

INVESTIGATING PANTHEISM IN IRAN'S ISLAMIC ART (CASE STUDY: ORNAMENTATION OF ASNAQ MOSQUE)

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Abstract¹

One of the main topics of discussion of philosophy is the link between the perceptible world and heavenly world² and mosques are a place when religious beliefs in the form of symbols that display the link between art and religion. Since the beginning of creation, temples have been crucially significant and that is why they have led to emergence of the most advanced techniques in architecture. In fact, mosques have created the sacred art and this type of art is based on allegories and exemplifications and is built upon pantheism. This ultimately has led to creation of the philosophy of unity in diversity and diversity in unity in all Islamic aspects which is manifested in many works of art. The present study aims to recognize the architectural ornaments of Asnaq mosque and their association with the dominant philosophical thinking. The question that rises here is that: in which elements of Asnaq mosque have the sacred notions and spiritual identities been manifested? In this article, by referring to written historical sources and by using the field study method and a descriptive – analytical approach, it has been attempted to initially review the architectural ornaments of Asnaq mosque and then to philosophically decode these ornaments and symbols. This article also aims to establish a connection between philosophy and art in Asnaq mosque. Ultimately, the result obtained from this research will show that manifestation of god in nature is the origin of Islamic art and architectural ornaments of Asnaq mosque are indicative of the oneness of god.

Key Words: Asnaq Mosque, sacred art, symbollic art, pantheism

¹ This article has been extractd from the thesis of the corresponding author with the title of “Comparing the illuminationist teachings of Suhrawardi to architecture of mosques located in northwest of Iran, from 6th century to the Qajar Era”.

Introduction

This theory that the reality of existence is simultaneously one and diverse can be called the unity in diversity and diversity in unity theory. This principle that realities and diversities existing in the world will ultimately go back to god is unavoidable. However, the issue that rises here is that how has this thinking, that has come to be known as pantheism, found its way in the art of architecture and particularly the art of ornamentation that depends on architecture and how does it become manifested. In fact, an architect attempts to display his inner thoughts and moods. That is why architecture of mosques has been somehow coded and secretive since mosque is a place that connects earthly art and sublime thoughts and ideas and can be associated with the views of Muslim philosophers. Sacred art is a kind of architecture which is the basis for arts using allegories and exemplification. This type of art is not made of images, it is rather objectifying and expressing human beings' inner thoughts and moods. Generally, in defining this type of art, it must be said that it is the external form and reflection of mental imaginations of an artist. In other words, ornaments are created because of different mental imaginations and the proportion used in it is the center of gravity of the unseen world of imagination. One of the basic features of Asnaq mosque is the usage of geometrical forms as architectural ornamentations. Here it is necessary to note that the building of this mosque is traced back to the period of Mughal Ilkhanate. It is obvious that the according to the customs of their ancestors, Mughals were Buddhists at the beginning of their entrance to Iran. "However, with the attempts of Amir Norooz in 4th of Sha'ban of the year 694 A.H. regarding the acceptance of Islam by Ghazan Khan in this period, Islam became the dominant religion in Iran and found advocates" (Shiraz and Ghasemi, 2012: 28). On the other hand, considering the date of building of the mosque, it must be said that although Islam might have had its popularity and acceptance to some extent among governors, artists and ordinary people in this period, but it did not have the place and significance it should have had and that is why the artists were seeking symbolic and ironic notions. The present study aims to establish a connection between art and philosophy in the symbolic ornamentations of Asnaq mosque. Given the variety and the large size of the drawings in this mosque, the criterion for selecting some images is being symbolic and that is why it is crucially important to select the right images.

Questions

The question that rises here is that:

In which elements of Asnaq mosque have the sacred notions and spiritual identities been manifested?

This study assumes that the spiritual identity of the mosque is manifested by perceptible ornaments and the type of ornaments used in the mosque is somehow an indication of the pantheism philosophical principle. These ornaments have been reviewed in this study. In fact, the objective of this research is, briefly, comparing the ornaments of Asnaq mosque to the pantheism philosophical principle.

Research Method

The field and library methods and the descriptive – analytical approach have been used to collect the research data. For this purpose, at first the considered mosque is introduced and then the philosophy is compared to the ornaments depending on its architecture.

Research Background

It must be pointed out that only few studies have focused on philosophy, pantheism and its manifestation in Islamic architecture. One of the most important researches focusing on this subject is the research conducted by Rahnemood (1990) called “art of Islamic revolution” which has briefly discussed unity and diversity in Islamic arts. In another research conducted by Khakpoor and Khazaee (2010) called “unity and diversity in Islamic art with a look at the works of Burckhardt” has initially emphasized the philosophical works of Burckhardt and has reviewed unity and diversity in architecture, clothing and calligraphy. The present study is the pioneer when it comes to consideration of meaning of signs and symbols of the architectural ornaments in Asnaq mosque. However, in association with the research background about Asnaq mosque, one must mention the article written by Ockan Bernard who has reviewed Asnaq mosque and Sarvar mosque, their architecture and their ornamentations. In a book called “Sarab’s antiquities”, the author has briefly referred to Asnaq mosque which is associated with its architecture and the time of its construction.

Geographical Domain of the Research

Asnaq mosque has been located in the city of Sarab, Mehraban village which is one of the villages of East Azerbaijan province. Sarab is located in the southeast of the province with an elevation of 1650 meters above sea level and it is considered as a cold and mountainous areas of Iran. Meshkin Shahr and Haris cities are the northern neighbors of this city, Ardebil province is the eastern neighbor of the city, Miyaneh city is the southern neighbor of the city and Bostan Abad city is the western neighbor of the city. Mehraban village is located 39 kilometers from the western area of Sarab, 14 kilometers from Tabriz-Sarab road and 92 kilometers from eastern area of Tabriz and it is located in a longitude of 47°7′ and a latitude of 38°4′.

Asneh or Asnaq village is located 13 kilometers from the Bostan Abad-Sarab road and 7 kilometers from the eastern area of Mehraban. The name Asnaq has been mentioned in the book “Hodood Al-Alem” as a city in Azerbaijan as “Asneh, Sarav (Sarab), Miyaneh, Khooneh and Jabroghan” (Hodood Al-Alem, 1423 A.H.: 164).

Asnaq Mosque

This building has been located in Haris area in Asnq village – in East Azerbaijan province – in Iran and it is one of the valid and beautiful buildings of the area from the Ilkhanate Era. This mosque is built in the middle of the village in a big yard and its ground floor is one-meter higher than the ground level and it has a porch and courtyard. The porch is shaped like a trapezoid and it has been built on two integrated columns made of rock which have been beautifully craved as a spiral. The yard of the mosque is shaped as a rectangle with the length and width of 8.80 × 10.35 meters extended from north to south. the roof of the

mosque is built on 4 integrated spiral columns made out of rock with well-designed pilasters and bases. The height of the columns – with their bases and pilasters – is approximately 6.20 meters. The façade of the mosque was originally designed with red rocks and apparently, the yard had a dome-shaped roof – like the mosque in the middle which was made of rocks – and over time, the dome and an important part of the northern, southern and western walls of the dome collapsed and they were replaced with walls made of rocks and mud and wooden beams have been used to build the ceiling; but the important part of the eastern wall of the mosque, which is its main façade and contains the date of the building and the name of its founder and carver, has remained intact and shows the elegance and beauty of the first building. The mosque has one door and two windows all three of which are on the eastern wall of the building. Its entrance has a chevron-shaped arch with the height of 173cm from the floor and 90cm from the opening of the arch. On the top of the arch, the phrase “La Elaha Elallah, Muhammad Rasool Allah³” has been written and in the bottom margin surrounding the sides and top of the entrance, a tradition by Muhammad has been carved. Below this phrase, on the forehead of the arch, two other inscriptions have been engraved with as follows: “Qala Allaho Sobhana va Ta’ali An Al-Masajed Allah Fala Tad⁴” and “Amr Be’emarat Hazehe Al-Masjed Fakhr al-Din Muhammed ibn Rustam⁵”. The windows are not arch-shaped and each of them have a height of 156cm and a width of 80cm. There are two inscriptions on the top of each of the two windows. The writing on the inscription on the top of the window in the middle is as follows: “on the door of the mosque, I wrote about my conditions so that whomever reads it after one hundred years notices that the engraved date goes back to 733 years”. And the bottom inscription says: “Anama Ya’mer Masajed Allah Men Aman Bellah valyom Al-Akhar⁶”. Two lines of poetry have been written on the inscription above the window on the left: “this is the mosque with carvings built by the master that is the famous Malekshah, all of these drawings have been engraved by an axe god bless him and his mastery”. And the inscription on the bottom of the window shows the tradition: “Ghala Nabi Alayha Salavat va Islam men Bani Masjedan Beni Allah laho Bita fe Janat⁷”. The poetries in Persian, the writings and the phrases in Arabic have been written calligraphically with a method that is close to “Sols⁸”. Inside the mosque, there is a disorganized and broken carved wooden pulpit which has been constructed simultaneously with the mosque’s building. On a piece of its arm, the name of the founder of the mosque “Saheb Fakhr Al-Din Muhamad” has been written. By taking a look at the phrases engraved on this pulpit and other available inscription, it becomes clear that the construction of this mosque and the carvings on its pulpit have been finished in the year 733 A.H. with the order of Fakhr Al-Din Muhammad ibn Rustam and by a well-known artistic carver named Malekshah.

³ In English: “There is no God but Allah, Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah”

⁴ In English: God Almighty said that the mosques to God do not let one with God

⁵ In English: “This mosque was ordered by Fakhr Al-Din Muhammad ibn Rustam”

⁶ In English: “As long as the mosques of Allah are alive, for whoever believes in Allah and the other day”

⁷ “The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said:” Whoever builds a mosque in the house of God has a house in Paradise ”

⁸ A method of Calligraphy

Unity and Diversity in Islamic Architecture and Their Manifestation in Ansaq Mosque

Islamic art manifest what is inside human beings and is based on revelation and submission to god's commandments. The truth of Islam includes the true essence of all other monotheistic religions and Islamic art, in its broad meaning, refers to all kinds of art which have been created in religious civilizations and on the center of them there is nothing but a sacred and holy affair. In other words, a sacred affair that is true beauty is manifested in Islamic arts and this symbolic art that depict perfection (Noroozitalab, 2009: 4). Islamic art exploits codes and symbols gives an objective environment a divine spirit and this art peaks at the architecture of mosques. These codes give material beings divine and spiritual. In fact, material elements, by becoming spiritual, make reaching the heavenly world possible. Presence of material elements in the form of divinity in mosques is somehow all of the existence drowning in mysticism. Line, surface, color and so on are all material things that are considered to be coded and nonmaterial and these combinations are indications of oneness and monotheism (Rahnemood, 2000: 64- 65). Islamic architecture is one of the biggest aspects of manifestation of an artistic truth in a material body. As the most important branch of Islamic arts, it has been able to institutionalize a large portion of specifications of Islamic arts in the context of time and place. In fact, spiritual teachings and cultural beliefs are infrastructures of a valuable and dynamic architecture and an Iranian architect is aware of the supernatural properties of the universe and at the time of creating a work of architecture, they always seek unity as the most important key to immortality (Mahdavinejad, 2004: 58-61). The principle of oneness in Islamic worldview has created the principle of movement from diversity to unity. In Islam, when we say "La Elaha Ela Allah", at the same time the distinction between different levels of reality is reserved (world of diversities), and everything is included in the supreme oneness (Burckhardt, 1990: 58). In Iranian architecture, oneness and unity is manifested in harmony and coordination, but in the architecture of Arabs, the principle of unity and oneness is shown by geometrical figures. Burckhardt believes that Iranian architecture has articulated subtleties and fragmentations, but they are not necessarily practical. For Iranians, unity is best manifested in coordination. An Iranian person is a visual individual who enjoys imagery. Unity in architecture is in fact the repetition of motifs, harmony and coordination that are present in the entire building; because qualitative usage of geometry in architecture is the intellectual basis for blending unity and diversity (Gonoon, 2007: 147). Sacred architecture is beautiful because it links heaven and earth and bring them closer together. Islam's sacred architecture is manifested on earth. In fact, the inside of the mosque has been constructed in such a way that a believer sees himself in the center and all of the other earthly elements, such as columns, walls and arch-shaped entrances, surround him. The believer considers himself the center of elements that is enough in itself. In other words, the ultimate and most significant goal of Islamic architecture is to manifest the space (Burckhardt, 1986: 32-33). Islamic architecture is a dynamic art and dynamicity and movement are its essential elements. Movement is a necessity when it comes to reaching pantheism or unity of essence. In fact, by using ornamentation in architecture, the artist tries to recreate an imaginary nature in an earthly form that is a manifestation of truth in such a way that god's perfection would be revealed to human beings through these tools.

In order to review the concept of unity and diversity in architecture more accurately, at first we review the meaning of the word movement and then study the geometrical figures and ornamentations of Asnaq mosque.

Movement is a symbol of time and it is one of its essential components. In Moeen dictionary, moving is the opposite of inactivity which means gradually exiting from the current mode and moving from potentiality to actuality (Moeen, 1984). With this definition in mind, the concept of movement can be quite sensible and objective or perceptible and subjective. In fact, if we compare a movement on a straight line to a rotatory spiral movement, we would find out about the regular and consistent change of direction of spiral movement. Spiritually and materially, the most significant property of a spiral curved movement is reaching unity and perfection. Then, "movement" is considered to be the most basic tools for reaching greatness and for this purpose, we must seek truth. Given the journey to truth and wayfaring, reaching truth and the journey to truth are both steps to truth. A sense of relief from prejudice and self-interest and an overall form of satisfaction can be found in a mosque or a house of god that is the safe temple and a place of worship for all. Therefore, there can be as many ornaments and figures as one wishes in order for the sense of relief from the material world to be reinforced. These ornaments will accompany a believer who is on the journey to greatness. Since they are manifestation of a sacred world and a sense freedom from the nether world, they are mostly seen at the alter where believers pray to god regularly and seek enjoyment and show their coordination with prayers of believers (Poor Jafar and Moosavi Lor, 2002: Pp 186-194).

Geometrical Ornaments of Asnaq Mosque

There are figures in the entrance of Asnaq mosque. Although these figures remain still, but we see essential movement that is somehow is an indication of reaching greatness and that it is only possible to achieve perfection and truth by moving. In fact, here the artist has used visual dimensions as a medium for the soul to reach the world of truth. The origin of Islamic art is Quran and methodology of prophets. However, one must not ignore the status of cultural fields when reviewing signs and symbols of the ornamentation of Islamic architecture. Architectural ornaments of Asnaq mosque are manifestation of visual beauties and an example of combination of symbols with deep spiritual beliefs of human beings.

In Islamic architecture, stars have always been the symbol of unity in diversity and diversity in unity and they address the concept of light in illuminationist philosophy and in the holy Quran. Allah Noor Al-Savat va Al-Arz⁹ (Noor/64) and stars are a symbol of god in Islamic architecture. Stars in Islamic architecture have 5 angles, 8 angles, 10 angles, 12 angles and 14 angles. In the entrance and the eastern porch of this mosque, we see five-angle stars which can refer to many notions such as human life, five senses of human beings, five pillars

⁹ God is the light of heavens and the earth

of religion (Shahadata¹⁰, Salat¹¹, Swam¹², Zakat¹³ and Hajj¹⁴), five times of daily prayer, five kinds of Islamic rules¹⁵, five people of the cloak, five messengers¹⁶ and Quran's broken letters that are not more than 5. The eight-angle star is the result of rotation of two squares in one another and it has been the symbol of the sun all around Europe, Africa and Asia for ages and in Islam, it has been expressed in two ways: Hasht Behesht¹⁷ or Hasht Dar-e Behesht¹⁸. In mysticism, this eighth door is the door of repentance and is always open and there are eight angels protect heaven¹⁹. In Sumer, the eight-angle star is the symbol of god and heaven. In a tradition by Imam Baqer, On the authority of Abu Jaafar, he said: "The best of all is the belief in Allah, and I know that the Commission has eight doors, each of which has a forty-year path. On the other hand, the most important and the most sacred place in the whole world is Mecca, the house of god, which is shaped like a cube and the first number of cube is eight. We can see many of these figures and shapes in the entrance of the mosque. Here, these stars are formed either when two irregular quadrilateral stars or when two squares combined together and create this shape in architectural ornamentation of this mosque. We see this shape in the entrance of the mosque along spiral movements (Hosseini and Farashi Abarghooyi, 2013: 35-37).

The only shapes seen in the ornamentation of Asnaq mosque are squares and circles. In the Islamic mysticism and philosophy, these geometrical shapes are indications of earth, heaven, sky and divinity of god. Square is an indication of qualities and circle is an indication of quantities. With this in mind, square can be considered as the symbol of diversity and circle can be considered as the symbol of unity. In the ornamentation of Asnaq mosque, geometrical figures have been drawn as limited circles between squares or vice versa. For instance, we observe some shapes in the entrance of the mosque and in addition to observation of adaptation, movement is seen in them which all ultimately lead to one point which is the mighty god (image 1).

¹⁰ Declaration of faith for Muslims

¹¹ Muslim's daily prayer

¹² Muslim's fasting

¹³ Muslim's religious obligation or taxes

¹⁴ Muslim's pilgrimage to Mecca

¹⁵ Obligatory, recommended, permitted, abominable and unlawful

¹⁶ Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad

¹⁷ Eight heavens

¹⁸ Eight doors to heaven

¹⁹ "Va Yahmalo Arsh Rabboka Foghahom Yomaeza Samanieh" meaning: "And he shall bear the throne of thy lord upon them eight days"

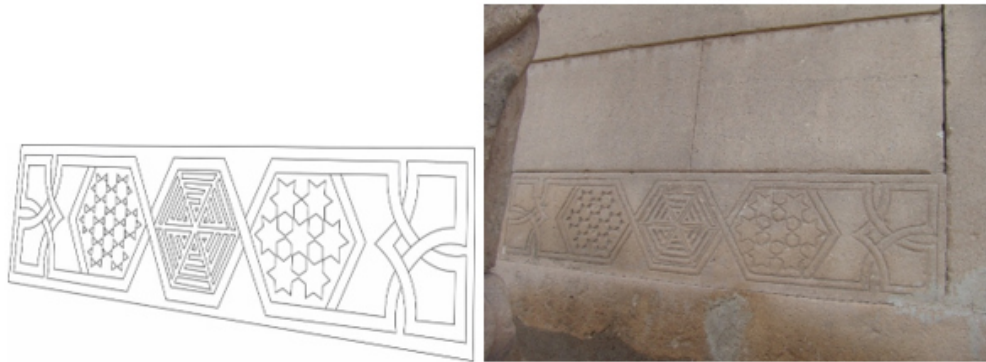
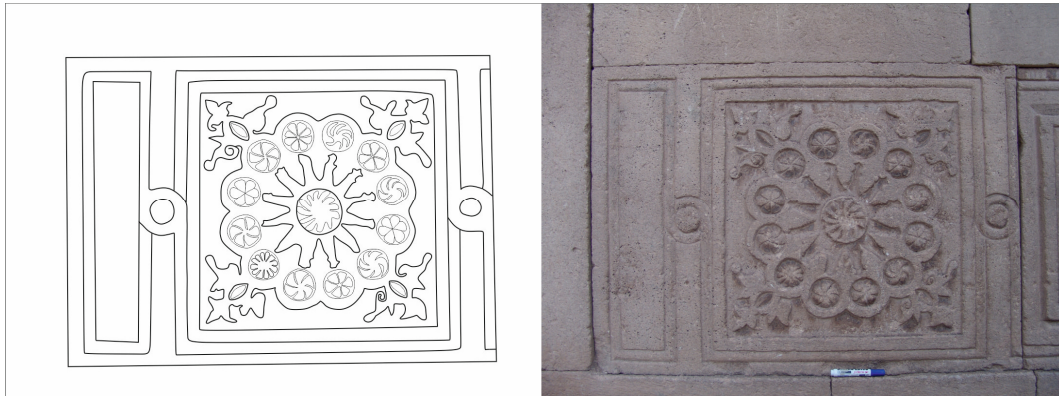
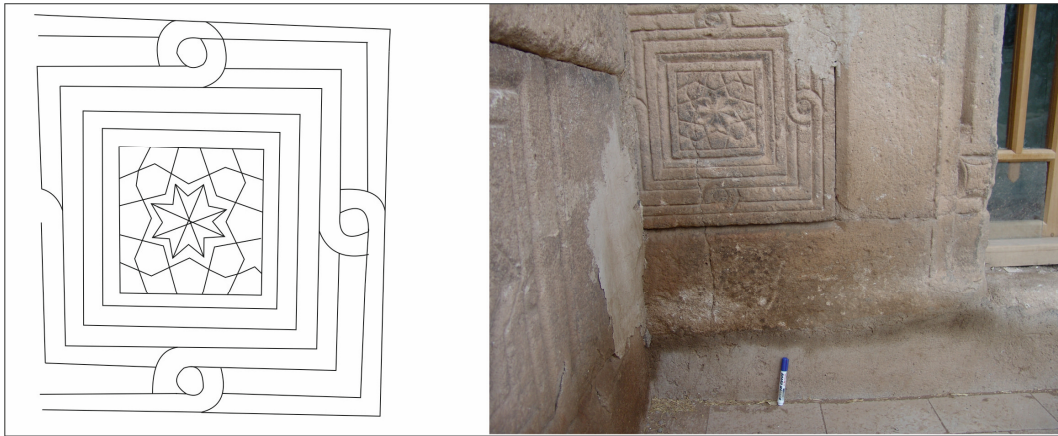


Image 1 – ornamentation of the entrance porch of Asnaq mosque (source: authors)

In other figures seen in Asnaq mosque, we see shapes and figures as multiple circles (image 2) or squares (image 3) blend together. About these shapes and designs, it must be mentioned that the world has begun and started moving with unity and this movement in shapes is indicative of the movement in the world and that the world moves towards and ultimately reaches unity and oneness. The important point here is that diversity of the world is not directly resulted from unity and there are mediums in creation; because according to the well-known philosophical belief “Al-Vahed” (one) is not the result of diversity and the repetition in these shapes might be indicative of the presence of these mediums in creation.



Images 2 – ornamentation of the porch of the mosque (source: authors)



Images 3 – ornamentation of the porch of the mosque (source: authors)

Lines and Inscriptions

In terms of the lines, it must be point out that there is a place for prayer on the wall and not only reminds the believer of the words but makes him aware of the rhythm of the words, their spiritual meaning and indications of divine power. In terms of the inscription that are seen in the entrance of Asnaq mosque on the upper part of the door, the following phrase can be seen: “La Elaha Ela Allah, Muhammad Rasool Allah”. Below it, there is the following tradition: “Qala Rasul Allah Alayha Afzal Al-Salavat va Akmal Al-Tahiyat, Eza Marartam Beriaz Al-Janat Faret’oo. Qila Ya Rasul Allah va Ma Al-Riaz Al-Janatah? Ghala: Masajed va Qila Ma Ar’ta Fiha? Qala Sobhan Allah va Ahmadollah va La Elaha Ela Allah va Allah Akbar va La Hola va La Qovatan Ela Bellah Al-Ali Al-Azim. Elalhom Aqfar Lelmomenin va Al-Momenat”. A rectangular shape is seen all around the entrance (image 4).

In dekhoda dictionary, the word “Hol” has been defined as movement and activity and the word “Ghovat” has been defined as ability (Dekhoda, 2005). Therefore, the meaning of this phrase is that no movement or ability is against will of god. On the other hand, “the Arabic lines, because of the broad range of this language, are indicative of the position of unity, which means that the broader the rhythm, the more the status of unity will be shown. In the Arabic line, in the horizontal line, from right to left, it is written that there was a movement from effort towards the heart and that is a journey from outside to inside. When it comes to writing, horizontal and wavelike movement is the same as conversion, genesis and emergence and the dimension of fixed essence of life is written on vertical visual lines. Each of these two dimensions unites itself with the other just like it separates itself from the other dimension. Horizontal movement of the line also shows genesis and has a tendency towards blending and emergence of various shapes, but somehow horizontal line and expansions of these letters become dominant and reduce the circular movement of writing. Thus, the horizontal line is an indication of diversity (Burckhardt, 1986: 58-59). Letters carry codes and symbolic notions. The letter “l”, because of its vertical form, is the code for divine glory and the sublime principle that is the origin of everything and that is why this letter is the first letter of the alphabet and the first letter of the word Allah which is the name of god (Nasr, 2010: 43). In the architecture of Islamic mosques, the repetition of the letters,

especially repetition of the role of Allah, has a symbolic notion. Due to this repetition, the artist has displayed an interpretation of Hadid Sura: “Hova Al-Avval va Al-Akharo va Al-Zahero va Al-Baten²⁰” (Khazaeli, 2002: 130).



Figure 4: calligraphic ornamentation of the entrance of the mosque and repetition of the word Allah (source: authors)

Entrance of Asnaq Mosque

The important point about the ornamentation of Asnaq mosque is the issue of manifestation. The majority of the Islamic jurisprudence discussions, which are the main topic of discussion of the present study, have been a discussion about truth and its applications. Truth has two meanings in verbal, philosophical and mystical discussions: manifestation and essence. The truth discussed here means manifestation because this meaning is in accordance with art. In philosophy and mysticism, stages of appearance of truth are interpreted as worlds which are sometimes called Alam Molk, Malakut and Jabarut²¹ and with other names. In fact, creation begins with Malakut²² and reaches Jabarut. It begins with unity, reaches diversity and returns to unity at the end. However, another thing that rises here is how to reach unity and truth. Truth appears to human beings depending on their status and position. In the architecture of Iranian mosques, we see a hierarchy for getting to the truth. In the entrance of mosques, there are various features with specific visual subtleties which can be reviewed with concepts such as intimacy, fear,

²⁰ In English: He is the first and the other and the outward and the inner.

²¹ Three different worlds in Islam

²² Heavenly world

poverty, wealth, etc. Kind traits of god are Sefat-e Jamal²³ and the coercive traits of god are Sefat-e Jalal²⁴. In other words, his Jamal is the origin of mercy, forgiveness, kindness and his Jalal is the origin of rage, wrath, vengeance, etc. (Javadi Amoli, 1999: Pp 45 and 46). In other words, manifestation of Jamal and Jalal of Allah and usage of punishment and transcendence in the physical body is one of the key factors that makes the entrance gate of the mosque different (Hamzenejad et al., 2013: 82). Entrance of the mosque is a mystical manifestation of abandoning worldly attachments in order to reach the heavenly world. The main element that is seen when you enter a mosque is its door and it might symbolically mean entering a heavenly world. Basically, the door is like a passage from material world to the spiritual world. A door is a sign of separation from Jabarut and entering Malakut.

Vacant Space Inside the Mosque

In the architecture of Asnaq mosque, space is obviously preferred to body. In this regard, the vacant space has been designed in such a way that it would refer to the material essence of objects and is a reminder of the emptiness of material human beings against essence of unity. The vacant space in Islamic architecture does not mean inability to create ornamental elements and indicates that there is only one truth in the whole world and that is the unique essence of Allah. Vacant space in architecture is an emphasis put on this principle, i.e. Muslims' monotheistic thinking (Tashakori, 2011: 5).

Mogharnas

Titus Burckhardt says: only plant and geometrical figures actually belong to the religious art of Islam. Mosques that don't have a picture in them have a negative purpose at first and that is eliminating any kind of "presence" that is against "invisible presence" of god and leads to errors. In the next stage, lack of image has a positive purpose and that is to put emphasis on the transcendence aspect of the almighty god which means that his sacred essence cannot be measured by anything (Burckhardt, 1990: 66). In the book *A Sense of Unity*, Nader Ardalan says: "the main issue in Iran's traditional architecture is conversion of square to circle using a triangle. Square is a symbol of earth and an indication of quantities. Conversely, circle is a symbol of heaven, sky and the divinity of god and is an indication of qualities (Ardalan, 2001: 371). In the ornamentation of the pilasters of Asnaq mosque, a square has been converted to a circle using a triangle. If circle is a symbol of quality and square is a symbol of quantity, perhaps we can accept the opinion of Suhrawardi about qualities and quantities and talk about creation of Mogharnas in architecture. In philosophy, circle is the symbol of quality and square is the symbol of quantity both of which are components of the ten transverse categories and movement occurs on four of them. However, Surawardi believes that "quantity is an exception and the reason behind this is that adding a value to another value requires destruction of the first one and emergence of the second one. He believes that adding a value to another does not mean that the first value increases". This statement by Suhrawardi about creation of Mogharnas applies to Islamic architecture. Movement is the necessity of the return of diversity in the world to absolute

²³ Good traits

²⁴ Bad traits

oneness unity and movement is only attained through quality. Ultimately, the created shape in the architecture of the pillar of this mosque can be somehow considered as unity in diversity and return of diversity to unity.

Conclusion

Structure of valuable Iranian architecture includes numerous words and definitions that are associated with this kind of architecture. In fact, the great civilization of Iran is combined with Islamic teachings and it has created a new civilization called the Iranian Islamic civilization which has been embodied in numerous architectural works, especially Islamic architecture. This integration has entered religious and spiritual concepts to Iranian architecture and subsequent to it, many of the religious principles have entered the most principal field of manifestation and occurrence of historical culture and identity of a nation through architecture. The shape of a building is associated with these concepts in such a way that signs and symbols have created a new language of various sciences in the current architecture. Subsequent to this symbolism, Iranian architecture is a cultural spirit that is affected by spiritual factors and various divine sciences that display the intuitive art connected to Iranian culture. One of these sciences that has entered the wide domain of architecture is philosophy and since Islamic architecture has started with mosques and the ultimate goal of their architecture is to provide the deepest kind of unity and its comprehensive meaning, philosophy has come to be quite effective on the architecture of mosques. Architectural elements in mosques, such as altars, domes and minarets, etc., have paved the way for expressing symbols of beliefs, religions and culture of Muslims. On the other hand, they made manifestation of artistic and geometrical ornamental shapes possible so that the bases of this sacred place would be strengthened. The artist tries to connect to the heavenly world through his/her art. Islamic art avoids using natural ornamentations in religious places and have selected abstract designs for decorating these places; because natural shapes can easily keep human beings from god. Therefore, we can see that philosophical points have been used in the sacred places.

Integration of time and place in the architecture of Asnaq mosque is unavoidable and confusing which ultimately shows spirituality. Purposes of an artist who is a believer, manifestation of unity and diversity can be seen in details and in generalities of architecture. In fact, diversity, with its different types, shows unity and is an indication of divine glory that displays unity and diversity at the same time. Imagination is as broad as the soul. Artistic imagination leads to creation. In fact, rationality plays a key role in perceiving beauty and imagination is an artist's wing and takes the artist to any place possible. In the formation of architecture of Asnaq mosque, a close relationship has been established between worldview and thinking and time and place. In fact, we can see a kind of thinking influence and divine imagination in atmospheric and climatic issues and that is why there are immortal values in the creation of this sacred space. The intersection between them is the existence of human beings on earth and worldview of the artist. In fact, architecture only becomes complicated when we want to travel in the divine and abstract depth of it. All of the prominent architectures of the world carry a secret which cannot be seen by one's eyes but by their mind. In Iran, this emotional approach is obtained when the spiritual and

emotional links and balances between human beings are desirably strong. Iranian architecture is associated with nature and it's in coordination with it. It moves in this respect and this coordination with nature has led to presence of natural elements in various ways in Iranian architecture. The main, overall and significant feature of Iranian architecture, which can be seen in the architecture of Asnaq mosque can be summarized as follows:

“Complexity in diversity and return to unity and centrality and avoiding idleness and dissipation”

The principle of sacred architecture is the superiority of space over body and spatial independence which has been completely observed in the mosque; because the inside of the mosque has its own unique conditions and unconsciously reinforce a sense of space in human beings which ultimately brings human beings closer to the divinity they deserve. Geometrical ornaments are the center of the heavenly world in the building of this mosque and the diversity that exists in the ornaments ultimately leads to an overall unity.

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