

CONSISTENCY THROUGH DIVERSITY IN TRADITIONAL ARCHITECTURE OF ORIENTAL COUNTRIES IN CASE OF IRAN, JAME MOSQUE OF QAZVIN

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1. Introduction

The most concise form of definition of the created world can be found in the sentence “once upon a time ...” [this expression in Persian is like once there was someone while there wasn't someone else], which indicates the promenade and journey from unity to multiplicity and the other journey from multiplicity to unity. In architecture as creating a manmade creature, as well, fashioning a multiplicity and uniting it in line and in interaction with the story character (man), or having an implicit hidden chant in the art-work, has always been a concern for the elegant and sophisticated Muslim architects of this land (Iran/Persia). The artistic works of this country are indications of this fact and evidence for its veracity. The mysteries derived from Islamic notions have led to the formation of worldview. The most fundamental of these concepts which is in a way the foundation of all past Islamic worldviews is the same notion of “Wahdat al-Wujud” –literally, unity of existence- or in other words the principle of “unity in multiplicity and multiplicity in unity”.

One of the fields in which Islamic worldview is well reflected in is the Islamic art and architecture where the guiding principles of the Islamic worldview are vividly revealed. Islamic worldview and therefore the Islamic architecture spread in the neighboring and non-neighboring countries in different ways including via one of the most vital communication-trade routes of east and west.

The Silk Road or the Silk Route which was an interrelated network of overland and sea routes for the purpose of business in Asia, and connected the east, west and south of Asia to each other and to the north of Africa and the east of Europe, was like a chain that each of its rings was the individual countries from which the road passed (Christian, 2000). Although, this protracted route has nowadays lost its flourish, a second overlook to that is in fact a review and a revitalization of the past culture and civilizations, since taking a more profound look to this route causes us to realize that this road was in effect the path for the transmission of cultures, dialects, and religions of different nationalities; the cultures which are ancient history of the Middle Earth and stretched their identity and worldview to the other civilizations and nationalities. The significance of scrutinizing this matter is for the following reasons:

1. Identification of Silk Road provides an opportunity to get to know the history and backgrounds of different countries.

2. It is one step forward to raise the people's awareness and acquaintance with each other and strengthening their ties with one another as well as dialogue among civilizations.
3. Creating new cultural and artistic prospects for the cultural progress of countries.



Fig. 1: The location of the cases studied along the Silk Route

2. Research Questions and Research Method

The aim of this article is to investigate the effect of the Silk Road course on the spread of the Islamic architecture and especially one of the most fundamental of its concepts i.e. the notion of unity and multiplicity in the neighboring countries which was made possible through the business relationships and the very significant and strategic communicating role of this road. For this purpose and in the studies carried out, the present article aims to answer the following questions:

- What is the main uniting component in the Islamic mosques architecture?
- How in the architecture of the Islamic mosques are unity and multiplicity put together and defining each other?
- Is the most fundamental concept of the Islamic architecture, i.e. the unity and multiplicity,
- reflected beyond its physical and temporal realm and flourished along the Silk Route?

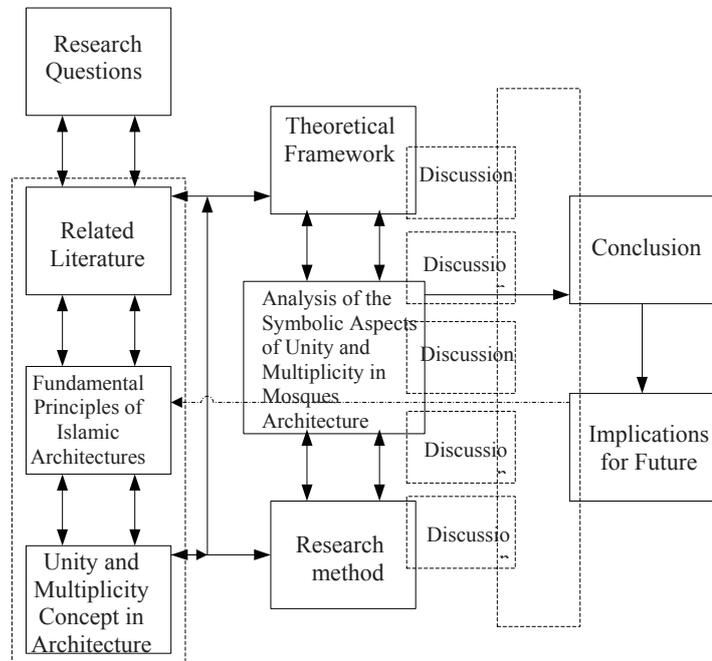
Hence, the research methodology of the present study is based on the recognition of the unity and multiplicity concept and the analysis of its physical realization in the architecture of the Islamic mosques through quantitative (descriptive-inferential) and qualitative (case study) methods. Beside the required data are the documents and library credentials as well as the structural/ground information which are gathered through field and library studies and interviewing the experts.

Also in the process of the present study first the literal definition of the unity and unity of existence are dealt with then the unity principle in the Islamic architecture doctrine and the way this worldview is represented and revealed in the physical space are emphasized. There are also a number of fundamental notions like divine monotheism, multiplicity, order, science and beauty that exist together and are always attended to in Islamic architecture. Afterwards, Isfahanism would be analyzed as the superior style of Islamic architecture and the heir of the Iranians ages of effort and hard-work in Khorasani, Razi, and Azari methods which bore fruit in Safavieh arena. Isfahanism is a practical instance of the interaction of the Iranian doctrine

and Islamic concepts and the most basic representation of the unity-oriented approaches and in particular unity of existence which is discussed in Islamic doctrine and theology. Then the physical-spatial realization of unity and multiplicity in this style would be thoroughly discussed and scrutinized in the Qazvin Jame mosque, as an Iranian model constructed in the Silk Road pathway, and Kalyan mosque in Uzbekistan, Xian Jame mosque in China, as well as the Jame mosque of India, as the non-Iranian counterparts. The non-Iranian models are chosen based on the congruence of the level and degree of function of the mosque in comparison to the domestic model and their location considering the location of the Silk Road, in the eastern Asia, (the Chinese Jame mosque, Xian), the middle east (the Uzbekistani Kaylan mosque), and the west Asia (the Jame mosque of Qazvin in Iran), as well as the south Asia (the Jame mosque of India).

Finally and considering the outcomes of the studies carried out, an analogical comparison between the discussed models is made and the answers are

provided for the research questions stated in the beginning of the present study. In the following diagram, various stages of the research are shown in a follow chart.



Flowchart 1. Different Stages of the Research
Source: the author

3. Case Study

As mentioned previously, the Iranian model which would be discussed and scrutinized is the Jame mosque of Qazvin, where the traces of the unity and multiplicity concept, as the topic of the present article, are followed. Qazvin Atigh Jame mosque is one of the largest mosques in Iran with the penthouse (Chahar-Eyvani) style in which the style of art and architecture of different eras can be pleasingly witnessed. Its oldest part belongs to the first centuries of Islam and during the later periods of time some changes appeared there gradually. The non-Iranian models also are chosen based on their function levels congruence with the Iranian model and on the basis of their location along the Silk Road.

3.1. Jame Mosque of Qazvin

The major Jame mosque is located in “Dabbaghan” neighborhood and in Sepah street, which is the oldest street of Qazvin, and with its magnificent minarets, its high porches, and exquisite tores, is one of the supreme art works of the Islamic era. The oldest part of the mosque, after the four-arched art works of Sassanid which are positioned under maghsooreh, is the Aaronic Arch which was built in “Aaron Al-Rashid” time in 192 A.H. The most important and the most stunning section of the mosque is the maghsooreh and the Seljuq dome in the

middle of the southern wall of it, an altar of smooth marble can be seen there with its both sides garnished with colorful tiles, and in its northeast there is a stony pulpit.

The other sections of mosque belong to the later eras by the end of the Qajar dynasty. The north porch and its two exquisite tiled minarets are built in time of Tahmasb Shah of Safavi dynasty and its west porch in the Soleiman Shah of Safavi. The south porch, the most beautiful porch of the mosque, was added at the time of the second Abbas Shah Safavi to the maghsooreh entrance. The exquisite arch, the luxurious minarets, the high porches, the elegant tower and its decorous building is the best case of the architecture style and the artistry of the Seljuq and Safavi eras.

3-2- Consistency and Diversity in the Mosque

The geometric graffiti and cornice are the manifest features of the Islamic architecture. The usage of the geometric graffiti in its symbolic and philosophical notion is for the purpose of the psychological effectiveness on the worshiper and strengthening the sense of monotheism in the mosque atmosphere. The tortuous geometric shapes repeating the proportions related to a single graffiti create a sense of discipline and coordination.

These two decorative components as the two basic features of Islamic architecture decoration in Qazvin Jame mosque are seen as intertwined and supplementary and through preserving their place have created novel and profound notions. As a matter of fact, the companionship of the virtual contents of the cornices with the sense of coordination and unity that the geometric graffiti create, has valuable and influential virtual and spiritual messages that penetrates into the soul and thought of the viewer.

The geometry of circle in the architecture of a dome house is also an indication of convergence and unity of the points. Even the curved lines dominating the majority of components and factors inspire a sense of compassion and magnetism and flexibility. A curved line means flexibility toward the surrounding environment and inviting others to oneself and opening the space for the others. The arch gives the mosque apron a special centrality. Beneath the arch that is the main representation of the rotation, conveyance, symmetry, and congruency can be clearly distinguished. In congruity we reach the center of unity; in other words, the brandenburg in the center is a field in which all graffiti are rooted, from which they get distant, and to which they return. This shape is made by circulating around a point and unity can be felt from the reverse manner in multiplicity of the graffiti (Guénon & Fohr, 2004).

4- Discussion

In the trend of the present studies, three approaches are identified when the subject is the unity of existence and are referred to in the following figure. (chart. 1)

In Islamic art there are some facts concentrated on that can be expressed through words like divine monotheism, unity, multiplicity, order and beauty all together. Unity has a particular place in this word collection in order to characterize the divine monotheism. From a historical perspective, architecture was the first art that could adopt itself with the Islamic concepts and be used by Muslims for recording and depicting their religious notions. This is because, the art of Islamic architecture is beyond the aesthetic experience and is in fact a symbolic representation of a premier fact that conveys the human from the multiplicity of the outside world to the divine unity and in fact this art places human in God's presence by creating a sacred atmosphere. Moreover, Isfahanism is the superior Islamic architecture style and the cause of pride in its different branches.

Put differently, Isfahanism is the era for the junction of Iranian doctrine, spirituality, and wisdom with the perpetual Islamic concepts and the most chief place of manifestation for the unity-oriented views and in particular the unity of existence, indicated in Islamic doctrine and theosophy in architecture.

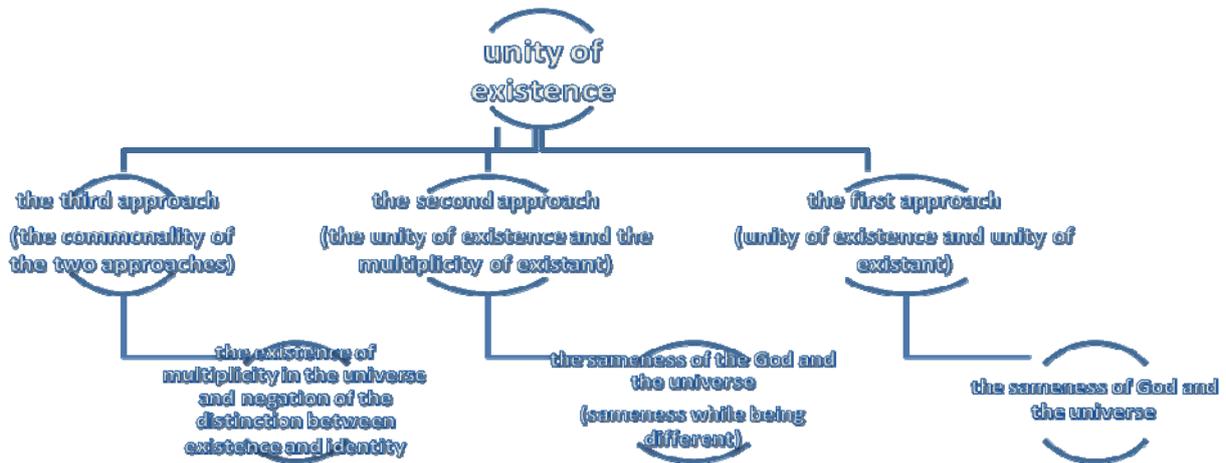


Chart 1. the approaches to unity of existence
Source: the author

5- Conclusion

The Iranian model, the Qazvin Jame mosque (Safavi era, 1736-1501 A.D.) is a mixture of Seljuq and Isfahanism architecture styles and the most significant outcome of Iranian architecture is exhibited vividly in its Isfahan style: that the architects and artists exerted the essence of the divine unity in the body of their works by worshiping God and abstaining from their very selves. The result of their deeds is incredibly dynamic, congruent, and adaptable so that it seems all of the components are part of a single body. This phenomenon is best seen in the dome house of Qazvin. Form the implementation of the circular form on the polygon plot in the dome house to the graffiti, colors, decoration, and tiles, each and every of the components are plural compartments that are united into a single whole. Investigation of the non-Iranian models of the Islamic mosques in the far east Asia and in middle Asia is also an indication of the veracity of the demonstration of unity while multiplicity principle in Islamic architecture and especially in mosques which are built in the Safavi governance era and the time of Isfahanism style in cities and stations along the Silk Road. Additionally, in the research trend the common concepts which are rooted in the same worldview are found in form, plans, graffiti, decoration,



Fig. 2: The graffiti on the Qazvin Jame mosque minarets and porches, unity in multiplicity and multiplicity in unity
source: <http://en.vionto.com>

... of the cases under study and this is regardless of all of the differences and impressionability that are due to the effects of the background culture and architecture.

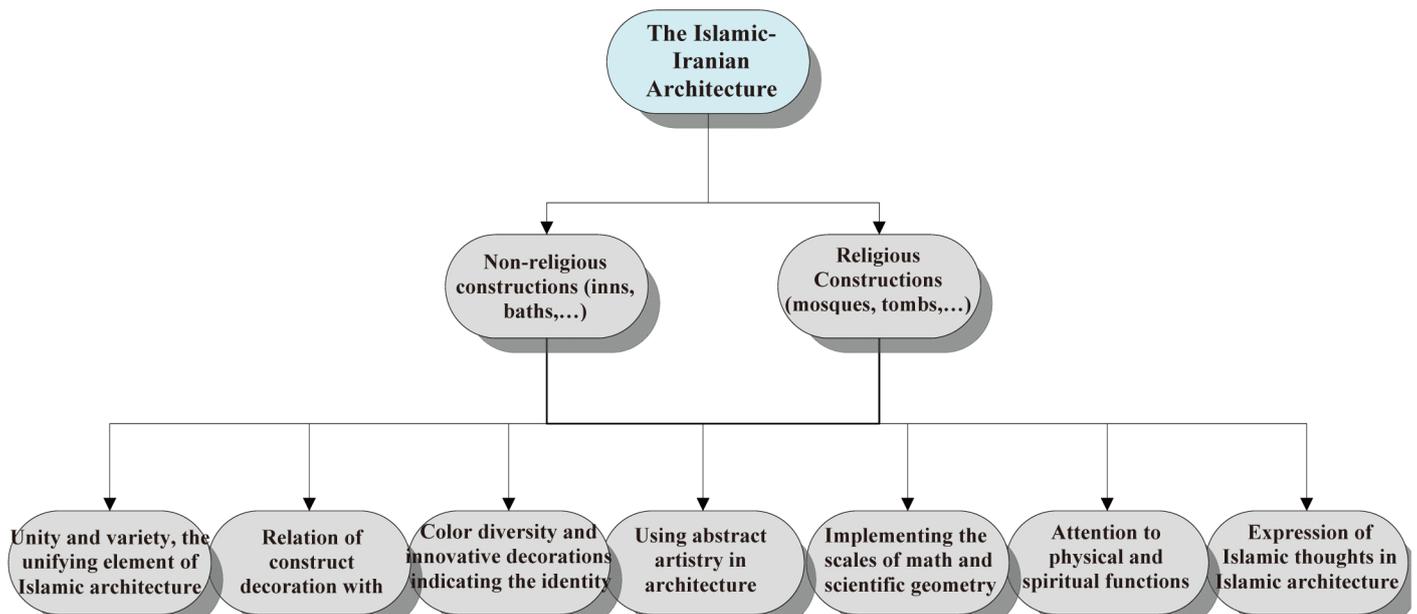


Chart 2. The main characteristics of Islamic-Iranian architecture
Source: the author

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