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Analysis of the Inscriptions as Advertising Media in Persian Architecture

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Abstract

This study seeks to analyze the inscriptions as advertising media in Persian architecture. The data collection was based on descriptive-analytic method and library studies. The study population included architectural inscriptions of Iran. The sampling method was selective and qualitative data analysis was implemented. The aim of the study is to analyze and recognize the importance of inscription as advertising media, visual capacity identification, and analysis media status inscription in Persian architecture. Based on the written component, samples were examined statistically. It was found that historical information plays an important role in the inscription that transfers information, thoughts, and ideas as advertising and signaling media. The inscription in Persian architecture in regard to the well-being of society reflects the social, religious, and cultural conditions in the inscription which plays a decisive role in the field of cultural and religious propaganda of the society.

Keywords: Advertising media; Persian architecture; Religious propaganda; Inscription

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1. Introduction

Iranian art arises from the artist's inner sense embedded in culture and religion. The artist brings his art to perfection using symbolic concepts and undoubtedly the inscriptions are of the great importance in architecture. Habibullah Fazaeli in script train wrote: "inscription is so-called the art of coarse script transferred on tiles from paper by scribe and then located on doors, walls, altar of mosques and holy places and other important buildings".

The inscription as a historical source plays an important role in revealing the identity of architecture, construction methods, management, sponsors, and so on. The inscription provides knowledge that reforms and completes our historical understanding of the economic, political, and social issues. In relation to the viewer, inscriptions contain different messages, inscribed in various forms and shapes, with different script and in different languages. Art and visual values of inscriptions have been considered, and the inscription in accordance with the welfare of society represents the social and behavioral relationships. Generally, spiritual connection with inscriptions shows cultural characteristics, beliefs and behaviors important in terms of ornamental, historical and religious aspects.

There is lack of research in this area, and hence the importance and necessity of research approach is essential. Many Iranian art forms include inscription preserved arts from different periods of Iranian art history. Despite a brilliant background and significant presence throughout the history of Iranian art, this art is not seen today and its features are not used in contemporary Iranian visual art, especially graphic. The features of this art include data retention, impressive and advertising. For example, in the Islamic period, the inscriptions advertising aspects are advertising and promoting Shia Islam or advertising a special person on building façade. In general, today's media have forgotten the inscriptions. All these cases reveal the necessity and importance of art in Persian architecture. Therefore, this study investigated the inscription in Iranian architecture, media approach and promotional aspects of this art.

The aim of the study is to analyze and recognize the importance of inscription as advertising media, visual capacity identification, and media status inscription in Persian architecture. The questions that are addressed in this study are; 1. How is the status of inscription in Persian architecture? 2. How can this art be used as an advertising medium in describing concepts and transferring information? 3. What is the importance of inscription in Persian architecture? A descriptive-analytic research method along with a library document survey for data collection has been conducted.

1.1. Research background

In the literature review, we realized that with the onset of the history and growth of human civilization, more attention has been paid to decorative issues. Subsequently, a correlation developed between decorative art and architecture. Later, this trend was reinforced in the Islamic period where iconic image together with basic component and architecture forces not only contributed in conveying the concept but also surpassed it (Rajaei Baghsorkhi & Amozademehdijeri, 2009: 2).

Shayestehfar (2005) in her paper on the role of craft and signaling of inscriptions in Islamic architecture, investigated the Qur'an, prayer, tradition as well as the three dimensions of spiritual truth that were manifested in the inscriptions. Ghelichkhani (1994 & 2004), in an article about script and calligraphy in time referred to script history in Iran. Makinezhad, in his article entitled 'Sols inscriptions in Persian architecture, from Safavid to Qajar period', investigated the features and technical differences, geometry and significance of the inscriptions. Rashid Mohasel (2008), in his book entitled 'ancient Iran inscription', has investigated the discussion, description and rooting of the inscription words in ancient Iran. Rajaei Baghsorkhi & Basiri (2009), in a book entitled 'inscription' that consists of two sections, have investigated the effect of art from previous periods and its role on the subsequent periods.

In conjunction with the media approach inscription, we have limited resources in the country. This study research is by and large about media function for the inscriptions. To answer the research questions and to achieve this purpose, we attempt to collect data via utilizing the resources and analysing image data by a descriptive-analytic method.

1.2. Importance and the role of media

Information is a valuable resource, providing knowledge of the ability to work and to take advantage of the opportunities (Farhangi & Nasiri, 2008: 99). The term media in art has shown that media is between what the artist does and what the viewer or audience sees, it is between the idea and realization means to transfer messages (Getsi, Davalo, 2003: 251). The media ability is to provide and instill the desired message, which plays an important role in shaping and penetrating in our culture, values, attitudes, and beliefs. These are the most important and affecting tools for information transferring in communication (Molavi & Ghaedifard, 2012: 21).

The media explains and analyzes the phenomena of the world around, classifying and bestowing meaning upon them and showing their relationship with the environment, the paranormal and other members of the society (Dehshiri, 2009: 186).

Due to the increasing growth of technology in the world, the numbers of media has increased. Media is an integral part of people's lives. We live in the world today, where media, information and news, affect every moment of our lives. The message of media is advertising and transmitting certain values and beliefs continuously. The most important feature of the media is to attract the audience's attention. The media itself is a cultural expression as well as propagating other cultural forms. They are often the only means of cultural communication available. Hence, their specific cultural works are domination of

traditional culture, having an open mind to new styles and linking the national dimensions to global and human culture.

Extensive promotional activities and raising public awareness approach in various sectors of society and general audience towards economic, industrial, cultural, political productions, production centers and organizations (Seyedmohseni, 2003: 65). Islamic architecture consists of creativity of artists in the history of Muslims and the openness of Islamic architecture. It constructs a great environment with spiritual purity using harmony and order of patterns, inscriptions and colors.

2. Data Analysis

In this study, the population is the inscriptions of Iranian architecture. According to research facilities and lack of access to census data, a limited number of inscriptions based on factors such as context, location of the inscription and script type were selected as relevant to the study and were analyzed using analytic approaches. The inscriptions can be classified from different perspectives. Initially, in this study, they are classified into three categories based on the type of script. Transposition is based on the alphabet letters of the name of the cities, and classified the scripts as follows:

1- Kufi script 2- Sols script 3- Nastaliq script

2.1. Statistical samples with Kufic (Magely)

An application of Kufic script reflected on the buildings, also called building script which appears in various forms, classified it as easy, medium and difficult. The base of this script is lineation on plaid pages, in a manner that first plaid page is lining and tiled and then the letters are organized. This was written based on the above order, easily picked up on building with bricks in order to read the phrase as well as the decorative materials. For this reason, it is called the architecture or building script.

2.1.1. Amol - Mir Ghavamodin Maraashi monument

The inscriptions on Safavid buildings, the use of mosaic tiles and seven colors in decoration were increased. The religious buildings in this period, such as the dome, arcades, over the entrance and minarets were adorned with tiles. Calligraphy of the tiles became common in the ornamentation of religious monuments and numerous buildings were decorated using Sols, Naskh, and Kofi script. Calligraphy in Islam attracts more attention than any other art, yet it has not been effective in raising any virtuoso among Muslims. This art has the important place among other arts which provides an appropriate substrate for the direct expression of mysticism and spirituality taken from the inscriptions.

Mashhad Mir bozorg Amol is an important ancient building in Mazandaran province. This monument, in terms of architectural features, decorative tiling, interior and exterior, especially in the entrance, has a historical significance. Another example is Mir Ghavamodin Marashi dome which was destroyed several times, and the present building of the monument and its surrounding large collections were held during the reign of Shah Abbas.



Fig 1 (a) Mir Ghavamodin Maraashi monument (Source: parsiblog.com) (b) Redrawn script of Mir Ghavamodin Maraashi monument

Mir Ghavamodin Marashi dome is built with brick and tile. The large entrance of the building in the middle, with two smaller entrances located on both sides of its margins, is covered with color enamel tiles with Kufic script. On the entrance inscriptions with Kufic script, phrases are written on orange background tiles with black lines: "Sobhan Allah Va Alhamdollelah Va La Eleha Ella llah va Allaho Akbar va la houla ele ghovate ele bellah" (Fig 1).

As can be seen, this inscription, other than its decorative and cosmetic aspects, has a historical and religious significance, describing beautiful names of God and praising them. It reflects the God's strength, which are arranged and composed with other components placed in a proper position at the entrance to create a good fit. The artist could exploit the effect of colors and their expression to induce his ideas and to clear a lot of information about the art of building or specific features of that period. The scripts on the building exterior are phrases such as religious holy Qur'an, remembrance of God that is reminiscent of religious and moral duties.

2.1.2. Isfahan mosque

Isfahan mosque is one of the monuments that was gradually built and decorated over time. The names of kings, princes, ministers, emperors, artists and its founder, both women and men can be seen in different parts of the mosque. This mosque depicts the encyclopedia of Islamic art and result of thousands of years of experience of architectural and building techniques (Shayestehfar, 2009: 88).

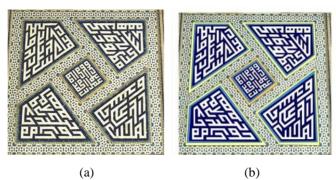


Fig 2 (a) Isfahan mosque (Source: esfahan23.persianblog.ir) (b) Redrawn the mosque of Isfahan

Isfahan mosque faced changes in every historical period. The inscriptions of many different historical periods were left, including the western portal, and inscription with a Kufic script signed by Mohammad Amin Isfahani related to the reign of King Hussein on which two bits of poetry was written (Fig 2).

We turned to each other as a crime Court action was taken and measured One more than all our sin, but Ali gave us to love

This poetry refers to two important points, one is paying attention to the Day of Judgment and deeds of men, and the second is interest in and devotion to the Ahlul-Bayt (AS) and spiritual rewards in this area given to humans. Persian poetry, in addition to its narrative features, has always been a means to express concepts and themes such as legal, spiritual, and extolling and descriptive concepts. The composition of this work was done under certain rules and accurate calculations with a connection among the elements. The structure and organization of the elements brought all the components together in this building and helped in defining the combined concept. The dominant color of this inscription is white with dark blue as background and the contrast of the two colors are attractive causing a better visible inscription.

2.1.3. Maragheh - red dome

One of the oldest tombs of Seljuk reign is the red dome of Maragheh known among the town people. During this period, tombs were of great importance as religious monuments and architectural styles (Moazeni, 2013: 3862).





Fig 3 (a) Maragheh red dome (Source: tebyan.net) (b) Redrawn the Maragheh red dome

The four squared dome and inscription on the north side of the dome is located above the entrance. The Northern wall includes two inscriptions that are separated by small arches or broken arch being one of the Persian architectural features. Under the broken arc it is carved with a Kufic script: "Amra bebena haze alghobato amir alalam fahkrodin emed eslam ghavam azarbayjen aboo alaziz ebn Mahmood ebnSaad yadiallah" (Fig 3). It means this dome was built by the order of the Emir and the head of the universe and who was proud of religion and Islam and lasting stability in his hands Mahmoud Abdul Aziz bin Saad.

The dome monument was mainly designed by bricks. Kufic script which was used in red dome inscriptions is very unique, combining it with an abesque design and its decoration which is elegant and sophisticated. Such method of writing Kufic inscriptions is no longer used. The architectural array of the building has fundamental meanings. Exterior scripts are indicative of names and nicknames of its founder, and the date of construction with historical information.

2.2. Statistical samples with Sols inscript

In this inscript, words are sometimes separated, nested and riding on both inscribed, at times with low readability. The appearance of the script is similar to Mohaghagh script with the difference in this line; unlike Mohaghagh, the letter rounding is more with a smaller size.

One of the characteristics of Sols script is that the letters have multiple forms and because of level and its narrowness derived from other Islamic scripts, it is known as mother script. This script has a strong religious background with graphic works used to write verses and prayers (Makinezhad, 2009: 29). This script is mainly used for inscription of altars, domes and mosques portal associated with arabesques designs.

2.2.1. Isfahan - Imam mosque

The king mosque, also known as Imam mosque's, Abbas mosque and new mosque of Sultan, is the mosque of Naghsh Jahan Square in Isfahan built during the Safavid reign as the landmark of Islamic architecture. The building is an architecture masterpiece with tiling and carpentry of the eleventh century. This mosque was built in 1020 AD by the order of Shah Abbas I, in the twenty-fourth year of his reign. Artists and calligraphers such as Alireza Abbasi, Abdulbaghi Tabrizi, Mohammad Reza Emami, Mohammad Saleh Emami have written the inscriptions. Mohammad Reza Emami Isfahani is one of the famous calligraphers of Sol's script in the eleventh century named as Imam of calligraphers (Makinezhad, 2009: 35).



Fig 4 Imam mosque Isfahan (Source: isfahanartists.ir)

The mosque entrance inscription text is written in Sols script (Mohammad Reza Emami Hamedallah Taali fih 1040) (Fig 4). The inscription contains historical information about the writer and date of inscription. It represents the culmination of thousands of building mosques in Iran. Shaping traditions, ideals, slogans, and religious concepts all decorated the Imam mosque which is among one of the world's largest monuments.

2.2.2. Kerman - Ganjali Khan Inn

Ganjali Khan Inn has been an important trading center with architectural features. It has two courtyards on the second floor surrounded with rooms. Presence of these two courtyards on the top floor is one of the rare cases in Iranian architecture. This was built in the Safavid reign.



Fig 5 Ganjali khan Inn (Source: Makinezhad, 2009: 32)

Under the entrance arch, we can see a part of inscription written Sols by the famous Safavid period calligrapher Reza Abbasi. The last sentence of the inscription depicts the names and title of the ruler, name of Reza Abbasi and date of inscription. The text of the inscription is as follows: (inscription Alaabd Almazib Alraji-Alireza Abbasi Ghafar Alzonub-1007) (Fig 5). The background of this inscription is blue with a golden script. The composition of the letters in this scroll is complex and dynamic. Golden scripts in horizontal, vertical, cross and circular directions with delicate blue spiral mixed together and tiny white flowers and buds have been distributed among them. Three white ribbons with same thickness as golden scripts, frames the floral margin of scrolls. The inscriptions are framed with a black background margin having a chain of small white and gold flowers with blue lines. Most of these inscriptions are written in Arabic script, and they have religious, moral or educational content with defined purposes. They have been used to promote Islamic principles using the effects of beauty. Iranian architecture has used inscriptions to record history, name and profile of founder, architect and the exact date of completion of the building that we clearly see in Ganjali Khan Inn, showing the media role of inscription.

2.2.3. Mashhad - Shrine of Imam Reza (AS) dome

The shrine of Imam Reza contains the tomb of the eighth Imam of Shiites in the city of Mashhad. This complex has 26 Lanai (building indoor) and 9 floor (open space) and 6 entrances in the name of the dead. In 1009 AH Shah Abbas walked to Mashhad from the capital, Isfahan, stayed there and ordered that the dome of the shrine once again be covered with bricks of copper and gold plating. Based on the inscription on the dome, this work started in 1010 AH and finished in 1116.



Fig 6 Shrine of Imam Reza (as) dome (Source: kabutareharam.ir)

The text of this inscription has been written in Sols script by Alireza Abbasi with golden letters on a turquoise blue background. The written text was: "In the name of God, Men Aazen tofighst allah sobhan. en nafagha alsoltan Alazam, Mola Moluk Alaarab, Alajam, saheb alnasab altaher kabavi, Alhasab albaher hgAlavi torab aghdam Khodam hazei Alatabat motahara Lahuti. ghabar naal zavar alroze almonavar ahg malakutie.moravej asar Ajdad Almasumun. Alsoltan ebn soltan mozaffar shah Abbas hoseini musavi safavid Bahador khan bel monji mashian ala ghamie men dar saltana Isfahan ela ziarat haram Alashraf, ghad tashraf bezina haze Alghoba men khalas male fi senat Alf va shahr, sat, Ashr".

The translation is as follows: (In the name of God the merciful, the compassionate and Almighty God that gives us great success of the king of kings, Arabic and Persian, with prophetic race and generation. Zafar Shah Abbas Hossein Mousavi Safavid Bahadur Khan, who walked from the capital city of Isfahan to visit the Haram al-Sharif and an attempt to make the dome by his own wealth in 1010 and ended it in 1016 AH) (Qomi & ElahiGhomshei, 2005: 828).

The inscription, as one of the decorative and accreditation as well as notification elements, was used in the Islamic architecture courses and also contains information about the historical events of that time that is well protected and transferred to today's generation. It should be noted that in some inscriptions, such complex scripts were used that it was not easy for the public to read.

2.3. Statistical samples with Nastaliq inscript

Nastaliq is one of the script writing styles in Persian calligraphy. This script was formed in Iran and was frequently used by Iranian calligraphers. By the tenth century, most Persian books were written in this script. Due to the beauty of this script for the Iranians, it has long been considered as the bride of Islamic scripts. In the eighth century, manuscripts were formed by combining Naskh and Taaliq that were summarized into Nastaliq due to the large number of applications (Jabbari, 2008: 78).

2.3.1. Tabriz mosque - Four minarets mausoleum

This building has four minarets in the ancient context and the western part of market complex that is called four minarets mosque-mausoleum or four graves. Based on a field survey, the dome and the tomb of this complex were built in the mid-fifth century. Domes and the main tomb date back to the Qajar period, but the remains of the Seljuk period have been rebuilt. The remains of the structure and the current state of the building with square plan, including input transom, brick dome and four minarets on the corners of the building have also been built.

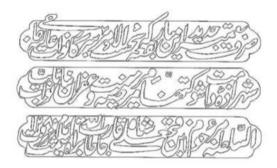


Fig 7 Redraw mosque-four minarets mausoleum (Esmaeilisangri & Elaei, 2014: 120)

The text inscription of this building is as follows: for repairing of this dome with the command of Navab Alie Haj Shahzade Damt Shokatha marhamat marzie va ghofran navab nayeb saltine marhoom ebn FathAli Shah quajar tab allah sorah was completed in 1280 (Esmaeilisangari & Elaei, 2014: 119).

The inscription text was written in 3 lines with Nastaliq script. The content is about the repair and reconstruction of the building in the Qajar era in 1280 AD by Prince FathAli Shah. According to the importance of the mosque repairing; the faithful people has always been active in building houses of God that can be named as sacred Islamic architecture. One way of understanding the insight of the Islamic architecture courses in addition to the use of motifs is paying attention to the inscription text and the role of cultural propaganda related to the restructuring of public places.

2.3.2. Tabriz Sadegie mosques, schools

This building is located in Sadeqie market adjacent to the Yakhchal market. The mosque was built in 1068 AD by Mirza Muhammad Sadiq, son of Muhammad Mostofi. The market square is the main access to the mosque that is surrounded by two additional shops on either side and with the passing of the entrance by a lofty porch to the courtyard of the mosque-school with access to both locations (Esmaeilisangari & Elaei, 2014: 124).



Fig 8 Redrawn inscription Sadeqie mosques, schools (Esmaeilisangari & Elaei, 2014: 125)

The rereading text of the only inscription of this mosque is as follows: (Mohammad Sadegh ebn Almarhoom Sayid Sadroddin Mohammad) (*Vaghfa Allah taala lama, kana zaleka fi sabae vastayin alf senate*). The inscription is located on the entrance of the eastern corridor of the mosque as a lintel. Only a part of inscription is original and written in

Nastaliq script. In this article, the script element is in the logically desired space, well combined and synchronized.

The text of the only remaining inscription of this mosque referres to the mosque founder –Mirza Mohammad Sadegh in 1068 AH (the Safavid era in the reign of Shah Abbas II). We can see that the aim of this inscription is promotion, advertising and the acknowledgment of all people that contributed to this work that represents the ingenuity in developing provisions of the management and culture in the society at that period of the Islamic governance (Esmaeilisangari & Elaei, 2014: 124).

2.3.3. Kashan-Agha Bozorg mosque and school

It is one of the most magnificent and opulent mosques in Iran's Qajar era. The school was built by Haj Mohammad Taqi Khanban's investment during the years 1250 to 1260 to use it for prayer and studying.



Fig 9 Agha Bozorg mosque and school Kashan (hammihan.com)

This inscription was written in Nastaliq script and due to its beauty and feasibility it was used for writing commands. The reread text of this inscription is as follows: "Hova Albaghii —be hokma Mahkam shahanshah Adel va Bazel Mohammad Shah Qajare hkoldollah melko ve ehsan ahsa; Be Khahesh jenab shariaate adab hojataleslam mola Mohammad Mehdi Naraghi manal divani ghasabi, dabaghi Kashan be mujeb farman mobarak be tahkfif mogharar az takalif divani moaf shod". This means in the name of God—on the basis of the command given by the justice and merciful king Mohammad Shah Qajar, on the tannery and butchery trade in Kashan was tax exempted on the respect by Mullah Mohammad Mehdi Naraghi. He may be cursed by the God and His Messenger (Moharrum 1256).

To sum up, as previously stated, the inscriptions are divided into three categories based on the script type: Kofi, Sols, Nastaliq. They are also arranged based on the first letter of the city's name in terms of placement and sequencing. The location of inscriptions,

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historical period, the text and subject are presented in the table 1, whose interpretations have been discussed in the preceding pages. Due to the limitations of the study, nine statistical samples are brought here. The statistical samples are summarized in the following table 1:

Table 1 Analysis of the statistical samples

No	Sample	City	Historical	Material	Installation	Subject-text of	Picture
			period	inscription	location	the inscription	Scrolls
1	Mir Ghavamodin Marashi tomb	Amol	Safavieh	Tile	Building entrance	Remember God	SSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSS
2	Central mosque	Esfahan	Safavieh	Tile	Western Ivan	Poetry	
3	Red dome	Maragheh	Saljoughi	Brick	Northern wall, building entrance	Founder name	Major Hard Major M
4	Imam mosque	Esfahan	Safavieh	Tile	Left side mosque entrance	Inscription	
5	Ganjali Khan Inn	Kerman	Safavieh	Tile	Below the entrance arc	Name of writer Alireza Abassi, date and king nickname	
6	Dome of the holy shine of Imam Reza	Mashhad	Safavieh	Gold	Circular dome	About kings travel and date of building construction	
7	Four-minaret mosque	Tabriz	Qajar	Rock	1	Repair	
8	School and mosque square	Tabriz	Safavieh	Rock	Corridor entrance	Founder of mosque-school	G.
9	Great Agha mosque school	Kashan	Qajar	Rock	Top entrance	Mohammad Shah's order discounts gift taxes	

3. Conclusion

Architecture is one of the oldest arts associated with human and religious beliefs. In the Iranian architecture, the beauty is in the balance of structure and content tailored to building and use of decorations that are interconnected to building structure. Art inscription from the early Islamic period has always been considered by artists and Muslim kings as an advertising medium for determining the religious, historical, cultural, artistic identity. In spite of the decorative and cosmetic aspects of building, it has a great importance in terms of its historical, religious and advertising aspects.

In answer to the survey questions, it can be said that the inscriptions have a significant place in Iranian architecture. The presence of the inscriptions in architecture is an important feature for every building. Inscriptions can be used to express concepts; for example, inscription can be considered as one of the most important historic resources that is used along with manuscripts, pottery, coins, etc. which play an important role in determining the identity of architectural spaces, and methods of manufacture and management of these buildings. Inscriptions provide awareness that reform and supplement our historical understanding of the economic and social issues. Inscriptions are illustrative documents that can provide useful information immediacy. They are an effective tool for data transfer and awareness raising in realization of the communication processes, which also results in the reconstruction of the culture and beliefs of the community and reinforcing them. In general, any type of media that conveys messages and information is closely related to its audience. Writing media has an old background and an important place in world such that human life is dependent on them, so advertising has a root in social life of humans. Finally inscriptions have significant importance and are illustrative documents that can provide useful information about cultural, political, social and artistic conditions in different eras.

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