
Ornamental Motifs of the Marouflage in Sheikh Safi –ad-din Ardabili Tomb with the Ervin Panovsky Iconology Approach

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Abstract

Murals have always been considered by the Islamic studies field. However, the marouflages in Iran have been less considered in terms of the execution and their nature. Some researchers have considered them murals, and some have taken them as canvas paintings. They are a combination of paintings that are executed on the canvas and are installed on a wall. The themes of the icons used in the Islamic era's tombs ornaments have found a divine nature based on the Muslim artists' beliefs and ideas. The prohibition of painting in Islam made Muslim artists turn to allegorical language to express concepts. The tomb of Sheikh, which was built in 753 A.H. and expanded during the Safavid era, contains different artistic disciplines. This tomb has the highest volume and diversity of marouflages in Iran, and that is why it has been selected for the current study. Due to the religious nature of the space, all marouflages contain ornamental and written motifs. Thus, these motifs have been considered for their great visual aesthetic potential. Like other components of the Islamic era art, the selection and high usage of the geometric shapes in this complex have certain doctrinal foundations. The current study aimed to investigate the distinguished ornamental motifs in the marouflages of Sheikh Safi with the Panovsky iconology approach. Using Panovsky's method and their tiniest visual details, a network of latent interconnected meanings was found, which indicates the painter's intention of using these motifs and themes as well as the meanings behind them.

Keywords: Sheikh Safi-ad-din Ardabili; Marouflages; Arabesque and Khatai Motifs; Islamic Art; Ervin Panovsky

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1. Introduction

Human has always sought to create art and express their inner desires with the help of image and words. Sometimes, these two arts are combined, and sometimes they are expressed separately. Now, we should see with what medium the artist expresses his idea, and his mental power lies in his art being word-centered or image-oriented. If we accept what is expressed in his art as a combination of both methods, the achievement of the latent concepts hidden behind the work would be possible through investigation and interpretation of its details. An interpretation that helps the viewer achieve the verbal meaning of the work depends on the work's criteria, its author, and its audience. Therefore, different individuals would perceive an artistic work differently based on their attention and use of each of these criteria, leading to the perception of its latent facet. Accordingly, and regarding the current study, when faced with the marouflages in Sheikh Safi-ad-din Ardabili Tomb, we do not know much about the hidden verbal meaning; this question is raised about how the verbal aspect of these images and what explains them are perceived? The murals have always been important as one of the artistic disciplines. Its effects on human life were such that it has always occupied a special place over time, and not only has it never disappeared, but also significant changes have taken place in it. Among different types of murals, there is a type of wall painting executed on canvas.

Canvas is one of the most prevalent fabrics that have been used for painting. Examples of such paintings can be seen in some monuments of the Islamic era in Iran. It has been executed on canvas in different methods. They were usually transferred to the intended location after execution, and then they are installed based on the spatial structure in which they are supposed to be placed. Their installation method was in a way that most of the time, they could not be removed, and not only were they considered a component of the work, but they also gave the monument a kind of divinity and historical value.

Murals have always been considered by Islamic studies. However, the marouflages have not been researched in Iran regarding their execution and nature. They have been slightly mentioned only in some writings. The tomb of Sheikh Safi-ad-din Ardabili is among the few monuments with the highest volumes of such murals that are still intact. In the current study, we will investigate this style of murals painted on canvas and attached to the wall. These murals are called marouflage.

The current study is an effort to answer these questions: What is the shape of the ornamental motifs on these murals? What meanings are hidden behind the interpretation of these images based on Islamic-Iranian art? How is the division of space and themes in these works from Islamic-Iranian art's doctrinal concepts?

The current study aimed to get familiar with marouflages in Sheikh Safi-ad-din Ardabili Tomb due to the high volume of these works in this monument, in terms of the form, content, constituent layers, and installation method. Understanding the concept and themes of the ornamental motifs in murals and their written inscriptions based on the Ervin Panovsky iconology approach to investigate the semantic content of these works and their inner layers is another objective of the current study. Panovsky analyzes content versus form. He has proposed a methodical research approach to evaluate works filled with latent icons and implications. The research method is descriptive-analytical in the current study, and the data collection method is library-based and internet-based. Unfortunately, no clear images of these murals were found in the internet sources, and due to the prohibition of photography, a great deal of effort was put in, and finally, we could receive a relatively practical image with the help and cooperation of the tomb's Public Relations Department. The findings indicate that the arabesque motifs first became prevalent due to the prohibition of human body illustration in the early Islamic era, and it had elements of Sassanid art.

Gradually, based on the teachings specific to that era, these motifs have found an abstract form and have also affected other arts in that era. The outcome of the current study is higher familiarity with this art, the current state of the work, and the verbal and visual concept of the ornamental and written motifs of these murals. Besides, the introduction of this art, which is performed with an Islamic-Iranian style, is important and necessary for the current study.

2. Ervin Panovsky Theory

Erwin Panovsky, as the most important and influential figure in the field of Iconology, is known as the founder of the theory and criticism in this field. He has introduced a fully practical, organized, and firm method of iconography and iconology. Panovsky, in 1932, in an article entitled “Studies on iconology: humanistic themes in renaissance art,” used the iconology approach to evaluate renaissance and Christian art. Panovsky methodically interprets the artistic phenomena from their description. “Panovsky has tried in this book to differentiate between the old interpretation of iconography as a visual representation of a theme through a figure and iconology as a perception beyond the iconic representations” (Abdi, 2011: 31).

This interpretation passes through three implicative elements: motif, theme, and content. In the iconology approach, the process of interpretation of the artwork has been organized under three strategic movements of description, analysis, and interpretation. Since each artwork is a set of icons beyond the individual and in the scope of the society’s beliefs and culture, the most basic objective of this approach is explanation and definition of the distinction and dissociation between the theme or meaning on the one hand, and the form on the other hand.

Therefore, during three stages of pre-iconographic description, iconographic analysis, and iconographic interpretation (iconology), this strategy identifies and separates the three primary, secondary, and content layers step-by-step, and with the objective of perception of the hidden messages beyond the tangible elements of the artistic work, analyzes and explores the unknown aspects of the beliefs and world-view hidden in the visual elements.

In these three stages, it should be said that pre-iconographic description is a formal semi-analysis and iconographic analysis is the entrance to the world of work’s codes through familiarity with the world of images, narratives, and stories. However, in the iconographic interpretation, we deal with the iconic values in the face of those images, narratives, and stories. Thus, in the first stage, the primary interpretation of what is seen beyond the conventional or iconic meanings is enough. The subject is only focused on the representation through practical familiarization with the artistic and visual principles and mastery of the style history.

The first step is introduced under the natural or primary subject title. In this stage, the viewer is encouraged to decompose the image to its tiniest and most obvious details and recognize the constituent elements in color, writing, form, etc. In his view, these pure elements and forms can be named artistic motifs. The recognition of the pure forms that constitute the image is named the pre-iconographic description stage by Panovsky.

The second step is raised for achievement and recognition of the secondary or conventional meanings latent in the artistic work, familiarizing with specific themes and concepts by referring to the literary knowledge sources and its mastery and testing this knowledge through familiarization with the historical types. In this stage, the icon interpretation is deeper.

The last stage in this approach is based on the written intuitions and inspirations and deals with the human mind’s basic inclinations, including the psychology or individual worldview in a mutual equation. The third and last stage allows the researcher to recognize the deepest layer of the icon. This layer is not allowed by the recognition unless, in a historical search, the researcher can

recognize the conditions and state of the creation and coding of the work. This final stage, which somehow seems to be out of access, is known with the latent and inner concept or meaning. This stage is focused on the achievement of the type of a nation's attitude from a specific social class in a specific period with specific religious and philosophical beliefs.

Panovsky applied his method to Christian art and, most specifically, the renaissance period, while others applied it to the Far East and Buddhist art and got some results. This emphasis leads the Iranian audience's mind toward the point where the iconology moves from the form to the meaning and, in this path, answers the probable questions made in the mind of the audience through referring to the sources and documents from non-visual texts. As a result, it is a comprehensive and facilitator method in the Iranian visual world.

3. Difference between the Mural and the Marouflage

This difference can be found in the constituent layers of the murals. Both forms of the murals are the same in terms of the support, priming, and ground layers; however, in the murals, the grounding canvas, paint, and varnish layers finish the work, while in the marouflages, after the ground layer, the adhesive, grounding canvas support, paint, and varnish layers finish the work (Fig 1).



1. Support Layer (stone, brick, wood, ...)
2. Primer Layer (plaster, clay, lime, ...)
3. Ground Layer (plaster, clay, lime, ...)
4. Glue or Nail Layer
5. Fabric Support
6. Ground Layer (water paint, oil paint, emulsion + filler)
7. Paint Layer
8. Varnish Layer

Fig 1 The constituent layers of marouflages (dark colors are the main layers and bright colors are the secondary layers) (Hamzavi, Vatandoost, and Ahamdi, 2017: 45).

The grounding for these marouflages is made of canvas. “Canvas is a Flemish word (Flanders Language) known as a rough and thick fabric” (Farhang, 1987: 206), which was very popular for being water-resistant. Canvas was originally a useful material for producing sailcloth and a great means for painting mediums. Before using the canvas, the painters painted on wooden surfaces, making it difficult for them due to cracking and warping. However, after knowing about the significant resistance of the canvas against the changes, it immediately became the most popular painting medium all over Europe.

The canvas weaving art in Iran roots back to the era before Il-Khanid Dynasty and is tied to the handicrafts of this era. The fame of Iranian weaving reached its peak in the Sassanid era. With the Safavid Dynasty coming to power and the trade exchanges between Iran and Europe, the Western artists' works entered Iran. As a result of political relations and the gifts exchanged between the western states and Iran, some paintings were also sent to the country. “The paintings painted on the fabric which were ordered by the Armenian merchants to be transferred to the churches can be mentioned as such examples” (Imadi, 2006: 176). Unfortunately, there is not much research in this regard; however, since the Iranians were familiar with the canvas weaving art, the artistic works imported to Iran from Europe grabbed their attention.

4. History of Marouflages in Iran

The murals have always been the center of focus in Iran, since “what gives identity to the mural is the exploration of the verbal and visual capabilities in the wall and achievement of the harmonic space between them, as well as the visual elements and qualities dominating the wall space” (Kafshchian Moghaddam, 2006: 43). The history of Iranian marouflage dates back to the Il-Khanid era, and an example of it can be seen in the Dome of Soltanieh in Zanjan. However, these murals have been damaged over time due to a lack of protection, and a small number of works have been left. There are no works observed from the Timurid Dynasty era so far. However, this style of murals has been more used by the artists in the Safavid Era. In this era, the exchange of artistic works between the European countries and Iran leads to the transfer of some works and paintings of the European artists to Iran. The sample marouflages in Safavid Era can be seen in Sheikh Safi-ad-din Ardabili Tomb, Chehel Sotoon Palace, Qazvin Dar al-Saltaneh, Isfahan, Isfahan Clock Mansion, Aali Qapu Mansion of Isfahan, Ashraf Hall of Isfahan, Hasht Behesht Mansion, Saint Mary Church of Isfahan, and sporadically, in a few other places. In addition to illustrations, decorative lines and written inscriptions were also used in murals in this era. The Zand and Qajar eras were the pinnacles of marouflages in Iran. In this period, many paintings were transferred from Shiraz to Tehran as ordered by Agah Mohammad Khan. Some examples of this period can be seen in Tabriz, Isfahan, and Tehran. During this period, the works grabbed more attention; however, since their maintenance method was inappropriate, they were seriously damaged. However, in the two monuments of Sheikh Safi-ad-din Ardabili Tomb and Saint Mary Church of Isfahan, a greater volume of intact works can be seen.

5. Sheikh Safi-ad-din Ardabili Tomb Complex

In the Sheikh Safi-ad-din Ardabili Tomb Complex, there are three separate yet adjacent shrines. The second shrine belongs to Sheikh Safi-ad-din Ardabili, known as the ‘Allah Allah Dome.’ The shrine of the great Sufi, Sheikh Safi-ad-din Ardabili, the ancestor of Safavid Sultans, was built in 735 A.H by his son, Sadreddin Musa and contains a complex of Safavid Sheikhs, Sultans, and scholars as well as ritual and worship spaces in Ardabil. This monastery that is among the ten most

important archaic monuments of Iran was also registered as the 11th most valuable historical monument in Iran by UNESCO on July 25, 2010. According to Ibn Bazzaz, “the house and monastery to Sheikh Safi-ad-din Ardabili have been the same place according to his will, he has been buried in a room next to an adytum, garden and spring house, and a building is built on his grave” (Ibn Bazzaz and Tavakol, 1999: 986). What has made this shrine artistically distinct is that different types of arts, such as calligraphy, molding, tiling, gilding, silverwork, etc., have been used in it in the most beautiful way possible. In this historical site, there are also several specialized museums. The specialized archaeology museum, the stone museum, the specialized library of Tomb of Sheikh Safi-ad-din Ardabili, and the porcelain museums or porcelain houses are also placed in this historical site.

The location of Sheikh Safi-ad-din Ardabili shrine is under the ‘Allah Allah Dome.’ “This dome which is placed above the Sheikh Safi-ad-din Ardabili shrine and is the central core of the complex, built by Sadreddin Musa, is a cylindrical brick tower with the height of 17.5 or 18 meters and a 22-meter perimeter, which is built on an octagonal stone base and ends in a low-rise dome with Araghchin shape at the top. On the body of the tower, the great name of Allah is written with turquoise-colored Mughal tiles, which is why it is named ‘Allah Allah Dome.’ The stem and dome decorations are also applied with the same turquoise-colored tiles on a brick background and with a repeated lozenge pattern. At the joint where the tower is connected to the stem of the dome, an inscription of Quranic verses in Sols calligraphy with white mosaic tiles in the azure background can be seen” (Babasafari, 1991: 237) (Fig 2).

Plan 1, at point A, the location of the ‘Allah Allah Dome’ and Sheikh Safi-ad-din Ardabili Tomb can be seen. Sheikh Safi-ad-din Ardabili Tomb is located in the middle of an octagonal area. Inside the tomb, it is covered with a finely carved and inlaid wooden box once adorned with jewelry. In the margin above its lateral surfaces, a detailed inscription is carved with Sols calligraphy that contains some phrases, including the name of the tomb’s owner. On the northern side of the box’s body, there is also a plate of silver on which is written the name of the tomb’s founder, Al-Abd Musavi al-Safavi (Fig 3).



Plan 1 The Sheikh Safi-ad-din Ardabili Tomb Complex (Monument registration booklet)

A= Location of the tomb and ‘Allah Allah Dome.’



Fig 2 Allah Allah Dome (Source: A photograph by Reza Khanabaei)



Fig 3 Sheikh Safi-ad-din Ardabili Tomb (Source: Ardabil Cultural Heritage Site)

6. Structure and Execution of the Murals in Sheikh Safi-ad-din Ardabili Tomb

The subject of these murals in the tomb is ornamental, and the inscriptions are written. There are few such murals with ornamental paintings of the plant motifs in Iran, and Sheikh Safi-ad-din Ardabili Tomb is one of these examples, with another example being Golestan Palace in Tehran. The main reason behind using arabesque-Khatai motifs in this place is the religious nature of the space, and since illustration is prohibited in Islam, especially in eth religious places, the artists have turned to the use of ornamental and written motifs.

Different from the murals in terms of the theme, they are as different in execution method. Some have glued the canvas painting on a wooden board, some have glued it to the wall with its frame, and sometimes, the frame around these paintings is decorated with plaster frames that, in addition to decoration, have also protected the works against damages. Furthermore, in another example, a wooden frame has been used instead of a plaster frame.

“The marouflages in the Sheikh Safi-ad-din Ardabili Tomb have full coverage of interior surfaces and are decorated with ornamental paintings in terms of characteristics, and are painted on a large canvas as needed for the installation place in terms of execution” (Hamzavi, Vatandoost, and Ahmadi, 2017: 49).

“During the investigation and analysis of the materials used in the paper inscriptions and the fabric used in ‘Allah Allah Dome,’ it was revealed that the fabric material is cotton, the yarns are Z-twist, the weaving style is taffeta, and the pigments were gold, yellow, azure, white-gold, yellow, orpiment, and most likely litharge, along with white lead, minium red, and grace green with white lead filler. The water-based adhesives (Soleimani and Shishehbori, 2017: 68).

The paintings have water-based adhesives binding attached to the walls with glue and nails. The ornamental paintings are executed on the canvas and then cut and attached based on the installation space. However, to prepare the written inscriptions, the paper was first attached to the canvas, and

then the calligraphy was perfumed. The remaining steps have been executed and installed like other works.

7. Concept of Arabesque and Khatai Motifs

In the visual dictionary of the visual arts, the arabesque motifs are described as follows: “The arabesque is kind of traditional plant decoration that consists of spirals, waves, and abstraction twists (stylized), and leaf-shaped abstract elements that are scrolled around curved patterns” (Marzban, 1998: 22).

Roein Pakbaz defines the word arabesque as “The arabesque”, which is publicly used for interwoven and scrolled plant motifs and is especially a prominent theme in Islamic art. The Muslim artist found them suitable for expressing his imagination and ingenuity and diversified them. The only important principle he observed was the contrast between the foliage and the continuity of the stem. The arabesque in the hands of the Muslim artists found a simple and complex design, mostly an abstract and manifested form (Pakbaz, 2001: 27-28).

The reason behind naming Khatai is not clear. It can be said that it is attributed to ‘Khata,’ i.e., a city in the Persian literature that is usually associated with ‘Khotan.’ In this case, this naming corresponds to ‘Eslimi’ (arabesque), which is the inverted form of ‘Islami.’ Besides, it would also denote the effects of Chinese art on Iranian art. Some carpet motifs designers believe that Khatai is the continuance of the design in which case it should be written in gold. Some others also write it as ‘Khataei’ and believe that the lines derived from ‘Khata’ (a word meaning mistake in Persian) correspond to skewness (Maleki and Aghdasiyeh, 1985: 86).

Khatai is the flower stem design and a manifestation of the tree’s branch or a plant with flowers, leaves, and buds that should enclose the flowers, buds, and leaves and create unity between them. As arabesque was a manifestation of an abstracted tree, Khatai is also stylized, and although its design depends on the artist’s initiative, it is not nature. There is a less straight stem, i.e., a direct line, in the Khatai design, and in fact, direct lines are less seen in the mature art of Iran. The stems of the trees have harmonic curves and are a combination of enchanting and charming movements of curved lines. In rare cases, straight lines sometimes connect spiral circles of flowers, leaves, and bracts, sometimes broken curves, and sometimes just the appearance of flowers and leaves.

With this description, it can be said that the Khatai design is used in a manner in line with the arabesque rotations and proportionate to the space and geometric forms, moving on the surface of the work and making the artists use such design. In other words, he, as a work tool, arranges it with consideration for the order, unity, and cohesion of the artistic components.

Spiral or the snail curve is the first step in arabesque and Khatai design. These curves are the main artery of the design since all components of the Khatai and arabesque motifs are formed on the same curves, and they play a very important role in creating the space.

It should be noted that although Khatai and Islamic curves are often designed in combination with each other, the elements of the Islamic curves are never placed on the Khatai curves. In addition, the Khatai flowers and leaves are never placed on the arabesque curves, and they are designed with complete independence from each other (Eskandar pour Khorami, 2000: 136-137).

8. The Subject and Installation Location of the Marouflages in Sheikh Safi-ad-din Ardabili

“The only monument in Iran whose internal surfaces are fully covered with marouflages is Sheikh Safi-ad-din Ardabili, in which the surface of the wall is completely covered with painted

canvas. Also, some Toranj patterns are painted on the dome's ceiling in this method. The paintings are ornamental and executed with Khatai and arabesque motifs" (Hamzavi, Vatandoost, and Ahmadi, 2017: 48).

The written sources describe the execution of some marouflages, and they have noted some decorations in this building. The walls of the room where the Sheikh Safi-ad-din Ardabili grave is located are plastered up to the joint with the dome on which the painted canvases are nailed. These marouflages on the internal walls of 'Allah Allah Dome' are a beautiful example of the painting decorations in Sheikh Safi-ad-din Ardabili Tomb Complex. Also, the Sols calligraphy inscription under the dome is attached to the fabric after performing and is fixed on the wall. In this tomb, two kinds of marouflages are performed. The works that exist on the surface of the wall are decorative, and the works on the ceiling are written.

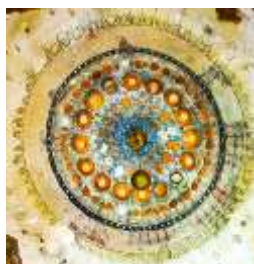
The works on the walls are directly painted on the canvas and installed on the wall. However, the written inscriptions are written on the paper for ease and smoothness of the reed pen, and then, the paper is attached to the canvas. The remaining installation steps are the same as the marouflages (Fig 4).



Fig 4 Sols calligraphy inscriptions around the dome's circle

9. The Interior View of the Ceiling of Sheikh Safi-ad-din Ardabili Tomb

On the 'Allah Allah Dome' ceiling, we see a sun motif in the middle. This motif has numerous symbolic motifs (Fig 5a). "The interior surface of the Sheikh Safi-ad-din Ardabili dome also has paintings in white on Pateh molding, which is painted in common molding decoration methods in Il-Khanid and Safavid periods. Among the important motifs of this area is the Sharafeh Shanzdah Par Shamsheh in the middle of the ceiling with eight Toranjes and half-Toranjes around it" (Golmaghanizadeh and Yusefi, 2005: 143-44). Before Islam, the sun symbolized a window through which the light of divinity was cast on the earth. Around this motif on the ceiling, we see eight Toranjes. This number has a specific divine concept for Muslims. Between these almost circle-shaped Toranjes, we can see eight cylindrical Toranjes, and inside the circle's perimeter, we see eight half-Toranjes (Fig 5b).



a



b

Fig 5 Shanzdah-Par Shamsheh in painting under the tomb's ceiling

Shamseh is the symbol of multiplicity in unity and unity in multiplicity. The multiplicity is the manifestation of God's properties, manifested in this motif in the form of multiple shapes cast from a single center. This motif, as its name suggests, evokes the concept of light. As Holy Quran also names God the 'light' "الله نور اسموات والارض" Allah is the light of the heavens and the earth" (Al-Noor, 64), Shamseh is, in fact, the symbol of God (Sattari, 1997: 53).

The Shamseh motif, the symbolic embodiment of the sun, has a great position in Iranian art and has been considered by artists for a long time. The sun disk placed in the middle of two wings next to each other in the Ahura Mazda sculpture indicates this fact. The sun disk with two wings on top of the stone pillars and walls have protected the sky and separated the sky from the earth. In the Muslims' art, inspired by the circular shape of the sun, has been usually associated with arabesque, Khatai, geometric, and inscription motifs, and in some cases, with animal motifs such as the fish or bird. Sometimes, it is similar to the sun disk with small beams, or in the form of the multiple numbers of repeated rays in a way that covers the entire surface, such as the motif in the center of the tomb's ceiling in which the sun rays are completely obvious in its perimeter (Fig 5). On the 'Allah Allah Dome' ceiling, we can see an eight-part division that has decorated the space around the inner perimeter with a Toranj shape. The internal walls are also divided into eight parts, and all these spaces are covered with marouflages (Fig 6).



Fig 6 Inside the 'Allah Allah Dome' and the tomb's marouflages (Source: Ardabil Cultural Heritage Site)

Eight petal motif is made through rotation of two squares, and the number eight has been for a long time the symbolic number of the sun in Europe, Asia, and Africa, as it has been expressed in Islam in different forms "the eight paradises, eight doors of paradise, and the eighth door which is the always-open door and the door of repent in mysticism" (Emami, 2003: 63). In the Zoroastrian religion, the eight petal pillar and the octagonal halls have been used in fire temples. In ancient Iran, the water goddess was illustrated with an eight petal crown (Avesta, Yashteha, 128). Furthermore, in Sumer, the eight petal star has been the symbol of God and the sky. This symbol has depicted the sky sign named King Naramsin, Sargon's nephew, in the land of Mesopotamia (Phingan, 1983: 50).

In terms of the symbology, the number eight has been mentioned in the Holy Quran and Shiite narratives as follows: In Quran, this number, the opposite pairs have been noted as it mentions ‘ثمانیه ارواح Samaniah Arwah’ (eight souls) (Al-A’araf: 43). However, the most important verse in Quran that denotes the symbology of this number is the Verse 17 of Surah Al-Haghah that mentions the throne of God which is borne eight angles “ويحمل عرش ربك فوقهم يومئذ ثمانية” (And there will bear the Throne of your Lord above them, that Day, eight [of them]). The most important place of the world on earth is the Kaabeh which is cubic, while the first number of the cube is eight.

10. The Murals in Sheikh Safi-ad-din Ardabili Tomb

In the marouflages of the Sheikh Safi-ad-din Ardabili Tomb, we can see Khatai motifs. These motifs are painted with a horizontal half drop repeat. As was mentioned before, the wall is divided into eight parts. Inside these eight parts, a single design is used, while in the remaining space outside, another design is used (Fig 7-8).



Fig 7 The paintings outside the wall division
(Source: Ardabil Cultural Heritage Site)









Fig 8 The paintings inside the wall division (Source: Ardabil Cultural Heritage Site)


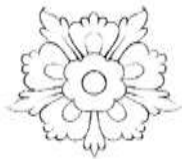

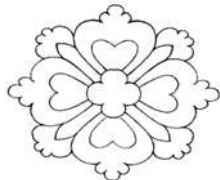
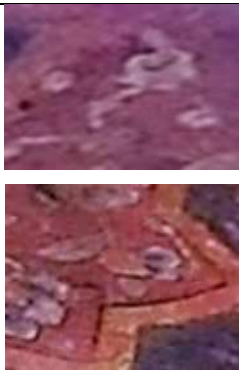



Khatai flowers are seen in different models with buds and leaves in the paintings. If we divide the wall into the inside and outside the eight parts, the motifs outside the division (Fig 7) are more in ochre red, dark blue, yellow, and purple, framed in gold. The gold alone has given these designs an elegant look and indicates the golden lines in gilding. In this part, as seen in Fig 7, the design begins with a central flower like the four petal pomegranate flower similar to the sun in the middle, and on the four sides of the painting, the Shah Abbasi flower can be seen. The space between these designs is filled with six petal and five petal butterfly flowers with simple arabesque lines and these motifs connect them. If this complete form is placed in the middle, on the four sides of this octagonal form, there is the ochre red that contains six petals, butterfly flowers and the buds. It is dark blue between these motifs in the center which are painted with eight petals, five petals, and butterfly flowers. These three combinations, as mentioned before, are repeated along the wall as repeated half drop horizontal form.

On the inner part of the octagonal area, we can see the use of brown, jujube red, dark blue, cedarn, and golden (Fig 8). These paintings, also like the outside part, are more in the form of Khatai flowers which are connected with simple lines. The composition of these paintings is in repeated half drop horizontal form along the wall. In Fig 8, we see a central design in which two eight petal and two six petal flowers are drawn. This design is repeated on both sides, and on the top and bottom sides, a four-sided flower is drawn, placed in the middle of eight petal star, and then the design is repeated.

Five petal star: The number five is usually associated with human life and the five senses. This number also plays a role in the general astrological process. Number five is also very important in Islamic tradition. In addition to the five pillars of the religion (Faith, prayer, fasting, Alms (Zakat), and Pilgrimage (Hajj)), the Muslims have five daily prayers. The Islamic rules include five categories (Wajib, Mustahabb, Mobah, Majruh, and Haram). The booty of war is divided into five parts for which the Khums should be paid. The five members of Al-e Aba (The Family of The Cloak) are the five members of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) who are the most prominent Shiite figures and also highly respected by Sunni people (Hosseini and Farashi Abarghuei, 2015). The Shiite Ikhwan al-Safa in the tenth century, openly announced that Islam is based on five, not only for the five principles and five members of the prophet's family but also because there are five *Arch-Prophets* (Ulul'azm) and no collection of the Quran's Muqatta'at (the mysterious words) exceeds five letters (Schimmel, 2016: 127-131).

Table 1 The motifs used in the marouflages of Sheikh Safi-ad-din Ardabili Tomb (Source: Author)

Name	Main motif	Khatai motif	Description
Flower			It includes pomegranate, butterfly, and multi-petal flowers, all taken from nature.
			Butterfly flower
			Six petal flower

			Five petal flower
			Combined four petal or square flower
Bud			Another element used in traditional design that causes the evolution and variety of designs is the bud, which consists of two parts, the bud and the petal.
Leaf			There are different types of leaves in small and large sizes, which are the same in traditional design and are used individually and in a multiplex.

11. Discussion

After the emergence of Islam, the buildings with religious usages, such as the mosque, monastery, and school, which had greater room than other buildings, were allocated for arabesque and Khatai motifs. Moreover, the lowest share belonged to residential usage (Namdar, 2012: 113). We can understand from this fact that two important categories exploit the ornamental motifs. First is the usage philosophy of the motifs. Today, most researchers believe that the use of arabesque and Khatai is closely related to the religious concepts and these decorations are first a symbol of the eternal paradise that depicts the eternity of the paradise. In the more supreme stages, they play a vital role in explaining the mystic concept of multiplicity in unity. The plant arabesque and Khatai, with their specific curves, leads all the directions and movements towards a single path of unity which is the supreme symbol of monotheism (Burckhart, 1997: 68). Drawing the arabesque motifs is more difficult and time-consuming than other motifs. Also, due to the numerous curves, these motifs have their execution with any kind of material is not easy and cheap. To decorate a building with arabesque motifs, more time and money should be spent. That is why in less important buildings, the ornamental motifs are less used than the geometric motifs, and it turns from a popular design into a luxurious and ceremonial design.

Relying on other people's opinions about this attitude, it can be said that Islamic art is complex, meaningful, symbolic, and mysterious at first sight. In this attitude, the Muslim's intention of creating an artistic work is not limited to merely exterior decoration and surface adornment. The artistic work is symbolically has been interpreted as a counterpart of the Quran's interpretation with the movement from the surface and appearance to the conscience. Edward Modan and AL-Faroighi have confirmed this belief in the symbolic being of Islamic art. Modan states that: "In the Islamic art, the limitless role of arabesque and inscriptions is symbolic everywhere it is found" (Bolkhari Ghahe, 2012: 449).

Oliver Leeman, in his inferences, does not agree with the Pythagorean ideas of Ikhwan al-Safa in the coordination of natural movements with artistic forms and the Platonic ideas of Nasr in the interpretation of Islamic art. He also rejects Sufi interpretation as well as extremism in symbolism. The book 'Aesthetics of the Islamic Art' states that those who believe that designs such as arabesque are going to instill other concepts in us are talking irrationally. Leeman believes that the fear of space for arabesque or Khatai or geometric motifs in Islamic art is due to the lack of the subject in the Islamic art, and in his view, all the spaces around the motifs are not full. He openly states that these motifs are not intrinsically eternal and holy motifs for the arabesque, but sometimes, they indicate a type of sensual passion, and sometimes, they are full of sorrow. In his view, aesthetic objectives can be defined, no specific interpretation be attributed to them based on movement from the surface to the depth. He believes that the line in "arabesque" designs seems continuous and uninterrupted; however, if the space in which the arabesque curves are used is limited, the arabesque also cannot be infinite and limitless.

In most of his arguments, he believes that what can be said about Islamic art, especially its arabesque and symbology, can be easily used about other motifs, too (Leeman, 2014: 109-111, 147).

As said by this group, in their point of view, and some other historians' opinion, the Muslim artists' intention of creating artistic works is to create beauty, ornament, and even exterior provisions. The religious teachings' view of the art has not been negative and inhibitory, and the Muslim artist has never intended to express doctrinal and mystical concepts or a latent and deep concept with the creation of artistic work. Rather, he has just turned to exterior decoration and adornment. According to these commentators, where the appearance of the artistic work is devoid of symbolic and cryptic expression, the movement to the meanings, depth, and conscience is meaningless, and the analysis of the artistic works does not need interpretation. The important components of this group's followers' thought are as follows:

- Islamic art is a decorative and formal art affected by the civilizations before Islam and is external and shallow in terms of content.
- There is no depth and interior in Islamic art and no mystery or symbols that are tools for expressing depth.
- The Islamic art has no mystic interpretation, and when it is discussed from the third attitude, it seems hollow (Musavi Gilani, 2011).

However, regarding Grabber's arguments in the book "A Review of the Iranian Illustration," this interpretation of externalism can be attributed to the effects of the historical conditions on the formal components of the Islamic artworks and motifs. Based on the title of Leeman's book "The Aesthetics of the Islamic Art" and his references to distance and aesthetic experience in defense of his justifications, a view close to Kant's division of free and continued beauty can be extracted from his opinions. Perhaps Kant is not directly mentioned in Leeman's book, but his collection of arguments in the description of free and non-symbolic beauty of the arabesque or the geometric

motif reveals his adherence to this. As a result, he talks about a pure initiative aesthetical experience when faced with the Islamic artworks or arabesque-Khatai motifs. In this regard, first, the consideration for the purposeful design and composition of the work is intended. However, it never stays at the same level since what is inferred from the external senses in the form of an internal imagination stimulates the internal sense, referred to as 'beauty.' A beauty that is created not from the sense of understanding but the harmony between the two forces of sensitivity and understanding, that is, two uncoordinated things, and it is the understanding of this beauty that will cause the pleasure of the work.

As an expression of the aesthetic idea whose force is innovation, this pure beauty in another stage becomes a rival of rational ideas. This beauty itself is so independent and free that under the dominance and consent of reason, it can be connected to other disciplines as the sub layer of a reflective and indirect relationship, no matter if it invokes the ethical concepts symbolically or creates other extensive meanings for the arabesque motif through resorting to the materials used or the inner content of the motif. In this case, the predicate of impure aesthetic judgment is replaced by moral concepts, which indirectly contain a degree of pure beauty. Also, there is no prohibition that after clarifying the examples of beauty, the effects of historical periods on whether they are enjoyable or not are evaluated (Grabber, 2011).

Wood states: "Even if it is said that when making an aesthetic judgment, any ability for provision of an aesthetic judgment, especially for the artistic works created by human, is a personal ability, and it cannot be considered to be separate from the previous experiences of the individual, cultural conditioning and the extent of his acquired ability to make such a judgment" (Wood, 2018: 265).

12. Conclusion

The marouflages are a category of murals that are executed on canvass. The similarity between the murals and the marouflages is naming a 'mural,' and their difference lies in their constituent layers. The oldest marouflages in Iran can be found in the Slotanieh Dome of Zanjan from the Il-Khanid era, from which only a part is available now. In the Safavid era, the diversity of these works underwent such drastic change due to relations with Europe that can be seen in the works available in Isfahan. These works have been decorative-visual. The works from the Safavid era indicate that canvas painting has been attached to the wall by glue or nail, or both, and then if a space remained empty, it was completed on the wall. This method has been seen only in Iran. The Sheikh Safi-ad-din Ardabili Tomb, due to its antiquity and containing the highest volume of such murals, has been selected for the current study. Since this space has been religious, the ornamental motifs have been used in it and a part of it (the dome's ceiling); in addition to these motives, the written inscriptions in Sols calligraphy have also been used. In addition to a brief introduction of the marouflages, it has been tried in the current study to evaluate the decorative paintings and written inscriptions inside the tomb and pay attention to the motifs on the wall and their symbolic concept. Then, the paintings were analyzed based on Panovsky's theory of iconology. In this regard, three factors can be identified to create the motifs in early Islamic art. The first factor is the thoughts and beliefs of the people as well as the literature and language, the second is the religious concepts, and the third is the ancient art heritage. The arabesque motifs rooted in the Parthian and Sassanid art and the Khatai motifs promoted by the Mongolians were a supplement for the Islamic art.

What can be inferred from the current study is that Islamic art is an art that, in addition to being influenced by the previous artistic styles, is alone rooted in the natural symbols and is naturalistic. The Islamic art reaches multiplicity from unity, i.e., a simple Khatai curve leads to the formation of a structure and elegant motifs in painting. Also, the finding indicates that these motifs first became

prevalent due to the prohibition of illustration of the human body in early Islam, which had roots in Sassanid art, and then, based on the teachings specific to that era, found an abstract form which is still effective to this day. Islamic art has survived to this day with all its properties due to its originality, and it has become even more bold and useful than in the past.

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