the same time, the family of court painter Haji Hussain Kamangar migrated to Karachi from India and started to paint on the trucks. Initially, the drivers started to decorate the trucks because they spend their time with the trucks away from their homes. They gradually added more décor elements like paintings, ornamentations and verses. This was an economically very successful period for the truckers because President Ayub Khan³ established many workshops all over the country and provided the trucks to the Hazara People where he belonged (Kazi, 2022).

It seems that the truck owners and drivers are very much emotionally attached to their trucks as Covington (2005) stated after a discussion with Kazi; the drivers always honor their trucks, but if they do not decorate them, the trucks will feel ungracious (Covington, 2005). The usage of striking and vivid colors on trucks is a symbolic representation of kindness and compassion. So Pakistani truck artisans always use bright colors to portray delight and cheerfulness (Hart,

2014). Truck drivers travel for long hours on risky and unsafe routes, so they use different colors and religious symbols to keep themselves safe throughout the journey (Ali, 2022). The truck decoration has a great impact on the lives of the people associated with it. The drivers feel annoyed and angry if the owners do not decorate the trucks well (Elias, 2013).

Furthermore, Stewart (2018) considered Pakistani truck art as an important part of visual culture and has become an industry that caters to more than fifty thousand people employed and working to fortify this art form (Stewart, 2018).

Trucks play a significant role in the vehicles, which fetch food for the families reliant on the trucks (Vox, 2019). Similarly, Elias (2011) discussed the economic factor for decorating the trucks and stated that the owners are responsible for all the decorations on the trucks because they pay for all the decoration works and the driver and artisans only can suggest if needed and if the truck is more decorated, more people will hire it (Elias, 2011). Trucks are commonly used to transport goods from one place to another in many countries like; India, Afghanistan, Japan and America. They valued to decorate trucks in their countries. But in Pakistan, the trucks are adorned at another level and booming day by day. The truck decoration has an enormous impact on other vehicles like Suzuki vans, buses, auto-rickshaws, and taxis as they are also decorated in the truck art style (Khan & George, 1980).

2. Methodology

Research is a defined process for the formation of new knowledge through the usage of existing data in an innovative way to develop new ideas, procedures and understandings (Crosley, 2021, Kothari, 2004). Research methodology, on the other hand, defines the procedures used to find and examine the knowledge about the research topics (Hammersley, 2012). There are different kinds of research methods adopted for specific research for collecting and analyzing the data, such as historical, anthropological and

³ Ayub Khan was the Chief of Army Staff and

President of Pakistan in 1971.

ethnographical researches. In addition to this, the research may be pure, quantitative and qualitative. Qualitative research deals with the analytical study of collected data through field surveys in the form of interviews, written materials and photographic documentation (Jackson, Drummond, & Camara, 2007, Kaplan, 1964). In qualitative research, the researchers distinguish the manuscript or the object in the form of visual text or photograph for analysis (Ricoeur, 1981). The mixed-method research is the combination of quantitative and qualitative research that complements each other and allows researchers to find the answers to their research queries (Sreekumar, 2023).

There are different methods in qualitative research namely narrative analysis, discourse analysis, grounded theory, thematic analysis and content analysis. The narrative analysis is used to analyze the information obtained through field surveys and interviews. Discourse analysis is followed to analyze the communication with the people in the social framework and the environment of interaction. Ground theory analyzes the collected data to investigate why something happened and the thematic analysis is used to classify the themes found in the data (Sreekumar, 2023). Content analysis is used to create categories from the collected data (Krippendorff, 1980) and to interpret the information (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). The researchers of the present study applied content analysis to address the research questions of the present study since this is the best method to categorize the information collected through data. The researchers adopted a six-step methodology to address the research question and the steps are described briefly in the following lines.

In the first step, the researchers collected the data from primary and secondary sources. The primary data sources include the interview and the personal observation of the researchers; whereas the secondary sources include books and articles. The sample population for the data were drivers, owners, and decorators (artists, electricians and wood carvers) and interviewed 30 decorators in total. On the other hand, the sample size was determined by deploying the n4

formula. The researchers handled the data collected from these sources through NVivo software. The data was analyzed patently and latently and the researchers labeled the data with appropriate codes. These codes were subsequently merged into sub and major categories. Following this, the researchers reported the findings by elaborating each sub and major category by quoting the relevant information from the data.

3. Findings

The decoration done through painting images on the trucks is more valuable, it contains the colors of the culture and depicts the values of the society. In these painted images the beauty is considered from all aspects; from theme selection to the craftsmanship. The data indicate that the images found on the trucks running on roads of Pakistan mostly include rose flowers, peacocks, pigeons, falcons, eagles, lions, tigers, horses, buraq, parrots, beauty queens (*haseena*), landscapes, film stars, folk singers, politicians, and sometimes the truck owners prefer to have their portraiture painting on the truck. According, the researchers formed five major categories of these images including celebrities, birds, animals, sceneries and other means of transportations which are described and illustrated in the following sections.

A. Celebrities

It is observed in the study that celebrities and public personalities have a special place on the trucks. Pakistan is an Islamic republic society, but it has a diverse culture and a major role in religious and military dictatorship. So, the images of celebrities, national heroes and military chiefs are particularly painted on the trucks, including Field Marshal Ayub Khan, Benazir Bhutto, Pervez Musharraf, Dr. Abdul Qadeer Khan, Imran Khan, Musarrat Shaheen, Jalal Chandio, Attaullah Khan Essa Khelvi, etc. are commonly seen on the trucks. With time, the ideals of people also change. Thus, new imagery emerges and the transformation goes on and on.

i. National Heroes

The analysis indicates that the truck drivers get painted the pictures on the back of their trucks

of the national heroes who have contributed in the formation or defending Pakistan. The analysis also shows that the most painted picture of national hero on the Pakistani trucks is the picture of Allama Muhammad Iqbal. He was a scholar and is the national poet of Pakistan who dreamt Pakistan in 1939. He shakes the Muslims of Hindustan through his poetry and made them to think of a separate identity through an independent state. Though, Allama Iqbal was born in Sialkot (Punjab) and mostly the truckers of Sialkot and its surroundings like to get painted the image of Iqbal on their trucks, many of the truckers of other regions also prefer to get painted the image of Allama Iqbal on their trucks. The portrait of Allama Iqbal is still painted on the trucks which shows the patriotism of the public towards him indicating that he is still alive in the hearts of the nation. In the images painted on the trucks, he can be seen in serious, sober and scholastic mood. In addition to this, these images also contain various other symbols like birds which are generally associated either with good qualities or a specific community of human being. For instance, the Figure 03 below represent the image of Allama Iqbal painted on the truck in the mood of thinking of Pakistan having a pen in his hand and a shawl on the shoulders. Mostly writers and thinkers wear a shawl on the shoulders whenever they go to public which is a tradition of Pakistan. And there is a black eagle in the background which represents the youth who can conquer the skies, and take the challenges to stand up as he described in his poetry as well.



Figure.01: Allama Iqbal with Eagle, Jhelum, 2022 (Photo by Wajid Ali)

Similarly, the second most frequently painted picture on the trucks is of Dr. Abdul Qadeer Khan. A.Q Khan was a Pakistani scientist who got maximum national and international attention when Pakistan tested nuclear weapons in 1998. Figure 02 shows the portrait of Dr. Khan with the Pakistani flag in the background and two *Ghouri* missiles he invented to carry the nuclear warhead painted on both sides. There is also a message written alongside the missiles as '*Dushman k liye Mout ka Paigham*' (A message to destroy the enemy).



Figure.02: Dr. Abdul Qadeer Khan on the back of the truck

(Source: <https://www.wired.com/2008/06/the-worlds-most-2-2/>)

ii. Political Personalities

The study reveals that President Ayub Khan has been the top-painted political personality on Pakistani trucks since the 1970's. Whenever the history of Pakistani truck art is written Ayub Khan will always be remembered, because he was the president of Pakistan when Gandhara Motors imported Bedford trucks in the 1970s. He belonged to the Hazara division of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (formerly known as N.W.F.P). So, the imported trucks were mostly given to the people of Hazara. Almost 50 years later, the image of President Ayub Khan is still being painted on the back of the trucks by the transporters of the Hazara region. He provided work opportunities to the Hazara people and they still idealize him (Kazi, 2010).



Figure.03: Field Marshal Ayub Khan, Multan, 2023 (Photo by Wajid Ali)

His portraiture is always made in military uniform as a gratified character with a highest ranked cap on the head and medals on the chest. There is a famous sentence that is always written along with the painting “*Tere Yad Ayi Tere Jane Ke Baad*” (you are remembered, even you died). It is not wrong to say that the painting of Ayub Khan stayed the longest on the trucks from 1970 till today.

Benazir Bhutto⁴ was the former president of Pakistan; she died in an attack in Rawalpindi in 2007. Just after the demise of Benazir Bhutto, her images quickly took place on the trucks. The main reason was that she returned to Pakistan with revolutionary thinking to serve the people of Pakistan after being exiled from the country for a long time. That’s why she has a special place and value in the hearts of people. Specifically, the people of Sindh and Baluchistan, as they titled her ‘Daughter of the Nation’.



Figure.04: Benazir Bhutto on the back of the truck, Ghotki, 2023 (Photo by Wajid Ali)

⁴ Benazir Bhutto was the former prime minister of Pakistan (1988-1990 and 1993-1996).

⁵ Attaullah Khan Essa Khelvi is one of the most

When Benazir Bhutto was alive her image never appeared on the trucks. After her death, the people who love her as a leader want to keep her alive and for that reason, they started painting her portraiture on the trucks. At times there was a grief in the air and the people were depressed, especially the people of Sindh and Baluchistan were feeling that they have lost a family member. Today when anyone sees a painting of Benazir Bhutto on trucks, he can easily recognize the truck belongs to Sindh or Baluchistan rather than any other province. It is shown in the figure 04 that Benazir Bhutto is praying for the nation holding a Tasbeeh in hands. There is also a flag of Pakistan People’s Party painted in the background in black, red and green colors. At that time, she was the chairperson of the party. Before the appearance of the image of Benazir Bhutto on trucks, there were images of various political leaders; like Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and General Zia ul Haq were famous among the Pakistani truckers as their ideal.

iii. Showbiz Stars

Like celebrities and political personalities, the pictures of the showbiz stars, singers and actors are also painted on the trucks. One of them is the portraiture of famous folk singer Attaullah Khan Essa Khelvi⁵. He is an internationally renowned Pakistani vocalist who belongs to Essa Khel, Mianwali district. Earlier, he was a truck driver and drove a truck. But after some time, he started singing while driving and became the voice of truck drivers. His fellow drivers started listening to his music. He is one of the singers who got the feat and fame in a short time in Pakistan. He uses the regional name Essa Khel with his family name Attaullah Khan Essa Khelvi and makes known to the world. As time passed and the wheels of the truck moved on, Khelvi left truck driving and preferred music as a profession and spread the magic of his voice all over the world. The journey to recognition goes on and he started writing poetry along with singing. He writes songs and composes music to get closer

popular folk singers of Pakistan and also the favorite personality of Pakistani truck drivers.

to the hearts of truck drivers. Nowadays, the truck drivers belonging to Essa Khel especially ask painters to paint the image of Attaullah Khan Essa Khelvi on their trucks and listen to the music with love and feel proud. Khelvi is a distinguished personality, whose portraits made an impact on the trucks and he is the highest most painted showbiz celebrity on the trucks. It is shown in Figure 05, that Khelvi is wearing a national dress having a traditional embroidered shawl of red color on his shoulder and a golden chain with a heart-shaped pendant on the neck. There are snowy mountains with lush green scenery painted in the background and covered with a flowery frame.

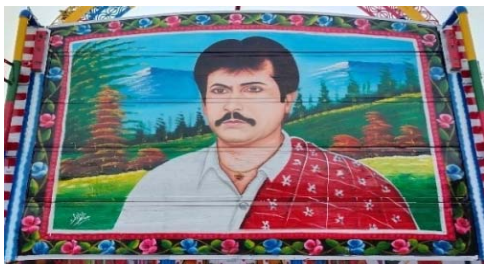


Figure.05: Attaullah Khan Essa Khelvi, famous folk singer, Khushab 2022 (Photo by Wajid Ali)

This study reveals that the second most painted celebrity on the trucks is Sindhi folk singer Jalal Chandio⁶. His portraits are frequently painted on the trucks of Sind. Like Khelvi, Chandio was one of the voices of the truck drivers of Sind. His portrait is always painted in stylized form with a big mustache, long hair and having traditional Sindhi cap on the head, and his shirt is fashioned with traditional truck art motifs. Some floral designs and reflectors are also fixed in the background to enhance the loveliness.



Figure.06: Portrait of famous Sindhi folk singer

⁶ Jalal Chandio was one of the most popular folk singers of Sind.

Jalal Chandio, Rakni 2022 (Photo by Wajid Ali)

It is further stated that more than eighty percent of the population of Pakistan lives in rural areas and is meticulously attached to customs and traditions. The tradition of visiting cinemas is higher than in metropolitan cities, they have much spare time in which they desire to watch the films of favorite Lollywood stars.⁷ They generally like to watch movies and romanticize big-screen heroes like Mustafa Qureshi, Rani, Sultan Rahi, Babra Shareef, Shan and Saima. The truck driver's community has an affection for watching their movies and likes to paint them on trucks.



Figure.07: Lollywood star Mustafa Qureshi with a turban, GT road Khanewal, 2019 (Photo by Wajid Ali)

In 1990's, Mustafa Qureshi was one of the favorite villain of folks in Pakistani cinema. His voice and dialogues are still remembered to the people, his portrait is often seen on the trucks painted with a turban on his head and having prominent mustache.



Figure.08: Lollywood heroine Saima on the truck,

Rawalpindi 2007 (Photo by Wajid Ali)

Film star Saima is one of the favorite heroines of

⁷ Lollywood is the term used for Pakistani cinema.

all truck drivers, she is known as the ‘Bollywood Queen’, she always performs the character of a simple, sweet and family girl linked to the local Punjabi culture. Her innocence always grasps the attention of the spectators through her acting. In the Figure 8, she is peeling the sugarcane to show the strength of a Punjabi woman (Manazar, 2023).



Figure.09: Film Star Rani, Khanpur, 2009 (Photo by Wajid Ali)

It is also observed during the study that only the portraits of film stars are made on the trucks, whereas, the portraits of tv stars are never seen. The portrait shown in Figure 09 is a typical portraiture of actress ‘Rani’ as a police inspector in uniform showing the strength of a female having a pistol in hand. These kinds of portraits are mostly painted on the trucks of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The heroes and heroines act as role models for Pakistani folks, most of the films are produced in Punjabi and Urdu languages, because in Punjab the trend of going to cinemas is much higher than in other provinces. Therefore, the producers cast the heroes conferring to the liking of the people.

The main examples of this are Mustafa Qureshi and Sultan Rahi, both stars depict the life and culture of Punjab through their strong characters and thus are remembered. Similarly, among the protagonists, the image of Rani is mostly painted on the trucks. By the time, the upcoming generation replaces the older generation, their favorite cinema stars also changed. But the interest of truck drivers doesn’t change, they like and are inspired by the superstars of their youth times and stick to them for a long time.

iv. Invented Characters

This study also indicates that like celebrities and showbiz stars, there are several characters designed and invented by the artisans and decorators. One of them is the image of a beauty queen, it has a unique value on the vehicles. This is one of those imaginative characters that are being made with both paint and Chamakpatti and looks attractive.



Figure.10: *Haseena*, The Beauty Queen made with Chamakpatti on acrylic glass, Karachi 2006 (Photo by Wajid Ali)

The image of the beauty queen is considered as the beauty of the vehicles, without this, the bus decoration is cheerless (Iqbal, 2021). As shown in Figure 10, the beauty queen covers her face, but only eyes and lips are seen. This shows that the image is painted in a poetic mood with intricate cuttings of Chamakpatti in various colors. One who loves can only understand this, if you never engage in true love, then you will find nothing in it (Ranjha, 2022). Bus drivers specially request to make the image of beauty queen on their buses, because pretty ladies travel in buses with them (Muneer, 2021).

v. Foreign Characters

Some characters have an impact globally, they strongly influence other societies and cultures. A few years back, a little change was found in the paintings and internationally celebrated characters are also seen on the trucks in Pakistan. The external influences bring changes in art and many other fields, likewise; when the popular movie of Spiderman ran in the Pakistani cinemas, the character of Spiderman was very much liked by children and adults. The vehicle decorators were also inspired and they started

making Spiderman on their trucks in different ways. An example of this is the painting of a Spiderman painted by the artisans in Pakistani truck art style as shown in the Figure 11. A Spiderman holding a Pakistani flag in one hand running out of the frame, along with the model 2004 written in the background with a galaxy of colorful stars. This shows the enthusiasm of the owners and the liberty of the artisans.



Figure.11: Spiderman in Pakistan, enamel paint on the bus, Karachi 2004 (Photo by Wajid Ali)

There is another painting found on a minibus in Karachi, painted by renowned Pakistani truck painter Ranjha, a Japanese girl having a folding hand-fan in hand and looking at the viewer and a peacock in the background watching the girl (Figure 12). This shows the liberated work by artisans who influenced by international characters, but paint them in their own styles. They enjoy and bring innovations in their practices.



Figure.12: An international Beauty Queen painted with enamel paints by the truck artist Ranjha,

Karachi 2006 (Photo by Wajid Ali)

B. Birds

Birds and animals are being made on the trucks as painted on the canvases to be displayed in the

galleries. They represent nature and the enthusiasm of humans towards natural beauty. Before Pakistan came into being, most of the artists worked in the Courts (*Darbars*⁸) of the emperors. They decorate the Halls, Darbars and Palaces by painting different images of birds and animals, specifically peacocks and deer. After the Indo-Pak partition, the culture of *Darbar* was reduced and many of the artists migrated to Pakistan. There was no *Darbar* culture anymore, so they started painting peacocks and deer on the trucks (Kazi, 2010). Peacocks and deer are also seen in the Hindu temples in different areas of Sind, they are still painted for beautification purposes. But they also have religious significance as well, one of the examples of a Hindu temple SSD- Sat Satram Das Daharki Sind as shown in Figure 13.



Figure.13: Peacocks and birds made in SSD-Sat Satram Das Temple, Daharki 2016 (Photo by Wajid Ali)

In the above picture, a pair of peacocks holding flowers in their beaks is made on both sides of the picture of Sat Satram Das, along with the birds and some plants in the foreground. Earlier, the image of Peacocks was found only on the trucks of Quetta, but gradually peacock images traveled from Quetta to Karachi and were seen on the trucks decorated in Karachi. The image of a peacock contains a special value among other birds. Currently, the peacock is strikingly made with different materials including paint, metal, and Chamakpatti as shown in figure 14.

⁸ Courts of the emperors were known as *Darbars*.



Figure.14: Peacock made with Steel and Chamakpatti, Karachi 2006 (Photo by Wajid Ali)



Figure.15: A pair of Peacock painted on the truck, Sehwan 2011 (Photo by Wajid Ali)

The truck decoration is incomplete without the presence of a peacock (Iqbal, 2022). The expertise of decorators is exceptional, they make the designs according to the availability of the space with all aesthetics as shown in Figure 15. There is a very simple reason to make peacocks on the trucks, when it was initially painted, many people tried to get the reason behind it. After a long, they came to know that the artist who paints the peacock, only has the skills to paint peacock nothing else (Kazi, 2010). Whenever the poet praises her beloved, he starts resembling her with different things, sometimes with rose petals, deer and sometimes with a peacock. The same is the case with truck decorators, when they decorate a truck it's more like a beloved for them (Ranjha, 2022).

It is also observed that the falcon and eagle are the most painted birds on trucks all across the country. There are some stories behind the images of the falcons; for example, Sargodha city is known as the 'City of Falcons'. It is the headquarters of the Pakistan Air Force where the cadets are trained and pilots are produced, the Falcon flies in the air and so are the pilots. The truck drivers of Sargodha feel proud that the fighter pilots are trained in their city and defending the homeland. Often on the back of

the truck's falcon is painted along with an inscription "*Shaheeno Ka Shahar Sargodha*" (The city of Falcons Sargodha). The other connection of the falcon is with Sialkot city, as it is the birthplace of Pakistan's national poet Allama Iqbal, (discussed in the section i. national heroes) who also symbolizes the youth with falcon in his poetry. As Iqbal says; The falcon touches the skies, never eats the deceased and is always ready to attack. So, the youth should have the courage and power to work beyond the limits.



Figure.16: Flying Eagle painted on a bus,



Figure.17: Attacking Eagle on the truck, Enamel Karachi 2010 (Photo by Wajid Ali)
Hyderabad 2008 (Photo by Wajid Ali)

The falcon shown in Figure 16 is taking flight in search of prey and few birds and mountains are seen in the background, while a falcon in an attacking mood is seen in Figure 17. Gradually, society intermixes, and the distance between people reduces, same is the case with some images which shift from one area to another. Falcons started to paint from Sargodha and Sialkot but are now also seen on the trucks of Karachi, Peshawar and Southern Punjab.

The images of fish are also frequently made on the trucks. Religiously and from Sufis' viewpoint fish has an importance, it is connected

with Prophet Hazrat Younas (a.s) who was kept in the belly of fish, which means searching in oneself. On some trucks, we see flowers coming out from the mouth of the fish, according to the Hindu and Christian philosophy this is about gaining life again after death (Kazi, 2010).



Figure.18: Beautiful fishes painted on a truck, Karachi 2006 (Photo by Wajid Ali)

As shown in Figure 18, there are two fishes swimming in a circular form which represent the life cycle painted with enamel paint on a Bedford truck. Fishes are also made with steel and Chamakpatti on different trucks in several styles.

Flowers also have an important value for Muslims, as mentioned earlier in this study the decoration of trucks and buses has more influence from Mazarats (shrines). Most of the drivers have strong feelings for shrines, they often put flowers and *chadar*⁹ on the graves of the Sufi Saints. Therefore, as a sign of respect, special importance is given to the flowers made on the trucks. The land from Sindh to Multan is known as the “Land of Sufis” and so, the drivers of these areas like to have flowers on their trucks.

The pigeon is one of the common birds painted on the trucks of every region, it is a symbol of peace and love. The truck drivers are very much influenced by the culture of Mazarats. From a religious point of view, the pigeon is the bird of the tomb of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and is also found in the darbars of Sufis, therefore it has religious importance.

⁹ *Chadar* is a piece of cloth, the pilgrims put on the graves of Sufis and Saints.



Figure.19: Pigeons as love birds, holding a heart in beaks,

facing each other in a romantic mood, painted with enamel paint,

Hassan Abdal 2014 (Photo by Wajid Ali)



Figure.20: Pigeon carrying a letter, made with Chamakpatti, Karachi 2021 (Photo by Wajid Ali)

Usually, the pigeon was considered a message conveyor bird as shown in Figure 20, it carried letters from one place to another, but today it is just set as a metaphor. Generally, pigeons are made on the trucks as a symbolic representation of drivers' lives. It is said that, when a pigeon chirps, it captures all the worries and problems and saves our trucks from misfortunes and accidents (Sattar, 2021). Pigeons have little balls of *Tasbeeh*¹⁰ in their beak which reflects its religious importance (Anwar, 2010). Moreover, pigeons are considered a symbol of love and affection, sometimes they act as love birds holding hearts in their beaks, which indicates the connection between lover and beloved as shown in Figure 19. The birds have special value in the decoration of trucks as they cover the small spaces on the sides and on the crowns.

C. Animals

¹⁰ *Tasbeeh* is made of small beads to count the numbers in Muslim prayers.

This study specifies that the depiction of animals is a great affection for the truck painters, drivers and owners to represent the trucks in different means. Likewise; lion, tiger, deer and horses are equally important in truck art as many of the birds. They are famous for high speed; thus, the trucks are, and mostly painted on the trucks. As shown in Figure 21, there are two black and white horses running swiftly on the grass which creates a moment in the painting, and the horses are framed with beautiful colorful flowers. The truck owners like to have horses on their trucks, which imitate the speed of the truck. This means the truck carries the goods at high speed, and frankly speaking, the horse is a strong animal and it also symbolizes masculinity (Sarhadi, 2018).



Figure.21: Black & White Running horses, painted on the truck, Karachi 2014 (Photo by Wajid Ali)

Similarly, the lion is the most painted wild beast on the trucks in different styles. From the earlier times of truck decoration, the image of the lion is still painted today. It can be seen in different moods and styles on trucks, sometimes thriving, sometimes chasing the target, and sometimes as a King of the jungle. The lion paintings have different expressions in different regions. It is also observed that the face of the lion contains the expressions of the artist, whose appearance is like a lion but conditions are not (Kazi, 2010). As shown in Figure 22, a smiling lion holding the Pakistani flag standing on the grass and some emblematic stars are painted on the pinkish background. The lion symbolizes the strength, power and command that makes him distinct from other creatures.



Figure.22: A smiling Lion holding the flag of Pakistan, enamel paint on truck, Karachi, 2017 (Photo by Wajid Ali)

In comparison with the lion painted on the trucks, the tiger is shown more aggressive and violent. Sometimes, the tiger is preferred to paint on the trucks instead of a lion. The tiger shown in Figure 23 looks hungry and in an attacking mood, but is covered with floral designs and small birds painted at the corners. Interestingly, all the birds face towards tiger.



Figure.23: The Hungry Tiger painted with enamel paints, Karachi 2010 (Photo by Wajid Ali)

Apart from the wild animals, the deer are found on the trucks to romanticize the paintings; this innocent and lovely animal symbolizes the adored. On trucks, it is made with both enamel paint and Chamakpatti with some supporting elements to enhance the beauty. The truck painters paint the deer prettily and sensitively with sensation. i.e. a running deer is shown in figure 24 with a palm tree, moon, star and some flowers in the background. The red color is used in the background to enhance the deer. The Chamakpatti decorators labeled their names with stylized Pakistani flags on the sides. Other

than trucks, the paintings of deer, its skin and horns are also used in home decor.

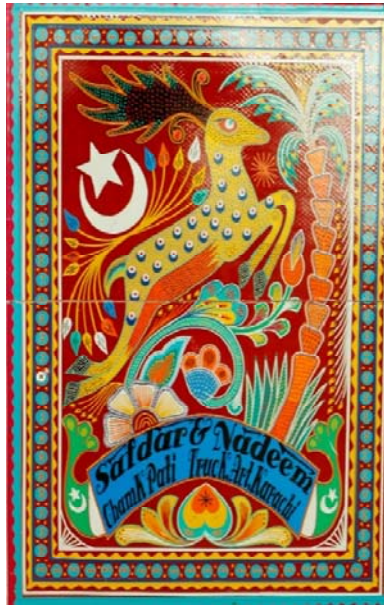


Figure.24: A Running Deer crafted with Chamakhpatti Karachi 2008 (Photo by Wajid Ali)

Besides horses and deer there is an imaginative creature known as *Buraq* being painted on the trucks. It is a horse-like animal having wings with a female face has a distinct value in Islam, on which Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) went for *Miraj*¹¹. In Sufism, the *Buraq* is a symbol of getting out from one's self into the search of some other entity (Kazi, 2021).



Figure.25: *Buraq* in enamel paint on a truck, Karachi 2014 (Photo by Wajid Ali)

Buraq has a special value among the paintings on the trucks. It is painted in every part of Pakistan but in different styles. As shown in Figure 25, a *Buraq* is painted in a typical truck art style. It seems to fly in the sky having an

innocent face with all the components like wings, crown and pendants in the feet. It is also important to me because the question arose in my mind as to why its face is of a lady having a crown on her head. Its reality is still indefinite. Many painters try to justify it in different ways. As it is the beloved conveyance of the Prophet (PBUH) which was sent by Allah and the Prophet traveled to the seventh sky, that's why it is made as a feminine (Ranjha, 2022). It is revealed in the study that different artisans of various regions have diverse points of view to paint animals on the trucks.

D. Sceneries

The current research indicates that the beautification of a truck is incomplete without the presence of scenery. Generally, sceneries and landscapes are made on trucks that have to travel far distances. Most of the drivers like to have the sceneries of their regions and sometimes they request the artisans to paint their dreamscapes. The painting shown in Figure 26 is considered a dreamscape having huts on the left side, mountains in the background, a flowing river, green trees, flying birds and a boat with a floral-shaped frame, that can be dreamed of.



Figure.26: Scenery painted with enamel paint on a bus door, Karachi 2009

(Photo by Wajid Ali)

¹¹ Miraj is the occasion, according to Muslims;

when Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) went to meet Almighty Allah.



Figure.27: Scenery on the truck, enamel paint, Sukkur 2018

(Photo by Wajid Ali)

Usually, there are different types of sceneries made on the trucks, mostly landscape and seascape. Landscapes mostly contain mountains, trees, ducks, birds, lakes, and beautiful houses whereas Seascapes contain ships, boats, sunset scenes and birds, etc. The landscapes are usually seen on the trucks but seascapes are rarely found. Seascapes are mostly found on the trucks decorated in Karachi having routes from the seaport. It is observed that a variety of landscapes, sceneries and seascapes are found on the trucks in Pakistan, and sometimes very attractive sceneries are seen that grasp the attention of the viewer.

E. Other Means of Transportation

The data show that the images of other means of transportations like the trains and the aero planes are also found on the trucks. Because the train takes passengers from one place to another same as a bus. The speed of the bus is less than a train, but in a sense, it is important to highlight the value of the bus (Shafiq, 2022).



Figure.28: High-speed Train, reflecting material, Lahore 2010 (Photo by Wajid Ali)

It is depicted that a swift train made of

Chamakpatti is coming out of a tunnel, mountains in the background and a yellow heart is made over the tunnel as shown in figure 28. It is also noticed that the decorators write 'Rail Car' on the buses, *Raftar* (Speed) is 110 Kms per Hour and Non-Stop etc. These all statements are not appropriate for a bus, they are just to make the passengers feel about it. In actuality, the bus is not a train and such buses never have this speed. A local bus can't be non-stop; this is a sarcastic beauty of Pakistani visual culture. To show the speed of trucks; airplanes and helicopters are also made on them. The truck is not only a truck but it's not less than an Airplane (Ranjha, 2022).



Figure.29: Fighting Helicopter on the bus, enamel paint, Karachi 2014 (Photo by Wajid Ali)



Figure.30: Aeroplan on the truck, enamel paint, Sehwan 2010 (Photo by Wajid Ali)

The painting of helicopters and airplanes on trucks is something new. As shown in figure 29, a war helicopter is landing on a ship and a few skyscrapers are in the background. This work started when America attacked Afghanistan, and due to this most of the Afghanis¹² were displaced and migrated to Pakistan. In Karachi and many other

¹² Afghanis are the people, who migrated from

Afghanistan to Pakistan, during the American Afghanistan war.

cities, a huge number of Afghan refugees are present who started to work as cleaners or conductors but now they have their own transport companies.

The Afghani truck owners were under stress by the impact of the war and its serious consequences. Soon, they started to get painted pictures of American fighter jets in their minds, who attacked their homes. Gradually, the airplanes were replaced by the war helicopters. With the passage of time and changing macro conditions, frequent change is observed in the paintings made on the trucks. This is a big contribution by the Afghan refugees in Pakistani truck art.

4. Conclusions

The trucks are the true representatives of society in one or another form. The era of palaces become extinct with time but the trucks and buses are seen as moving palaces on the streets. They almost contain all the enhancing components which were part of the palaces. The images painted on the trucks and the changes that occurred are not very much different from the societal changes. The decorated trucks are not much valued in Pakistani society, as it seems a common thing and people are used to it, but still its demand is increasing day by day. The iconography seen on the trucks depicts the values, colors and cultures of the society. These paintings contained all the aesthetics through various themes and the workmanship of the artisans. Different themes are portrayed through the paintings included floral designs, patterns, celebrities', birds, animals, international characters and sometimes the imaginative characters.

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Zia Sheikh, S. (2018). *International Journal of Multidisciplinary and Current Research*
Impact of truck art, as popular culture on Pakistani society.
<https://doi.org/10.14741/ijmcr/v.6.5.10>