

Introduction to Ilkhanid Period Altars Ornamentations in Iran

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Abstract

Ilkhanid period architecture is one of the outstanding Iranian architecture periods in terms of visual ornamentations. Creation of space and ornamentations of the altar is one of the majors sections of Ilkhanid period architecture ornamentations. Identification and perception of the different steps of familiarity and analysis of the altar ornamentations aid us in better perception of the architecture of this period and it can provide a pattern for contemporary architecture ornamentations. This reassert aimed at identifications of the researchers of the fields related to Iranian Ilkhanid period altars. The research method was descriptive- analytical and the tool was documentary research and the research findings depicted operational compilation of primary familiarity with the topic of Iranian Ilkhanid period altars and the research methodology was related to discussions. The final results of the research provide possibility of prototyping of the motifs and drawings extracted from altars in Iranian contemporary architecture in addition to providing opportunity for familiarity with Iranian Ilkhanid period altars.

Key words: Ornamentations, Altar, Ilkhanid period

INTRODUCTION

Architecture is one of the main elements of human civilizations and architecture of the religious centers representing its outstanding place in any culture. After expansion of Islam, construction of mosques was accelerated relative to other monuments in Iran. Indeed, mosque includes a set of diverse arts which together have created a specific space and place. The space or place that is proportionate with establishing connection between the God and the people and it can be said that mosque was the first place for manifestation of Islamic art.

As the symbol of Islamic architecture, mosque should play an important role in reflection of supremacy of the almighty God (R. Othman, Z.J.Zainal-Abidin, 2011, 106). As the manifestation of the holy art, mosques carry eternal affairs facts. The facts which are seen in their forms and shapes. Hence, perception of element is dependent on

two systems including form and meaning or form and material. Holiness of art is rooted in this fact that the eternal concepts belong to the intelligible world that are manifested in the tangible forms. Religion and world are not separated in Islam and they are unified and this unity is seen in the coordination of the mosque building (Pashayikamali&Kahnamui 2000, 108). The necessity of a holy place such as mosque is not physical structure, but what makes a place holy is a spiritual space flowing in it (Tavakkoli, Javadzade, 2000, 176).

Altar is one of the important part of a religious monument that depicts the skill of the artists. In architectural ornamentations history in Islamic art, altars have carried the most valuable motifs, drawings and calligraphic samples whether in terms of style or motifs (Gorbanzadeh, 2007: 54).

In the first part the altars of the mosques in Ilkhanid period were investigated that include Iranian architecture most valuable treasures which deserve to study from different perspectives. In the second section, the Ilkhanid mosques altars were studied that include motifs, calligraphies, golden proportionate and the issue on light.

Iran architecture was undergone revolutions and progresses in this period and plastering, mosaic and brick layering

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ornamentations were employed in skilled way which depict manifestation of Iranian architecture art (Wilber, 1986: 46).

In this period, innovations and elements governing architecture include: large scale, splendor, attention to architectural principles, coordinated combination and arrangement, altar ornamentation revolution, application of Mogharnasfor decorative purposes and also earthenware and glazing ornamentations on the large surfaces, extraordinary skill in plastering and its application in wide range, complication of the plastering as the coverage of the monuments, using glazed mosaic and also tiles with extrudedlines and drawing of various drawings and lines in different shapes and application of cruciate and star tiles and advent of solth inscription which was gradually replaced for naskh inscription. Of the features of this period architecture it can be referred to emphasis on beautiful ornamentations in the monuments interiors and the exteriors were not paid attention more. Plastering was begun since third century and the most beautiful plastering works were created in Ilkhanidperiod. The surrounding of the altars were covered by inspirits with detailed motifs(Wilber, 1986: 135).

Mystical attitude toward mosque architecture and its ornamentations is necessary for identification and specification of the reasons for usage and extraction of the patterns used in the structure and ornamentations of mosques. Employing mystical resources, each element in Islamic art ornamentations in mosques is analyzed in

conceptual background of tradition by the perception of place and prototypic extraction. Also research has been carried in order to identify the symbolic aspects of architecture and ornamentations in monuments inIlkhanid period which have employed Islamic ideology.

Due to historical nature of this topic, the historical, technical and architectural viewpoints are dominated. Inhistorical and technical viewpoints, structural system, plan, materials and all other specialist aspects are considered.The ornamentations and motifs are also seen in the historical inscriptions and a few studies have been done on their aesthetic approaches and visual and meaning of the inscriptions and their ornamentations according to the mentioned viewpoints. Ilkhanid period Islamic art decorations as the aesthetic perfection in Iranian art have not been introduced from motifs and inscription point of view and the relationships among them and also style perspective and no specified pattern has been extracted for them. Also these patterns have not been employed in contemporary Iranian architecture principles.

Table: altar definition

(by writer)

Before the issue of changing the Muslims kiblah in the north section of the Prophet Mosque, there was a seraglio with wooden pillar made of date tree and the prayers said prayers under it toward Jerusalem. After change of the kiblah, the north seraglio lost its function and the prayer

Work	Author	Definition
Sokhan dictionary	Hassan Anvari	The place of the mosque in the kiblah direction that the imam stands there- a part of worship place that the people stand there during worship (Anvari, 2014: 6744)
Farsi dictionary	Mohammad Pasha Andaraj	The front part of a place and the noblest section that Imam and the kings stand there (Mohammad Pasah, Andarajm 1981: 3869)
Shamim dictionary	Shamin Ali	The place of fire, in the meaning of the arch toward the kiblah (Shamim, 2000, 987)
Gyasolgyath	Servat Mansur	House, the top of a session, arch inside the mosque toward to kiblah called altar (Servat, 1996: 788)
Persian dictionary	Sadri Afshar	A part of the worship place (mosque or fire temple or church) that people stand toward it (Sadri Afsahr, 1998: 707)
Payam Persian dictionary	Akhtariyan Mahmud	The top of the house, the noblest place for sitting and the place for sitting of imam (Akhtariyan Mahmud, 2008: 522)
Danesh dictionary	Amuzegar, Habiab	Place for praying of the Imam and place of Imam in the mosque(Amuzegar, 1996: 799)
Amid Persian dictionary	Hamid Hassan	The top of the house or a place, the altar, place for standing of the imam, the mosque arch in the kiblah direction (Amid, 1988: 1094)
Katoziyan dictionary	Tehrani Mohammad Ali	The front of a place, the valuable place (Tehrani, 1994: 678)
Dehkhoda Persian dictionary	Moein Mohammad	The top place, top of the shop, booth, house, the noblest part of a house, place for sitting of kings, the place of rulers, Imams, the place of Imam in the mosque, the arc of the mosque called altar, kiblah, for worshipping, place for worshipping (Moeain, 1998)
Complete Persian dictionary	Ensafpour, Golamreza	The place for standing of Imam in the mosque in front of kiblah, the place of fire, the place of the king, the top of house (Ensafpur, 1990: 1039)
Moalem Persian dictionary	Sofi Maryam	The front of a meeting, the noblest place, the place of Imam, the place of praying (Sofi, 2001: 1095)
Moein Persian dictionary	Moein Mohammad	The front place, the top of a house, the place of king, place of praying of Imam, kiblah(Moein, 1996: 3900)
Nafisi dictionary	Ali Akbar Nafisi	Booth, the front of a place, the noblest place, the place for sitting of Imam in the mosque the place of the kings and the great men, arch, the place that Imam stands during praying (Nafisi, 1939:3166)

location was transferred to the seraglio in the south side. Hence, there was no altar and the prophet (peace be upon him) placed a thing such as a stone or bayonet for showing the kiblah which was called the place of war with the carnal soul (Zamarshidi, 1995: 18). In Iran there were places for worship pre-Zoroaster and there was such arch there and this arch was entered to Islam world by Iranians. In pre-Islamic period, making altar was progressed and its walls were decorated in different styles (Shams, 2009:29). Altar is the place of light and holy presence manifested by the presence of the Misbah (Burckhardt, 1990:49). The main elements of the altar architecture until Ilkhanid period which were considered the patterns for other altars included: forehead, margin, quarter, arch, large and small vault, capital and pillar. However, the Islamic, geometrical, symbolic motifs, and different inscriptions with Kofī, Solth and Naskh handwriting were influential in culmination of altar. In Seljuk period the inscriptions were covered by solid motifs (Javadi, 1984:714). Ornamentation on the plastering was begun in Iran since fourth century and it was exalted in seventh century and appeared as small netted shapes and this style was continued until attack of Mongols (Sajjadi, 2008:156). Approximately, three-dimensional plastering was continued for three centuries (Pope, 2007: 106). The Ilkhanid period can be considered important due to using plaster and innovation of complex and elegant motifs. In plasters obtained from this period until Mongols it is seen that the best motifs were used, so that before tiling it was the only aesthetic method in decoration of the religious monuments. In researchers' opinions, this period plastered altars included abstract installations employed in the best artistic way and the abolished abstract symbols were replaced by the geometrical figures (Pope, 2008: 3195-3196). Some researchers suggested the abstractness or concreteness of the motifs as the base of division of plastering (Azarnoush, 2007).

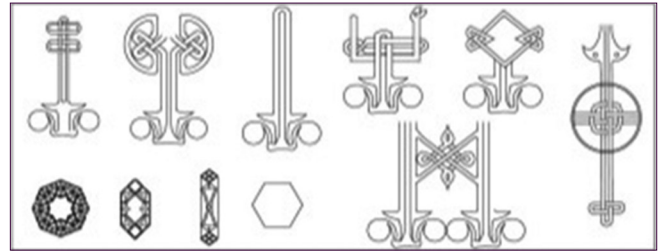
ALTAR ORNAMENTATIONS

Ornamentations of mosques can be transferred from one region to other region with specific effect, but all of them are rooted in Islam and this is the symbolic meaning in Islamic art which is interpreted as unity in multiplicity (R. Othman, Z.J. Zainal-Abidin, 2011:107). According to holy aspect of altar in Islamic architecture and prohibition of iconography, the ornaments of the altar can be divided into three groups of geometrical, plant, inscription (Kiyani& Ansari, 1996: 95, Sajjadi, 1995: 204-211). Due to the importance of these groups, they are explained briefly:

Geometrical Motifs

these motifs depict creativity, order, rational repetition of the defined motifs in religious monuments decorations which reveal unity in multiplicity. These ornamentations

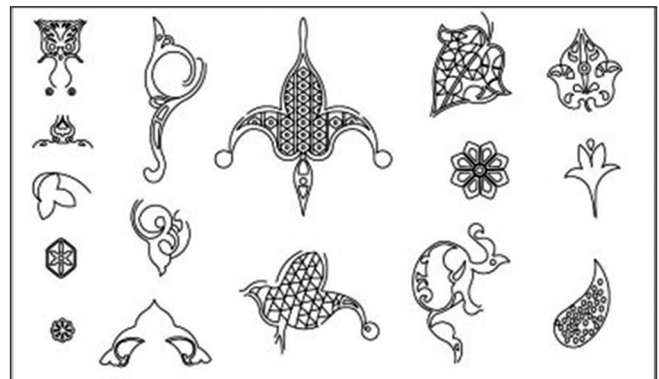
prevent centralization. They are rational and harmonic and manifestation of human soul (Burckhardt, 1986: 75).



Shape (1):Pattern of Geometrical motifs(by writer)

Plant Motifs

One of the sensible aspects of abstraction in Islamic art and architecture is application of specific geometrical forms which according to Burckhardt offers boundary for Islamic art. In Islamic motifs and drawings this issue is seen in exalted way. In these motifs, the angled lines are minimized and even in the case of existence, they are seen as curvatures and circles (Naghizadeh, 2005: 93). Islamic is a dialectic in ornamentation category which is unified with alive continuity and includes two main elements of intertwisting and twisting of the motifs and drawings (Burckhardt, 2011: 139). Islamic for a Muslim is not only possibility of artistic creation with images, but it is a direct tool for dissolution of image or what is conformed between subjective system and image, as repetition with weight and harmony dissolve some of the subjective fixation speeches on the desired objects (Burckhardt, 2011:146). Islamic whether in stylized or as geometrical and interwoven lines represent balance and coordination (ibid, 74). The Muslim artist forms and motifs are stylized and this is due to this fact that they prevent any egotism and also beyond it prevents any attraction (Naghizadeh, 2005: 93). Islamic motifs mainly reproduce the creator cosmic process by the means of the nature. Since the nature is based on rhythm and Islamic is a rhythmic concept and a movement that reflects ordered incidents of features, phenomena and components and this it has an alternative nature (Ardalan, Bakhtiyar, 2011:73).



Shape (2):Pattern of Plant motifs(by writer)

Handwritings and Inscriptions

The noblest visual art in Islam world is calligraphy and writing of Quran is considered as a holy art (Burckhardt, 2011: 151). When the words of the God are expressed by calligraphy, it is placed in the wholeness of the work and the result can be known as the symbolic expression of Quran. Quran depicts certain coordination between unity and multiplicity which unified with the blessed soul. Thus, it has the mystery of balance and holiness, culmination of creativity in its structure and it is the best symbolic guide for traditional architecture and its arrangement (Ardalan, 2001: 75). Arabic calligraphy possesses ornamental possibilities and includes different handwriting such as Kofi and Naskh (Burckhardt, 2011: 152). These handwritings reveal Arabic spirits, while Nastaliq and Solth have curved twisting depict flexibility of the Iranian souls (IslamiNadushan, 2001:17).



Shape (3): Pattern of solh posted line (by writer)

Arabic writing with its broadness represent hadiths and by expanding its scope, its unity becomes obvious (Burckhardt, 2011: 152). The inscriptions created excitement by intricateness of the line that should be investigated. They are adorable due to their pure design, however, the Muslims consider them with inner specifications (Pope, 2007: 159). Besides plant and geometrical contents of the Arabic language as the language of inspiration, inscriptions were considered as a decorative element and a new form of ornamentation in architecture and were taken into account as symbol of Islamic art. Arabic writing had potential for ornamentation (Bagsorkhi, 2010: 97).



Shape (4): Pattern of kofi posted line (by writer)

Different types of writings enriched Islamic-Iranian art and they were manifested in monuments. The Muslim artist

tried to visual the Quran speech and hadith in the elegant and beautiful way (Ardalan, 2001: 45). These inscriptions act differently in compositions, motifs, but by repetition and symmetry succeed to constitute a unified and integrated system. In this system, the motifs are usually placed inside the geometric confinement or decorative circles with vacant interval in the background, so they do not cause to any distortion among them (Nogrehkar, 2010:136).



Shape (5): Pattern of naskh posted line (by writer)

THE NECESSITY OF CONDUCTING RESEARCH

Diversity of the Islamic architecture ornamentations and ever-increasing expansion of their usage in architecture and space creation in Islamic architecture history and efforts in innovation of the new forms depict its importance among the architects and artists. This importance also reveals the need of the architects and designers for this major tool in achieving desired space that is shown elegant and artistic. Islamic art with its holiness reflects a material world with eternal and holy messages (Eliade, 1987:12) and it includes exalted Quranaic contents (Atasoy, 1990:7).

Nowadays, by expansion of human communication acquisition of a new language for expressing purposes with outlook on the past architecture is the only way that can aid in protection of the culture and its origins.

In current social condition the vacant place of Iranian original cultural symbols and elements is seen. The Iranian architects can employ intellectual and theoretical paradigms extracted from these motifs and inscriptions for creation of works proportionate with Islamic and Iranian spirits. The Islamic architecture form and structure can be considered as the results of physical laws, climatic features, rituals and physical functions of the monuments (Kunel, 1996:6).

Identification and application of the unknown relations and principles in the inscriptions and motifs and their proportionate application cause to Iranian contemporary architecture nobility and adds on its strength.

Undoubtedly, the architectural symbolic aspects of historical monuments are important. Investigation of these monuments is inevitable, since they depict secrets which aid us in identification of their architecture thoughts. These symbols and secrets are manifested as geometrical shapes, plants, inscriptions and etc. Ilkhanid period is one of the important periods in Iran and its architecture and decorations are of importance.

Research Goals

- For better identification of the aesthetic aspects of these motifs, extraction of Islamic and geometrical patterns and inscriptions and visual and Islamic symbols seem necessary.
- The architects used two realistic and idealistic styles in application of their inspirations and their personification in symbolic way.
- Examining of the unmaterialistic, semantic and conceptual aspects of ornamentations as the symbolic forms of Islamic art which seek to manifest Islamic architecture in addition to their academic different aspects.
- Identification and analysis of outstanding visual characteristics of this period and construction of plaster altars with different Kofi and other handwritings, including geometrical knots and intricate motifs among the inscriptions and the first application of Mother and Child inscription.
- Examining structural system, handwritings, geometrical and plant motifs as the main element of constituting of any inscription, their position, proportion and connection with surrounding in architectural spaces.
- Offering a geometrical patterns and observing all detail and wholeness elements from all steps to implementation based on the proportion and composition.
- Identification and extraction of the patterns from the motifs of flowers and the role of chain in the plastering causing to great revolution and creation of the masterpieces.
- Necessity of considering Islamic and Iranian architectural patterns and identification of the potential and application of them in Iran contemporary architecture.
- Examining and analysis of the mosques inscriptions which can be considered as an encyclopedia of motifs with Iranian identity.

Research Questions

- What are the constituents? What pattern do they depict? Does utilization of composition and proportion follow principles? What are these principles?
- What are the rules governing on the ornamentations with architectural dimensions, sizes and situations in

the monuments? What spiritual concepts do they infer?

- What is the impact of style of implementation and the extracted patterns of Ilkhanid period architecture on the concept and content of contemporary Iranian architecture?

Research Hypotheses

- The motifs and drawings of the mosques altars in Ilkhanid period have the unified pattern.
- The mystical and semantic concepts govern on the motifs and drawings of the mosques altars in Ilkhanid period.
- The motifs and drawings of the mosques altars in Ilkhanid period and their principles and Islamic and Iranian architecture patterns are used in contemporary period.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

For realization of the mentioned goals, the field and documentary study was done on the ornamentations of this period and the data were analyzed by descriptive and analytical method. It was tried to use comparative studies for identification of the characteristics of this period motifs. The research was limited to Iran in Ilkhanid period since there are many historical monuments in this period. It was also tried to investigate the works with outstanding motifs influential in the conclusion.

- At first the inscriptions were photographed and the data were collected.
- The secondary data were collected by Coreldraw Freehand Photoshop Auto cad Stream line
- Graphic analysis was done to investigate the ornaments and inscriptions and the hidden motifs in their architecture for separation of them
- Then the image were drawn by the computer and finally the relationship among them was investigated with their compositions and patterns.
- Integrated designing was carried out on the studied mosques alphabets in order to study their visual arts.

The research method was descriptive and analytical and the statistical population consisted of all inscriptions and altar motifs. The altars were investigated in terms of structure, motifs, drawings, commonalties and difference in order to offer examples of their usages in the counterparty architecture with applied and academic results.

CONCLUSION

The graphic format and extraction of the patterns in the motifs for access to their form and content of the inscriptions and motifs provide the monuments characteristics in clear

way and also pave the way to compare their ornamentations. On the other hand, by renewal of these inscriptions and motifs it can be created valuable works with traditional and national heritage as the best source for architecture and modern decoration. The power of designing and the artists' viewpoints have numerous ideas for renewal of Islamic and Iranian architecture patterns.

Documentation of these valuable heritage and rereading of the past works aid in eternity of these works in addition to compensation of their shortages and certainly according to the visual possibilities of the mentioned inscriptions it can be benefitted from the enrich and original resources in different branches of architecture. Since the empowerment of visual art and architecture of any country depend on existence of visual resource. It can be said that providing a set of Islamic and Iranian motifs ensures continuity of these arts. But the necessity of useful application lies in rereading of Islamic and Iranian architecture patterns and collecting and investigating of all aspects and capabilities.

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