

A Study of the Aesthetic Structure of the Term 'Ali' in the Tile Decoration of the Jame Mosque in Yazd, Iran

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Abstract

With a glance at the sanctity of calligraphy in Islamic art and historic values of the Jame mosque building of Yazd, one feels the need to study and analyze its aesthetic aspects. The study investigates the aesthetic forms of calligraphy in the inscriptions with the word 'Ali' in the Jame mosque of Yazd and how the aesthetics of the calligraphy affect the attraction of audience of the mosque in Yazd. Certainly, the efficiency of calligraphy in the inscriptions of the mosque can increase the presence of the audience heart. Therefore, the present research has made an attempt with respect to Islamic rules and Shia religion to study the functions of the word Ali and also to consider its structure and content significance. The results show that there are two important poles in the Islamic visual art, which are architecture and calligraphy. In Islamic architecture, calligraphy has been frequently used which has an indescribable beauty. The calligraphy is effective on the aesthetics of the Jame mosque. Accordingly, the study has been conducted using a descriptive-analytical method to analyze the aesthetics of the word 'Ali' in the tiles of the Jame mosque in Yazd.

Keywords: Aesthetics; Calligraphy; Ali; Jame Mosque; Yazd

1. Introduction

Mosques in Islamic cities since the past till present day have been as the most significant structure and the most important place to function as worship, social, political, cultural and economic. One of the mosque is the Jame mosque of Yazd. The existing mosque structure belongs to the eighth century constructed by Sayyed Ruknadin Mohammad Ghazi. The historical texts and

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various books of the Jame mosque of Yazd also has been known as the Friday's mosque, ancient Friday mosque, Atiq Jame mosque, etc. This mosque in different historical period has been considered in various dimensions.

Calligraphy and letter design and its function in the Islamic architecture of Iran has special place. The Jame mosque of Yazd as the most important museum of Islamic art is the best representative of art of Iranian artists in the aesthetics of calligraphy. The previous studies focused more on the historical and archaeological aspects of Jame mosque of Yazd. Therefore, this study analyses the aesthetic aspects of this historical structure such as the calligraphy of inscription and tiles with the name of 'Ali'. In addition with the introduced statistical samples an attempt is made to identify the word 'Ali' and to analyze based on aesthetic.

2. Literature Review

Many scholars and theorists of science related to historical and ancient work of art has considered the inscriptions as one of the objective and scientific documents. Inscriptions can be of help as the historic-ancient document for discovering the authenticity of the structure. On the other hand, Jame mosque is the heart of an Islamic city. Many scholars have done research on the Jame mosque. The books presents has information of Jame mosque, which is generally related to the historical and archaeological background. The book of Jame mosque written by Mehran Dehghan Chenari, describes the history, tiling and research on the existing inscription of this structure. The book on 'Turquoise masterpiece of the desert' written by Fatemeh Islami, Susan Ajdar and Ali Akbar Khodaei, has described the Jame mosque in the best archeological way. The book on 'aesthetic of calligraphy of Jame mosque of Isfahan' written by Mohammad Hussein Halimi is about calligraphy analysis in the tile of Jame mosque of Isfahan. The related articles are the analyses of Shia symbolic aspects decoration in Jame mosque of Yazd by Seyyed Hashem Hosseini; the Shia thought in Jame mosque decoration by Hossein Farashi Abarkoochi. Another article entitled 'coordination of colors and patterns in the decoration of Jame mosque of Yazd, Zilu and Meybod pottery' by Mahnaz Shayestefar and 'study of color and common pattern in Jame mosque of Yazd and Zilu and Meybod pottery by Mehran Behzadeh. In an article entitled 'Comparison of design and pattern of Zilu weaving of Meybod and Jame mosque of Yazd' by Mahnaz Shayestefar and Shahriar Shekarpour, they have conducted a comparison between the design and pattern and reached common point.

Theses: The graphic design of the inscriptions of Jame mosque of Yazd from Seljuk to Timurid period by Mansour Chati has studied the pattern of inscriptions and categorized and analyzed. The dissertation is on examination of the motifs of the tiles of Jame mosque of Yazd by Azadeh Sheikhi which is about the decoration of the mosaic and Islamic floral pattern (Islimi) and vegetative motifs. Another dissertation entitled 'aesthetics of geometric and calligraphic motifs in the Jame mosque of Isfahan and its application in environmental graphics by Golnaz Azizi. Based on the resources given there has been no information related to aesthetics of calligraphy. The aesthetics of calligraphy is one of the strong points of the Jame mosque of Yazd and no research has been done by any researcher.

2.1. Aesthetics

The philosophical perception of aesthetic emerged in ancient Greek. The term aesthetic in Greek means a sense of perception (Bavandian, 2004: 122). Aesthetic is the philosophy of art (Langfeld, 1920: 28). Aesthetic is any kind of general research on art, either it is philosophy or scientific

(Beardsley, 1981: 85). The perception of aesthetic is not merely the use of sense and requires the power of recognition, taste and sensitivity (Hanfling, 2002: 99). Since the time human have been deviated to architecture has paid attention to spiritual needs and sense of aesthetics. The first dwelling examples show such a relationship. In other words, nature in different cultures has been associated with aesthetics and architectural space. Sense, mood and spirituality in the architectural space has direct relationship with man and its users (Ghaemifar, 2016: 43-44).

3. Methodology

The descriptive-analytical method has been implemented to analyze the data based on library studies, documentation and field survey of the inscription of Jame mosque of Yazd. In this paper, after reviewing the researches done in the field of aesthetic and identifying the types of calligraphy in the inscription, the necessary inscriptions was selected. Then the imaging tool for recording and reading the work of art has been used. Later, the inscriptions was analyzed and evaluated.

4. Inscription of the Jame Mosque

With the advent of Islam by the rulers of Ilkhani, it was the beginning of constructing religious and non-religious structures along with decoration and tile work. After this period, there was popular use of yellow, indigo, brown, black and white color (Kiyani, 1983: 16).



Fig 1 Tiling the altar of Jame mosque of Yazd (Source: authors)

In this period, the decoration of the building important especially tiling, and at this historic point one observes a large variety in the tiles. There are various opinions stated about the reason for using tiles in structures. But most of the opinions are related to the issues of aesthetic of decoration and

durability. The type of tiles of that period are mosaic tiles, seven colors, zarrin form and composite tiles (Mackinejad, 2002: 68).

The word 'inscription' means 'a part of the army and division', but originally it means 'writing' and 'book'. In architectural terms inscription is referred as writings or paintings that are engraved on stones, bricks, wood, tiles and plaster (Dehghan Chenari, 1989: 50).

In the Jame mosque of Yazd, inscriptions are seen in five categories of Quranic themes, keystones, altar stone, charity stone and grave stones. A lot has been said about the value and importance of calligraphy and the art of calligraphy (Danesh Yazdi, 2008: 19). The inscriptions have an important role in the decoration of mosques, since apart from the decorative and architectural aspects of the building, also has religious significance and can highlight the uncertainties related to the artistic features or special structure (Shayestehfar, Shekarpour, 2009: 28). Based on the researches, the beautiful designs of Jame mosque of Yazd is unique and like other mosques, includes designs such as Islamic floral pattern (islimi), Shah Abbasi flowers, vase (or pottery) designs, geometric patterns, Chinese knot, inscription designs and calligraphy art work. The inscription of mosques and religious places since the 3rd century till the present day because of rebellion and internal conflicts are the most interesting parts of Islamic architecture with its own unique style and it is incomparable with any other style. This inscription astonishes the viewer's with the rules of calligraphy adds beauty. Calligraphy is an art that exists in Islamic art. The Jame mosque of Yazd acts as a museum for various Islamic arts and its scientific and artistic identity is an example of progress and development of science and art of Iran. The function of calligraphic aesthetics and the decorations are unique features in this mosque.

The Jame mosque of Yazd as one of the most significant buildings of the 8th century, displays aesthetics by the use of variety in calligraphy, decorations, appropriate color combination and various tiles, as well creating a type of order and harmony. Since ages religion has been one of the factors influencing art showing mystical emotions. The mosque is like a magnificent jewel in the desert, and the architectural style, beautiful arches, finial, motifs has transformed the mosque as one of the foremost mosques in Iran.

5. Calligraphy Aesthetics of Jame Mosque of Yazd

The historical analyses, complete photography of the mosque, fine design, artistic values of calligraphy, and letter design shows the audience the enthusiast of Iranian art, artist and designers of visual art. The unique architecture and design drawn on the tiles, in terms of design and motifs, the composition and manner of performance is professional and artistic. The beauty and simplicity of the motifs and the manner of designing are among the most important issues in the study of Jame mosque. The Jame mosque is one of the rare mosques that has been preserved the works of art for several centuries from different periods such as the Ilkhani, Timurid, Safavid and Qajar.

The artists have used calligraphy and mentioned the divine names and signs in their existing works and tried to convey their sanctity to their works. Calligraphy was the most appropriate art that has a fundamental role in terms of visually and content. On the other hand, this mosque was built during Ilkhani period, and the features were with beautiful stucco with pleasing motifs and broad, deep and long Islamic floral pattern (Islimi), different types of Kofi calligraphy especially knotted Kofi, different types of Sols, Reka, Toghi and Divoni writings and combination of Sols and Naskh calligraphy was used in the altar construction and inscriptions of the mosque as masterpieces of plaster and tile work.

In Iran's Islamic culture, the process of studying the inscriptions indicates that their originality has always been preserved and this shows the presence of a sacred geometric system and hard work

(Teimuri, 2010: 86). The artists have used type of design, floral and geometric designs, and calligraphy on various types of building materials along with the spiritual themes on the inscriptions which show the valuable messages that penetrate into the soul of viewer and also create unique composition (Ferasat, 2006: 25).

6. Research Findings

After conducting the field survey and photography of all the inscriptions of Jame mosque of Yazd, the inscriptions with the name 'Ali' were selected and it is described in detail.

6.1. Assessing the Inscription of 'Ali' of Jame Mosque

In-between the two edges of the eastern side inscriptions, there is a 50 x 50 cm square inscription with Sols calligraphy in white on blue background which has the following Quranic phrases,

'لا اله الا الله محمد رسول الله على ولي الله حقاً حقاً' read as '*La Ilaha Allah Mohammad dan Rasool Allah Ali yan Vali Allah, Haqkan Haqa*' the arabic letters are not stretched and none of the letters overlaps. The name 'Ali' has been well arched in the last line (Dehghan Chenari, 2011: 153). In the eastern part of the mosque the mogharnas of the gateway the name of 'Allah' has been written in Naskh style and on the other gateway the Surah al-Akhlās, with Naskh style in a circle. The words of 'Allah', 'Mohammad' and 'Ali' are designed separately and placed in same size squares. The feature of this calligraphy is that all the positive and negative space is of the same size. Complimentary colors are used. The letters are designed in close proximity at short distances. There is an order and beauty in the circulation of round letters. On the corners of the two sides of niches, names of 'Mohammad' and 'Ali' in Kofi calligraphy are repeated between the floral patterns on the mosaic (Nosrati, 2001: 20). The letters are designed white on the blue background. The ends of the letter 'ع' or 'A' and 'ى' or 'I' in the name 'Ali' are decorated and some parts decorated with Islamic floral pattern (Islimi). In addition, the decorated word is enclosed in spiral interconnected square called as Shamse.

The entrance door above the marble platform on each side there are three Shamse (spiral interconnected squares) and one of them mentions the 891 year. Also in between these phrases are written that appear like key motifs and it is read as 'Ali' in broken style.

The tile which dates to 777 AH on the right side of Cyrss is made of marble material with the following specification:

Size: Length and breadth is 50 x 64 cm and without margin 50 x 34 cm. The inscription is in Sol's calligraphy. Some parts have been faded without any reasons.

Reading the inscription: 'Hoalbaghi'

"اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِ مُحَمَّدٍ الْمُصْطَفَى وَ عَلَى الْمُرْتَضَى وَ فَاطِمَةَ الزَّهْرَا وَ حَسَنَ الرِّضَا حَسِينَ الشَّهِيدِ بِكَرْبَلَا زَيْنِ الْعَابِدِينَ وَ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ بَاقِرٍ وَ جَعْفَرَ صَادِقٍ وَ عَلَى مُوسَى الْكَاطِمِ وَ عَلَى بَنِي مُوسَى الرِّضَا وَ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ تَقِيٍّ وَ عَلَى النَّقِيِّ حَسَنِ الْعَشْكَرِيِّ وَ حُجَّةِ الْقَائِمِ الْمَهْدِيِّ صَلَوَاتِ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِمْ أَجْمَعِينَ صَدَقَ الرَّسُولُ اللَّهُ" "بنده خاندان... حاجی بن علی... الیزدی فی تاریخ صفر لسنه سبع و سبعین و سبعائه"

The above script is read as '*Allah Mohammad Al-Mohammad and Al-Mohammad al-Mustafa and Ali al-Muratai and Fatima al-Zahra and Hassan al-Reza Hossein al-Shahid with Karbala Zain al-Abedin and Ali Mohammad Baqir and Ja'far Sadegh and Ali Musa al-Kazim and Ali ibn Musa al-Reza and Ali Mohammad Taghi and Ali al-Naki Hassan al-Shakri Haja al-Qaim al-Mahdi, Salavat, Allah, Allah, Ajam, and Allah, The servant of the family ... Haji bin Ali ... Elizadefi, Safar, Nesand, Saba, Sabaeen and Saba'ah*'.

The margins of the above inscription are decorated in tiles and the paintings are in brown, dark orange, and turquoise color. While at the entrance of the Cyrss a stone is located on the left and the specifications are:

Size: The size of the inscription is 140 x 65 cm since the 9th century in Kofi calligraphy and the altar decoration in Islamic floral pattern (Islimi) and geometric patterns (Dehghan Chenari, 2011: 77).

Middle: In the middle part a mirror is located with the word 'Allah Akbar', 'Mohammad', and 'Ali' on the four sides. They are designed in Naskh calligraphy writing and located inside a rectangle with a circle in the center.

At the entrance of Cyrss on the left and opposite there is a stone with the specification as:

Size: The size of the inscription is 140 x 65 cm since the 9th century in Kofi calligraphy and the altar decoration in Islamic floral pattern (Islimi) and geometric patterns (Dehghan Chenari, 2011: 77).

Four corners: Four times the name 'Mohammad' in Kofi calligraphy and each located in a square. The name 'Mohammad' is spirally designed.

Period: The Quranic verse,

سبحان الله و الحمد لله و لا اله الا الله، الله اكبر و لاحول و لا قوة الا بالله العلي العظيم

The above script is read as 'Sobhan allah va alhamdo Allah va la ilaha ila Allah, Allah Akbar, la hol va la Qovateh illa be Allah al Ali Al Azim', which is written in Naskh style, compressed and squeezed together with all letters calligraphy beautifully.

Forehead: 'Al-Malekul Allah' in Kofi's style with a square surrounded by flowers and bushes. This phrase is placed spirally above the inscription. The thickness and distance are same for all the letters.













Middle: A mirror is located with words 'Allah Akbar', 'Mohammad', and 'Ali' on its four sides in Naskh style. A rectangle shape exists inside with another rectangle in the middle.




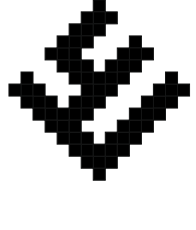

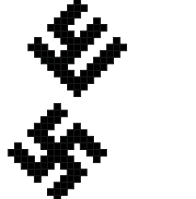





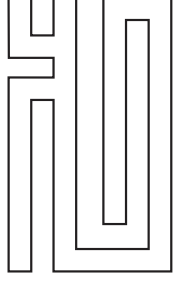
The shaft of the minaret has the names of 'Ali', and 'Mohammad' is carved beautifully with Kofi calligraphy. These two words are designed with turquoise on dark orange background. These words are repeated in rhythmic manner. The mogharnas inside the dome with the names of 'Mohammad' and 'Ali' are repeated in Kofi style (Nosrati, 2001: 22). These turquoise tiles are designed on brick background.


Above the entrance and below the dome the name 'Ali' is repeated in Kofi style. The repeating name 'Ali' and decorative motifs (Chilipa) fills the entire surface with balanced positive and negative space. The inscription bricks are in turquoise color near to dark orange color.

The brick ceiling of the left side corridor the 'Al Malekol Allah' is repeated in a chain in geometric style. In the middle of the roof, in a circle the name 'Mohammad' is carved four times with white tiles and four times with yellow tiles in cross wise manner and in Kofi style. At the center three times the name 'Ali' is written in Kofi style.

Table 1 Results of field survey analysis of name 'Ali' in inscriptions of Jame mosque

No	Location	Calligraphy	Color	Type	Image	Diagram example
1	Between the two edges of the eastern side inscriptions	Sols	White on blue background	Mosaic		
2	East gateway of mosque	Naskh Broken	White on blue background	Tile		
3	Two sides of the eastern gateway, on the sides of the niche	Decorative Kofi	White on blue	Mosaic		
4	Entrance above the marble platform	Broken	Turquoise with blue	Mosaic		
5	Right Cyrss	Sols	Dark orange	Marble		
6	Cyrss on the left	Naskh Kofi	White as elephant trust	Stone		

7	Shaft minaret	Kofi	Turquoise on the dark orange	Mosaic		
8	Inside the Mogharnas dome	Kofi	Turquoise blue	Tile		
9	Entrance below the dome	Kofi	Turquoise	Glazed Tile		
10	Altar	Sols	Yellow on blue	Tile		
11	Altar	Naskh	White and brown on the blue	Tile		
12	Wall inside the corridor	Kofi	White	Plaster		

13	Left hand ceiling	Decorative Kofi	White and blue turquoise on sky blue	Mosaic	
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7. Conclusion

As it has been mentioned in the historical documents, the Jame mosque of Yazd was built centuries ago, and it has been named as Friday mosque, atiq Jame mosque, ancient Jame mosque and new Jame mosque. The Jame mosque is one of the architectural and historical masterpieces of the world, and it has one of the tallest minarets in the world.

The architecture of this mosque is unique that every year tourists from around the world travel to the city of Yazd to visit the masterpiece. In many countries, Jame mosque has been known as the symbol of the province and Iran. This is one of the first great buildings of the country. In Islamic religion, the mosque is a scared place where people gather to worship Allah, to make this place beautiful Islamic designs and calligraphy was used. Since 8th century calligraphy has been as a non-visual element for expressing the concept and to convey message of Islam. With the combination of colorful tiles and bricks designs the aesthetic is elegantly exhibited.

Any visitor who visits this mosque is astonished by the unique Iranian architecture. The altar in the mosque is decorated with inscriptions, crossed bricks and mosaic which shows the world its aesthetic. The influence of aesthetics in the inscriptions, and religious and historical writings reveals the existence of Allah. The repetition of the verses and divine names with beautiful calligraphy makes the devotees to reside to the unity of Allah. The present inscriptions have influence on the validity value of Jame mosque. The Yazd Jame mosque is one of the most prominent mosques in terms of inscription and all are designed and executed with beautiful calligraphy by artist of each period. Aesthetics in the mosque of Yazd has caused many visitors to Yazd to visit each year to look at these beautiful works and to realize the truth of God more and more.

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