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**STUDY OF THE ROLE AND POSITION OF PRAYER IN FORMATION OF A
PERMANENT MONUMENT WITH THE ISLAMIC SPIRIT**

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ABSTRACT

Numerous spaces have been formed in the history of civilization of Islam for (prayer), that is, one of most delicate and most exquisite and most central beliefs of Muslim humans. Regarding such buildings many issues have been written yet the impact of belief, culture and prayer (language and expression of prayers) on the formation of the space has been less discussed and reflected. Prayer is humans' dialogue with God. Prayer in the Islamic culture is not merely demanding for need and request; rather, it is the school of recognition and teaching of epistemology. The concepts hidden in prayer cause for the human who prays to study himself and his position in the process of movement from the origin to the Ma'ad (resurrection) and reach towards perfection based on his capability and competence. Islamic architecture, whether physically or inherently, represents the uniqueness and reality of the world of creation. In the culture of Islamic architecture, in addition to the movement of form and content in the design of the building the principles of Islamic verdicts also exist and this kind of architecture always invites its residents towards monotheism, prayer, righteousness, purity, honesty and straightforwardness. Thus, Islamic architecture within the framework of an Islamic city not only represents the citizens and their belief principles but also brings about a pure and excellent feeling in the spectator. Therefore, Islamic architecture plays a highly significant and permanent role in the propagation and advertisement of Islamic values and inattention to it will bring about unpleasant and irreparable consequences. In the present study, besides investigating the role of

prayer in formation of the permanent buildings with the Islamic spirit which has been studied theoretically, it has also been practically examined in the sacred monument of Kaaba as this building is one of the most distinguished models of physical crystallization filled with love and religious beliefs by the Muslim architects, and the given results of analysis of this indicator have been presented.

Keyword: Prayer, Islamic culture, Islamic architecture

INTRODUCTION

The form and content of many prayers show the method, quality, intellectual utilization and nutrition of select humans regarding the divine words. In the Islamic culture, it has been stated that the prayer purifies the heart of all pollution and furthers it. This sincerity of the heart is the same sincerity that is obtained in the definition of Sheikh Ab al-Razaq Kashani¹ regarding honesty. Thus, we conclude that a person who communicates with God through prayer must in the first place have honesty and integrity so that he can engage in prayer which is the most delicate human act. This prayer leads to the sincerity of the heart.

In discussions which have been over long years discussed regarding the wisdom of Islamic art, the prerequisite for the creation of the artistic work has been expressed as the sincerity of the heart and insight. With a simple conclusion, it can be perceived that there is a direct and inseparable relationship

between prayer and creation of the work of art (immortal work).

The prayer that humans make and the words that they express result from their intellectual nutrition of concepts and contents based on divine revelation and word. Now if this person be favorably familiarized with the concepts of art (craft) and in modern expression, be an artist (architect), the work that he creates will be immortal since the since whatever the sincere mind and heart creates is sincere. So, a relationship can be established between prayer and creation and this relationship can be reflected.

In the present paper, in order to investigate the role and impact of prayer in the creation of the space as one of the distinguished indicators in the architectural works of Muslims, primarily the statement of problem and expression of necessity of the study have been explored and then the considered goals and the research method used has been expressed and then according to the theoretical issues considered the issue is

¹ Abd al-Razaq Kashani known as Kamal al-Din, (650-735), virtuous, mystic (theoretical-practical).

placed in one special structure and the end also the given results have been presented.

Statement of problem and necessity of research

After the advent of Islam, the architecture of Muslims was proposed as a large part of the cultural and artistic heritage of the world of Islam. This architecture used and drew on the architectural elements before Islam such as Iranian architecture and eventually the architectural foundations of Muslims were formed with a combination of the architecture of the past and of the Islamic culture. The God-centered role of Muslim architects in creating architectural works of Muslims can be considered as the features of this architecture (Bemanian, 2007, 2).

The present study intends to look into the secrets and mysteries of this architectural indicator of the Muslims and intends to address the following questions. What role has God-centeredness played in the architecture of Muslims? What role has the belief of the builder of building has in formation of the architectural space? What has been the role of prayer and position of prayer in formation of a building with an Islamic spirit? The topic of the present article has also been focused on the necessity of investigation of the above issues and intends to look into the role of prayer and

relationship with God (prayer) as one of the effective factors in forming the architectural works of Muslims, and consider this factors as one of the indicators of this architecture. In the field of the assumptions of the present study, based on the considered issues and the research topic, the assumptions have been developed thus.

1-The relationship between Muslim architects and their works is regulated based on God-centeredness.

2-The beliefs of the architect play a basic role in formation of a basis in accordance with the Islamic culture.

Research Goals

One of the goals of this paper is the study and exploration of the features of the God-centeredness role of Muslim architects and examination of the role of their relationship with God Almighty in forming an space with the Islamic spirit which Muslims have drawn on in their architecture, and this study has been considered in a building both theoretically and also practically. The main goals of the present study include:

A: Study of the role of the relationship of the Muslim architect with God Almighty in the formation of Islamic space according to Qur'an

B: Study of the feature of God-centeredness role of the Muslim architect in a special building

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In the present study, the analytical-deceptive method has been used. The method and tools used in this study are also in the library method and study of written documents, and in addition to referring to available and accessible resources and raising different views and analyzing them, it has been attempted to take into consideration all possible aspects of the issue. In the section on case studies also, based on the variables obtained in the theoretical studies that have been specified, these indicators have been investigated and evaluated. In fact, in the present study, based on a logical method of study and conducting description and analysis, it has been attempted to access the research goals.

Theoretical Foundation:

Prayer and its impact on the creation of work

The relationship between prayer and creation of space, in other words, is the relationship established between thinking and remembering. Remembering is the very act of expressing; whether in the issue of prayer where this remembrance is the expression of thought (in language) or in the issue on the

creation of the space where remembrance is the very expression of the artistic thought, of course objectively (the famous proverb: such as tree is, such is the fruit). To study the relationship between thinking and remembering (thinking and expressing) and formation of an immortal work of art which in a not very distant past happens through our traditional architects or, more precisely, artists (craftsmen), we have no other way than to be familiarized with the mentality and beliefs of the artists at that time. To enter the discussion on the study of thinking and reflecting, we should at first start with the appearance and reach the content; that is to say, we should be first acquainted with the language of traditional architects (the common terms and words among traditional architects). If we want to make use of the available books published in the areas mentioned to gain this recognition, we may not reach favorable and desirable results since most available books in the mentioned areas are directly and indirectly written by the strangers and in fact our architectural culture has been considered from outside. At the same time, it can be said that this kind of approach is not valuable since it may make us notice many values but is not enough. Thus, we should look for a perspective so that the category of Iranian architecture can

be observed from within the culture; an architecture that has been formed over fifteen centuries following the holy marriage between the Iranian civilization and the Islamic culture. Shortly, we can conclude that for the study of the thinking and thought of traditional architects it is better for us to have the Iranian identity and Islamic belief so that we can approximate a proper understanding of the thought and mentality of an artist who has supposedly created the Jameh Mosque of Isfahan.

Architecture and the pure Iranian Islamic wisdom

Islamic architecture is considered as one of the greatest manifestations of the emergence of an artistic reality in the material body. Islamic architecture, as one of the greatest branches of Islamic art, has managed to internalize a major part of the features of the Islamic art in the context of time and during various periods. From a historical perspective, architecture is considered as the first art which has managed to accommodate itself to artistic concepts and also be used by Muslims. Muslims' enthusiasm for this art caused this art to look into the religious and theological concepts for years as the only Islamic art. This continued to such an extent that the first thing that comes to most

people's mind, when hearing the word "Islamic art" is Islamic architecture.

Islamic architecture describes a broad range of Islamic works which have been formed in Islamic countries during the many boom years of Islam. Although there can be seen some differences between them in physical terms, in a general and comprehensive look a valuable and dynamic continuum can be recognized in them which has caused all of them to be juxtaposed in the same mold under the name of Islamic architecture. Islamic architecture is the outcome of the comprehensive attempts of Islamic architects and in terms of the location of these buildings, a broad range of Islamic art comes to view which, despite climactic and cultural distinctions, has great spiritual coordination. What defines the works of Islamic architecture with all the species in a collection in juxtaposition, is an idea which has crystallized the spiritual teachings of Islamic architecture in each of these works. In other words, a hidden principle has been bestowed on these buildings which helps use be able to recover them next to each other as the members of one family; a principle which Seyed Hossein Nasr recalls as "the principle of unity" (Nasr, 1996: 40).

The principle of unity is a useful essence in recognition of the works of Islamic

architecture since it on the one hand makes the comprehension of buildings possible and on the other hand makes it possible for all works of Islamic architecture in Iran and other Islamic countries to be studied as a single collection (Nasr, 1991: 14).

Although Islamic architecture of Iran has been greatly influenced by local and historical features like many other methods of Islamic architecture, it is considered as one of the most important and successful schools of Islamic architecture since over many years it has exposed a pleasant ascending trend and evolutionary process. The methods of Iranian architecture have each complemented the methods prior to themselves and they have engaged in the development of excellence without the slightest flaw. The geographical position of Iran has also been highly effective in this regard since Iranians were on the one hand among the first nations that converted to the clear religion of Islam and on the other hand, many other nations and countries have also achieved this success through Iran. Expansion of geography and cultural richness of Iranian people has also been highly effective in this respect. Thus, in the existing classifications, Islamic architecture of Iran has been accepted as one of the most important schools of architecture and also in

terms of content and form, unique features can be defined regarding them (Pirniya, 1990: 13).

Islamic architecture; the border of art and spirituality

There are very few people who set foot in an Islamic building and do not get drowned in the infinity of its space. The appeal of the azure color, the strong curve of the anticlines, regular mirror works which give no direction to the building and gilding of the walls with words that are other other-worldly and so on are all manifestations of the supernatural in nature. Islamic art is a combination of intuition and thought; quality manifests the existences in the appearance of the representations and briefly, it is love that creates art. Bukhart says in this regard:

“If someone has to answer the question of “what is Islam?” it would suffice for them to refer to one of the masterpieces of the Islamic art, such as the mosques of the world of Islam.”

Thus, according to him, the Islamic art is a completely thought-oriented issue. Through visualization and embodiment of a raw material, the artist in fact tries to create a work of art and in fact gives it a spirit. Thus, the artist is a creator. The creator must always be purified and thus art has always been highly esteemed by Muslims. In the

Islamic art, nothing should distance humans from the unseen presence of God. This is why the direction of the mosques in any part of the world is the Kaaba; that is, the direction is based on the direction beyond a place wherein it is built. Thus, the concept of time for such a building whose direction is outside place is different from the countable time. It is here that the Islamic art is tied with spirituality. (Avani, 1978: 42).

The Islamic culture in architecture

The Islamic culture both in terms of appearance and also in terms of the content is representative of uniqueness and reality of the world of creation. In the culture of Islamic architecture, the principles of Islamic law are used as well as form and content in designing buildings and this type of architecture always invites its residents to monotheism, prayer, righteousness, purity, honesty and righteousness. Thus, Islamic architecture in the form of designing an Islamic city is not only representative of the citizens and the principles of their beliefs; but it also brings about a pure and supreme feeling in the spectator. Thus, Islamic architecture has a highly important and memorable position in propagation of Islamic values and inattention to it will bring about adverse and irreparable consequences.

The role of self-improvement in space development

Since the time education replaced training in the architecture of this country, the identity crisis started in architecture as well. Prior to this period², the architect was trained in a cultural context with clear belief principles far from meeting and atheism besides learning relevant sciences and techniques.

A context which nourished not only architects but also other artists, poets, literary figures and professionals. The common points between the works that have remained indicates this claim. In evaluating the surviving architectural works of this country, the paramount attention has been given to the artifact and the creator of work of art has been less often heeded. In fact, study of the character of traditional architects has remained anonymous. In the process of academic architectural education which has been a translation of the common methods in the west, development of the personality of the architect and his nourishment has no place. Tens of different kinds of knowledge, technique and skills are taught, but there is no criterion for evaluation of the personality of the persons that want to build the society. It is highly unlikely for humans that haven't achieved self-improvement to be able to

² After the Safavid era

construct their surrounding environment as is deserved.

If the architecture of this country intends to recover its former strength and character, it has to recognize its former path and improve training in architectural education. The prerequisite for this issue is to return to the principles and foundations of formation of the architect's personality.

Affinity with prayer and attention to the latent contents in it is one of the means of self-improvement and a great gift for a person who wants to improve himself/herself prior to building the environment (Avlia, 2001: 5).

As stated by Jami³:

How can an essence that has no life of its own give essence to others

Intercultural and extra-cultural perspective

Primarily it seems that the issue can be considered from two perspectives:

Intercultural perspective

This type of approach can be defined by a person who has experienced the effect of prayer and prayer in different ways and is quite familiar with the quantity and quality of its principles, concepts and expression. At the same time, the person should have

³ Nour al-din abo al-barakat abd al-rahman ibn nizam al-din ahmad ibn shams al-din mohammad jami (817-898), poet, scientist, writer.

enough knowledge about the category of architecture as a method of artistic expression and should be able to establish a competent relationship between these two categories.

Extra-cultural perspective

In this type of approach, it is assumed that, in the method of approach to the issue, the watching person has an intellectual background at odds with the language of prayers. Although he has not experienced the impact of prayer and prayer, he thinks it highly likely for the act of prayer and prayer to be able to be reflected as one of the human activities and concepts that are expressed through language, while he accepts the effects of prayer on formation of the spiritual space (Avlia, 2001: 7).

In our existing educational system which is drawn from western methods and these methods have stemmed from western methods and these methods have arisen from an insight and worldview which doesn't speak of God and belief in Ma'ad or Resurrection, naturally the issue of prayer and prayer in books and lessons can't be of a great position. Thus, if such issues are not ridiculed, they will be at least considered as non-scientific.

Traditional architects, when starting work, start their work with the name and

remembrance of God and in critical cases such as implementation of the arch, when putting the last tile of each row in the sharp and ending that row, the architect and his/her assistants will utter “Salavat” and each row comes to an end with the name of God and the last messenger of God. In fact, this holy remembrance is the end of a paragraph that is repeated in accordance with the number of the rows of each arch and turns into part of the formation of the brick or tile structure of the building.⁴

I have many times wondered what its secret is. Can this remembrance be considered in the row of traditional expressions and terms of architecture or not? Is there a kind of relationship between the quality of space, strength and stability of the building with such remembrances or not? If there is, which one of the engineering formula does it correspond to? And if there is not, so why does the traditional architect put it into language? (We know that based on the text of Qur’an (Surat al-moemenun ayah 3) the Muslim believer is not allowed to do a fruitless act).

⁴This explanation is the result of my personal frequent observations when traveling through the historical structure of Yazd (Fahadan neighborhood, behind Yazd Jami Mosque).

According to the designer, constructor, user and (even the ordinary passer-by beside the workshop), it is God that gives material and spiritual strength and power. For this reason, in a short but wise common prayer, the constructor of the building invokes God to bestow power on him.⁵

Based on this approach, stability of the building is subject to the determination of the All-powerful God. One should show their gratitude to every achievement and Salavat is the gratitude for blessings.

One day, scientific and technical approaches may one day be able to discover their mystery in their evolutionary process and try to introduce them by a deserving expression.

It is assumed that in the same way that contents such as the remembrance mentioned above are directly and openly used in the task of construction, there are concepts that are indirectly and latently effective in the development of the space; concepts which most probably draw their strength from the Qur’an, Hadiths and prayer.

For architectural engineers like us that have been raised in the western and quasi-western educational system and the language for communication with traditional architects and traditional architecture has not been

⁵ “God give me power” is a short and common prayer in the workshop, (Allah Kuvvet Versin: May Allah give you power) in the Turkish language

taught us, if family educations do not come to our help, acceptance of such issues will be difficult for us since our mentality is the result of (western) education while their mentality is the outcome of (religious) training.

Our traditional artists (craftsmen) believed that in one work, reality, beauty and righteousness are not separate (unlike the modern belief) and the expectations that they had of a work of art was not merely aesthetic or merely moral or epistemological and rather all three issues had to exist in one work. Thus, in addition to technical education by the master of the job, they were at once subject to spiritual, epistemological and moral training by relevant professors; thus, they have also had a religious training. The thoughts that were formed in the mind of these artists was the result of the same training.

It is clear enough that there is a great difference between “education” and “training”. Nevertheless, we and the creators of traditional architecture live in two different worlds since the world in which we live and our perception and expectation of art is totally different from the perception and expectations they have had of the fine industry.

Practical Investigation:

Prayer and holy Kaaba

Following this issue, it will be attempted to investigate a building with the Islamic spirit as a case study. For this reason, the belief principles of the constructor of the building of Kaaba (Hazrat Ibrahim) and the impact of this belief on formation of its building will be considered.

“In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate”

One day, building of “kaaba” was accomplished by the hands of the architect of kaaba of faith, “Hazrat Ibrahim (A.S.)” and his sib Ishmael. They turned to the world above, saying: *“And [mention] when Abraham was raising the foundations of the House and [with him] Ishmael, [saying], “Our Lord, accept [this] from us. Indeed You are the Hearing, the Knowing.”*

“Our Lord, and make us Muslims [in submission] to You and from our descendants a Muslim nation [in submission] to You. And show us our rites and accept our repentance. Indeed, You are the Accepting of repentance, the Merciful.”

“Our Lord, and send among them a messenger from themselves who will recite to them Your verses⁶ and teach them the Book

⁶ It is the Arabic equivalent to “phenomen” in phenomenology.

and wisdom and purify them. Indeed, You are the Exalted in Might, the Wise.”

“And who would be averse to the religion of Abraham except one who makes a fool of himself. And We had chosen him in this world, and indeed he, in the Hereafter, will be among the righteous.”⁷

From the verses presented above, the following concepts which are related to the main discussion can be inferred:

1. Creation of an architectural work in nature and in this world is related to the supernatural (next world). In other words, formation of the work in the material world is related to the world of meaning.

In the explanation for this statement, it can be said that: Hazrat Ibrahim who represented an immortal and eternal work by the name of “Kaaba” was merely the constructor of the building and the maker of its appearance; a cube-shaped stone structure. It was his inherent belief and conviction that caused this building to become an immortal and eternal work; a building which is, in the best way, aligned with the main tenets of Islam (simplicity), otherwise splendid Bani Omayyad palaces could have also become

immortal and symbol of manifestation of God Almighty through history. At the beginning of the discussion, we noted that one of the main features of creation of spiritual and permanent spaces is having sincerity. We also said that a human who prays (to God) has a pure and sincere mind and heart. With little reflection on verses 127 to 130 of Surat Al-Baqarah (The Cow), we come to see that after completing the sacred building of Kaaba, Hazrat Ibrahim along with his son Ishmael started to pray. So we realize that the building which has been the single Qibla of the Muslims for years and every year millions of Muslims appeared in a world congress and did Tawaf around it, has been made by an architect who was very well familiar with the act of prayer and prayer and has had a sincere heart and this heart, like a pure mirror, has been able to reflect the image of sacred divine essence at the heart of this world. By drawing help from the discussion on the theory of manifestation this building can be easily considered as the symbol of manifestation of the beauty and grandeur of God. Manifestation of beauty can be defined as the thing in which God’s attributes can be observed (based on this definition: all the particles in the world are manifestation of the divine sacred essence);

⁷ Qur’an, Surat Al-Baqarah (The Cow), verses 127-130, taken from the article “prayer and the creation of space”, Dr. Oulia, Documentation Center of Yazd University

so the structure of kaaba can also be the symbol of divine sacred essence.

On the other hand, this sacred building can show the grandeur of God (based on definition: manifestation of grandeur refers to the thing which can show that God is pure: Subhan al-Allah (glory be to Allah). As this building on the earth is unique, it can somehow show the grandeur and glory of God.

1. Architecture is a form of expression.

In describing this issue we should conclude that the dominant spirit in this building is the result of the mental thought and belief of its constructor (Hazrat Ibrahim) and at the beginning of the issue this result has been obtained.

2. "There is an interaction" between prayer and creation of the architectural work.

3. Worldview and type of belief considerably affect the formation of the space and transmission of the spirit into its body (Nasr, 1991: 20).

CONCLUSION

By elaborating on the above issues regarding the relationship between thinking and remembering, thought and expression and also the relationship between prayer and creation of the work of art, it was intended to reach a general conclusion and find a clear

relationship between the artist's belief in the existence of the divine sacred essence and the act of prayer and creation of a spiritual space (alive and with a dominant spirit) by the artist. Eventually, the general conclusion that was obtained from the issues discussed, specifically from the method of construction of the building of Kaaaba and the belief principles of Hazrat Ibrahim and the relationship between prayer and the creation of this building, was that there is a direct and inseparable relationship between the thought and expression of the artist and that if this thought be pure and serene and advance in the path of recognition of truth of existence, the artistic expression of the artist (the craftsman) would be an immortal expression and the manifestation of the truth of existence, as almost all of us believe that all the particles and creatures in the world are somehow representations of God Almighty's manifestation.⁸

There, it can be briefly concluded that in immortal and religious buildings in which the Islamic spirit, meaning and truth is dominant and flowing (as if the building is alive and is speaking to us; as if it is in the world of imagination), the space has been created for prayer and the prerequisite for building such

⁸ Theory of manifestation in the philosophy of Islamic art; the manifestation of beauty of God

a space is to have sincerity and it is through relationship with God (prayer) that this sincerity can be achieved.

Space...for prayer

Prayer...for...creation of space

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