

Concepts Analysis of Religious Inscriptions of Goharshad Mosque According to Educational & Moral Concepts (A Case Study of Maqsurah Veranda)

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Abstract Goharshad Mosque is a particular building of Timuri era in holy Mashhad city which is located between house dome and holy Razavi shrine with four veranda. The biggest Veranda of this Mosque is its southern one, known as Ivan (Veranda) Maqsurah. The most important and valuable inscriptions of the Mosque are there. This study tries to investigate Quran themes used in Inscriptions of this veranda from spiritual function view. The methodology of this article is interpretation-analytic which its data gathered in library and field. The present study findings show that many educational & moral concepts can be concluded from the verses of such inscriptions which put forward a valuable resource to those who interested in such issues.

Keywords Religious Inscriptions, Aesthetic, Goharshad Mosque, Educational & Moral concepts, Maqsurah Veranda

1. Introduction

Inscriptions as the most essential element of Islamic architecture have ever been considered by artists and scholars which represent the artists' emotions and realize themes and concepts of history, art and, culture as well. A review of researches consider these inscriptions represents that they are important according to their forms and contents. The Visual appearance of the inscription causes relaxation of the visitors. Covert spiritual and/or internal sphere inside physical word is the secret for these artistic figures, which, transferee to the visitors. Imam Reza (p.b.u.h) pilgrimage complex as one of the oldest religious places, put forward a very valuable sample of such inscriptions to investigators. The porches, courts, and verandas of Rezavi holy shrine have plethora of such unique Islamic art characteristics. Amongst them, Maqsurah veranda is the most important verandas of Goharshad Mosque because of its direction two are qibla¹ axis. This veranda has the most decoration and inscriptions. The present investigation is to discover themes and concepts printed in inscriptions of sleeping yard² and stoas of both

sides of the veranda of house dome (fig.1,2) according to aesthetic criterion the rest of this article is methodology, literature review and a brief history of Maqsurah veranda.



Figure 1. Quranic inscription around the dome Imam Reza Mashhad, Iran



Figure 2. Quranic inscription head on the Maqsurah veranda, Razavi holy, Mashhad, Iran

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¹ - qibla or kiblah – direction to which Moslem pray.

² -A part of a Mosque designed for sleeping or nocturnal prayer.

2. Methodology

Sleeping yard of Maqsurah veranda has many decoration including inscriptions, various geometric herbal and anthrop paintings and Quranic verses as well, such composition causes a kind of harmonious beauty of meaning and visual aspects. The artist of this façade created innovative and attractive combination which associates.

The visits to a spiritual world with meaning rather than real word meaning. This study based on interpretation, the analytic approach uses, on words meaning in various contexts and tenors. According to this Method, we focus on Quran-Quran interpretation style. Amongst current Quran interpretations, we used: argumentative interpretation (Almizan) which is a Quran-Quran interpretation. (Tabatabaee, Hamadani translation, 1995) argumentative-social interpretation Nemoneh (Makarem, 2004) social-educational interpretation "Noor" (Qeraate, 2004). Amongst existing Quran translation, we used Mohammad Mehdi Foladvand translation (1998). Moreover, we used any available translation or interpretation. The method of investigation is as follows: firstly, we gathered verses of the inscription, then we put forward their translations and/or interpretation according to their style tenor, texture and dignity of deliverance: finally, we tried to extract educational and moral' themes according to the grammatical role, styles and such and so. Some Islamic scholars consider moral action and speech as eminent and good agenda in art philosophy (1), evaluation of spiritual or aesthetic function of Goharshad Mosque will be conducted based on such an approach.

3. Literature Review

Although there are plenty of sources on Razavi holy shrine including "Iran history of Timvri era, an investigation conducted by Cambridge university by Royale and translated by Yaqub Azhand which contemplates the architecture of the Timuri era, such as Goharshad Mosque, we can mention to three books about tile-work and inscriptions or Razavi holy threshold. Which are published by "sacred threshold Art Recreation Institute" the first book titled "Art in shrine a review on arts used in Razavi shrine" written by Behzad Nemati (2002) which introduced the arts in Razavi shrine generally the second and third books titled "the complex of art master pieces of the Razavi shrine "written by Mehdi Sahragard (2013) which described the analysis and critic of historical and artistic Goharshad Mosque inscriptions and is about Enghelab court inscriptions. From other investigations, we may mention to many MA thesis as follows: MA thesis by Sadaghat Jabari (2003) titled" harmonious and a relationship of visual elements in Razavi inscriptions/Atiq court. Sid Mohammad Hosein shahmohammadi (2010) titled "Graphical Investigation of paintings of tiles of Goharshad Mosque and a comparison to Ghasieh Khargard school tile-work" Bahareh Moqadam (2012) titled" Design & color

in tile-work of holy shrine in Safavi era and a comparison to the same era tile-work in Esfahan", Rihaneh Al Sheikh titled" Investigation of paintings of selected tiles or Razavi holy threshold "and Elahe Khakshor titled" Recognition of specification of designs and paintings of holy shrine tile-work after Islamic Revolution. In none of above mentioned studies, concentration on the relationship of the art with educational & moral themes was considered, which will be taken as the innovation of the present study.

4. A Brief History of Maqsurah Veranda

The importance of the Timuri era in Iran history lies in religious and mental changes. Centralization of Khorasan and Transoxiana³ and development of the cultural and economic condition, causal a development in architecture and art style n that geographical domain. Goharshad Mosque was built by lady Goharshad, wife or Shahrukh Timuri in four verandas in 821(A.H). Maqsurah veranda is the best and most important veranda of Goharshad Mosque, which stressed on kiblah⁴ axis, because of such specialty. Its other name is kiblah veranda. Twine minarets⁵ of Goharshad Mosque are located in both sides of Maqsurah veranda the decoration of this veranda includes: tile-work, designs and painting of inscriptions, Moaragh⁶ stone. Painting and calligraphy on gypsum. there are changes accrued to inscription tiles of the veranda because of 1084_(A.H) earthquake (Amberse 2, history of earthquakes of Iran: 183) the First rebuilding of the dome and the veranda was done by Shojahdin Esfehahi, according to the king ordered, Soliman Safavi king. Which date 1088_(A.H) on two inscriptions, one is above the western sleeping yard and another is on the eastern minaret (fig.3). The second rebuilding was done in 1339_(A.H); the cause of the second restoration was damages of Russian cannonade (Modares Razavi, the chronicle of Mashhad. 1999: 231-232). Besides, all these damages, the genuine of the Mosque dome and veranda preserved as an architecture structure of Timuri era (fig.4). The veranda inscription can be categorized a cording to their text, frame, form and compositions (1). The following table represents some information about the inscriptions location, type, calligraphy, calligrapher and year of built.

³ - beyond the (Oxus)river.

⁴ - direction to which Moslem pray.

⁵ - high, slender tower of a mosque.

⁶ - a kind of decoration work on stone, word,etc.

Table 1. Information about the inscriptions Maqsurah veranda

| No | Inscription location | Type of execution | calligraphy | Type of inscription | size | The artist | Date of exe |
|----|--|---|------------------------|--|------------|--|---|
| 1 | Around Maqsurah veranda | Tile Mareq | Sols. kofi tarbiee | Ehdasieh Mazhabi tomari mother&kid | — | Bisongher bin shahrokh mohammad reza emami | Main inscription 821 (A.H) rebuilding above part 1084-1087(A.H) |
| 2 | Plinth of Maqsurah veranda | Tile Mareq | Sols | Ehdasieh reqab 2 row belt | 10*33cm | Bisonghor Bin shahrokh | 821(A.H) |
| 3 | Fore of Maqsura veranda | Tile Mareq | Sols | Mohamad reza emami | 16.5*51cm | Mohamad Reza Emami | 1087(A.H)rebuilt 1338(h.q) |
| 4 | External sight of entrance of Maqsura veranda | Tile Mareq | Sols /kofi | Bisonghor bin shahrokh | 7*044m | Bisonghor Bin shahrokh | 821(A.H) |
| 5 | Scarf sight of Maqsura veranda | Tile Mareq | Sols | Unknown | 120*160 | unknown | 1381 (A.H) |
| 6 | Retreat of entrance of Maqsura veranda | Tile Mareq & calligraphy | Sols/ kofi | Probably Bisonghor bin shahrokh | 35*70 | Bisonghor Bin shahrokh | — |
| 7 | Around main inscription of Maqsura veranda | Tile Mareq | Sols | Unknown | 10.5*25cm | unknown | 216word of "Allah Albaghi" around all inscriptions |
| 8 | Edge of entrance of Maqsura veranda | Tile Mareq | Kofi netted knot | Mazhabi frame-work on plinth of round column | 60.80cm | unknown | Repeat of the verse |
| 9 | Are walls of entrance of veranda | Tile Mareq | Sols | Mazhabi disc-liked4-rowed simple | 45.75cm | Bisonghor Bin shahrokh | 821(A.H) |
| 10 | Facades of sleeping yards and arc – typed columns of both sides of veranda | Tile Mareq and painting on rypsum | Sols/ kofi | Mazhabi tomari Mother & kid | 2/5.55/.m | unknown | 1385(A.H) |
| 11 | Above 1 st entrance of western sleeping | Tile Mareq | Combination Sols/ kofi | Combination (2-rowed sols) & kofi | 6/5.2.5m | unknown | 821(A.H) |
| 12 | Outside rim around altar in Maqsura veranda | Tile Mareq | sols | Mazhabi tomari Mother & kid | 19.7*/.5 | unknown | 821(A.H) |
| 13 | Inside rim of altar | Hejazi and painting sols calligraphy and golden kofi. | sols | Mazhabi tomari Mother & kid | 17.5*35/.m | unknown | 1346(A.H) |
| 14 | Inside altar arc | Hejazi | Sols. Kofi | Mazhabi mother&kid | 35.70cm | unknown | unknown |
| 15 | Dome-skull cup | Painting on rypsum | Sols | Toranj disc | | unknown | 1384(A.H) |
| 16 | Celling of dome | Tile Mareq | — | Mazhabi. shamseh disc (2-rowed) | — | unknown | 1384(A.H) |
| 17 | Around dome stem outside | Tile Mareq | sols | Mazhabi tomari 2-rowed belt | — | — | 1346(A.H) |

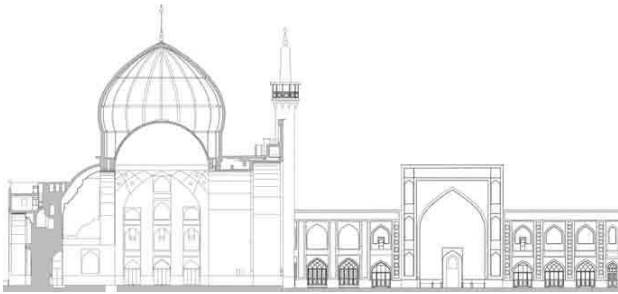


Figure 3. Maqsurah veranda plan, (1) Razavi holy, Mashhad, Iran

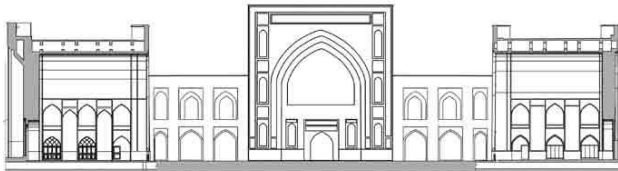


Figure 4. Maqsurah veranda plan, (2) Razavi holy, Mashhad, Iran



Figure 5. Maqsurah veranda after the reconstruction, Razavi holy, Mashhad, Iran



Figure 6. Exterior view of Goharshad Mosque, Maqsurah veranda, Mashhad, Iran

5. The Study Limitation

In the present study, because of extending inscriptions, just the inscriptions of sleeping yard and eastern arches of Maqsurah veranda have been considered, and from aesthetic point of view, their verses have been noticed to extract

educational and moral themes (No.4) to obtain a coherent theory about art function in educational and cultural realm.

6. General Investigation of Eastern Inscriptions of Maqsurah Veranda

There are six inscriptions in this part of the veranda which all have verses stressing on the importance of pray to God and being pious, based on the resemblance of technical execution, it can be said that all are of when they rebuilt because of Russia cannonade in 1330_(A.H) (Razavi chronicle, Mashhad, 1999:137). Perhaps the calligrapher of this inscriptions, took the great calligrapher Bisonghor, as his pattern (Sahragard, Razavi holy threshold art masterpieces, 2003:75).

The most advantage of such inscriptions is their color. In the previous inscriptions, it was tradition to combine the main Sols calligrapher in white, background in Azure, and to decrease the coldness of color, spiral decoration in yellow, but in this inscriptions, as a tradition-breaking way. The main Kofi calligraphy is mixed with yellow and decoration with blue (ibid:76).

7. Inscriptions Texts

7.1. Establish Regular Prayer, Enjoin what is Just, and Forbid what is Wrong: (31/17)

The previous verses are about loqmans⁷ advises to his son regarding monotheism and resurrection day after that he advises his son to do good and righteous action including pray to God and then enjoin kindness and forbid iniquity (Nemoneh interpretation, v17:44).

What can be realized is that one of parents duty to their children is to encourage them to pray. We are to educate our children by advising them to pray and to make social and responsible in individuals by teaching them to enjoin kindness and forbid iniquity (Noor interpretation. v17:261) Educational and moral concepts that can be extracted from this verse are: enjoin kindness and forbid iniquity with mercy awareness, consulting with wise people, piously (fig7).



Figure 7. Quranic inscription No 1, (31/17)

7.2. O ye who Believe! Seek Help with Patient Perseverance and Prayer; for Allah is with those who Patiently Persevere. (2/153)

This verse recommends two thing: trust in God which its best symbol is praying and being resistant and patient,

⁷ -one of the God's prophets.

because there may be big problems in oneself life that make him trust to God and be patient, pray to God makes individuals resistant and patient (Nemoneh int.v1:520). Educational and moral themes of this verse are: trust in God, hope to God, being patient against problems (fig8).



Figure 8. Quranic inscription No 2, (21/53)

7.3. O ye who Believe! Fear Allah, and Make Your Utterance Straight Forward: (33/70)

This verse is talking about persons who are scaremongers. According to the verse, what is necessary to faith is piety and what is prerequisite of piety is right speech. The faith has two signs: external sign [straight forward] and internal sign [Fear Allah] (Noor int.v.7:410) (fig9). Educational and moral themes of this verse are: trust in God, hope for divine mercy, Resist against hardship.



Figure 9. Quranic inscription No 3, (33/70)

7.4. Set up Regular Prayers: for such Prayers are Enjoined on Believers at Stated Times (4/103)

The word "stated time" here means being obligatory: the verse says that pray is obliging to each Moslem at certain times in day and night (Almizan translation. V.5:101). Islam has some obligatory duties for Moslem such as pray which shall be done in special time, some may argue that it is better to do pray whenever you are in a good attitude and mental relaxation but human being experiences show that educational issues must be done in a discipline, otherwise they would not be so efficient. Educational & moral concepts of this verse are as follows: being on time, continuity in doing good Pragmatism (fig10).



Figure 10. Quranic inscription No 4, (4/103)

7.5. And the Places of Worship are for Allah (alone): So Invoke not any One Along with Allah (72/18)

There is the debate between Islamic scholars regarding the meaning of the verse. Some believe that word refers to the place which people worship God, which its best example is

Sacred Mosque⁸, other believe that this word should be considered in a broader context. i.e. anywhere to worship God is a mosque. Some scholars believe that the word refers to that parts of a body which touch with earth during pray, such as hands palms. Educational & moral concepts of this verse are: being toward God, being summoned to the right (fig11).



Figure 11. Quranic inscription No 5 (72/18)

7.6. Verily the Most Honored of You in the Sight of Allah is (he who is) the Most Righteous of You. And Allah has Full Knowledge and is Well Acquainted [with all things] (49/13)

The previous verse represents that it is human being nature that seeks perfection" God says that human real perfection is in piety and being toward God (translation of Nemoneh. Int.v11:198). Educational & moral concepts of this verse are piety, keeping human dignity, knowledge, avoiding of doing sin (fig12).



Figure 12. Quranic inscription No 6 (49/13)

7.7. Establish Regular Prayer: for Prayer Restraints from Shameful and Evil Deeds (29/45)

This verse mentions to pray God philosophy which refrains human being of doing evils. The nature of praying reminds persons to God which causes faithful people to avoid doing sins (Nemoneh. int.v6:285) educational and moral themes of this verse are "being toward God. Avoiding of doing sins. Pray, avoid of being arrogant and thanks giving (fig13).



Figure 13. Quranic inscription No 7, (29/45)

8. Conclusions

The present study tries to mention to specifications of inscriptions such as their locations, calligrapher type, size, the calligrapher. Year of execution and repair and such and so. Beside visual beauty, there are educational & moral

⁸ -one of the major mosque of Moslems in Mecca.

concepts intertwined in them, which can be considered as their internal or spiritual beauty: such beauty, according to Plato, observes, reality and is synonymous to “righteous (Plato, overall works, Lotfi translation 1987). But this kind of beauty is not merely concluded from the concepts but intuitional. In the other words, lines, designs, volumes and simply the inscriptions form are not just sensed but are made, i.e. meaning layers are accompanied with them. Consequently the inscriptions convert to historic and

cultured totality, which displays external and internal of the era completely, as it exists. Such intuition, puts forward the aesthetic experience to the addressee and discovers the other sphere of art and beauty that helps to improve educational and cultural aims of the present age young.

This is the mental and spiritual function of art which is elicited from educational & moral themes of the verses for whom seeking truth.

Table 2. Aesthetic finding of Maqsurah veranda

| No | Verse No | Verse | Aesthetic dimensions |
|----|----------|--|--|
| 1 | 31/17 | establish regular prayer, enjoin what is just, and forbid what is wrong | enjoin kindness and forbid iniquity with mercy awareness, consulting with wise people, piously |
| 2 | 2/153 | O ye who believe! seek help with patient perseverance and prayer; for Allah is with those who patiently persevere | trust in God, hope to God, being patient against problems |
| 3 | 33/ 70 | O ye who believe! Fear Allah, and make your utterance straight forward | trust in God, hope for divine mercy, Resist against hardship, |
| 4 | 4/103 | set up regular prayers: For such prayers are enjoined on believers at stated times | being on time, continuity in doing good Pragmatism |
| 5 | 72/18 | And the places of worship are for Allah (alone): So invoke not any one along with Allah | being toward God, being summoned to the right |
| 6 | 49/13 | Verily the most honored of you in the sight of Allah is (he who is) the most righteous of you. And Allah has full knowledge and is well acquainted [with all things] | piously, keeping human dignity, knowledge, avoiding of doing |
| 7 | 29/45 | establish regular prayer: for prayer restrains from shameful and evil deeds | Avoiding of doing sins, Pray, avoid of being arrogant and thanks giving |

Footnote

1) Inscriptions can be divide according to text, frame, overall, design, calligraphy, categorization of inscriptions based on text may involve: religious text including verses, poems and so on, which are around domes and facades of veranda and porches. Ehdasieh (built information) inscriptions usually have information such as the mason or architect or calligrapher name, year of execution the inscriptions location are usually on the main building façade, to be seen by the pilgrims. Division on overall frame basis results in Tomari inscription frame work and inscription discs or Toranji discs. Another type of inscription is which categorized according to calligraphy, i.e. inscriptions with kofi, sols or Nastaliq calligraphy.

2) The holy prophet(p.b.u.h)said: loqman was not a prophet, but a great thinker who thought too much. Who had gerent faith, loved god too much and knew philosophy.

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