

A Comparative Study of Illuminationism in the Architecture of Safavid and Contemporary Mosques

Abstract

Islamic architecture, like other types of architecture, is related to epistemology and ontology in the culture of society. To apprehend traditional Islamic architecture, or any other form of traditional architecture, it is compulsory to be acquainted with the style of traditional attitudes towards architecture as a whole and its constituents. The most central of these components is space. Safavid period (1135-907 AH) is one of the brilliant periods of architecture in Iran. This historical period has been one of the most sensitive historical periods in terms of the prosperity of Islamic culture and thought. In the contemporary period, with the expansion of relations with the West, Islamic architecture was also influenced to some extent by new innovations. The issue that can be raised here is the degree of influence of Safavid and contemporary architecture in terms of the signs of Illuminationism within them. This research is based on descriptive and analytical methods and grounded on library studies and field observations. The architecture of Isfahan Grand Mosque and Al-Ghadir Mosque in Tehran have been studied as prominent examples of Safavid and contemporary architecture as two architectural works. The research findings indicate that the world in the mind of the Safavid architect is based on holy verses and religious narrations, consequently in the architecture of the Imam Mosque of Isfahan, the issue of Illuminationism is evidently reflected. In the Al-Ghadir Mosque, the purity of the volumes used, the application of materials and brick and tile decorations in the façade and the use of elements and concepts of past architecture presented in a new expression indicate the influence of postmodernist movements in contemporary architecture.

Research aims:

1. Recognition of the signs of the wisdom of enlightenment in Isfahan Grand Mosque and Al-Ghadir Mosque in Tehran
2. Comparative study of the architecture of Isfahan Grand Mosque and Al-Ghadir Mosque in Tehran

Research questions:

1. What effect does Illuminationism have on the architecture of Isfahan Grand Mosque and Al-Ghadir Mosque in Tehran?
2. What are the similarities and differences between the architecture of Isfahan Imam Mosque and Al-Ghadir Mosque in Tehran?

Keywords: Imam Mosque of Isfahan, Al-Ghadir Mosque of Tehran, Illuminationism, Safavid Architecture, Contemporary Architecture.

Introduction

Iran has constantly ensured unique works and styles in the field of architecture. Most of these works belong to the Islamic period. In the Safavid period, Islamic-Iranian art and along with it, architecture flourished. The study of Safavid architecture demonstrates the deep penetration of Islamic intellectual and philosophical foundations. One of the philosophical schools related to the Islamic period is the school of illumination. The close relationship between Safavid architecture and Islamic culture has triggered researchers to emphasize this issue. With the expansion of foreign relations and the increase of cultural exchanges between diverse societies, Iran was affected by this cultural connection. This consequence can be seen in various dimensions of society. Architecture is one of these areas that has undoubtedly been affected by this concern. A comparative study of the surviving works of the Safavid period as the heritage of Islamic culture with the architecture of the contemporary period can be used to apply the concepts and symbols of the wisdom of enlightenment in the architecture of this historical period. Isfahan's Imam Mosque has been selected as a representative of Safavid architecture and Al-Ghadir Mosque in Tehran has been designated as a contemporary architectural work. The necessity of conducting research in this field is determined by the fact that culture and its requirements have a great impact on architecture. Recognition of this development can pave the way for the management of architectural designs.

Regarding this issue, that is, a comparative study of the wisdom of illumination in the architecture of the Imam Mosque of Isfahan and Al-Ghadir in Tehran, no independent work has been written so far. Concerning the reflection of wisdom in Islamic architecture, an article entitled "Study of the relationship between spatial configuration and wisdom in the Islamic architecture of Isfahan schools and Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque" has been written by Mohammad Reza Bemanian et al; in this study, the authors believe that in moving from abstract ideas, including worldviews of mystical journey and behavior in the wisdom of Iranian Islamic architecture, to space design, the method of arranging space provided space tools for researchers and has tuned through discourse through the media. If he considers the mosque as a ground for Islamic social maturity, in moving from abstract ideas, including worldview of mystical behavior in the wisdom of Iranian Islamic architecture to space design, the method of arranging space is a tool for visual information and this is critical in the field of education and design (Bemanian et al., 2016: 155). The present study seeks to analyze the wisdom of illumination and its effects on Safavid and contemporary architecture by descriptive and analytical methods and relying on library studies and field observations. A comparative study of two works from two different periods can determine the extent to which they are influenced by common intellectual and cultural ideas in each historical period (Dibaji, 1390: 4-5).

The issue of light is one of the most imperative issues in the philosophy of Sheikh Ishraq. Suhrawardi has never dealt with the originality of existence or the originality of nature in his works, and if we want to give a name to his philosophy, conceivably the finest title is the originality of light. Suhrawardi considers existence as purely rational credentials; he does not use light and existence in the same sense, but considers light as a synonym for appearance and life, and deliberates it as "the appearance of intrinsic features", "manifestation of otherness", and "active perceived life", and existence as containing light and darkness (Hekmat, Hajizadeh, 1391: 17). Light is a philosophical metaphor that has been used in the wisdom of enlightenment, with two ontological and epistemological aspects, in order to show Suhrawardi's definition of perception based on his definition of wisdom. In the wisdom of enlightenment, light is truth and objectivity itself. This truth and objectivity, at the same time, appear twice in the nobility and in the world of human example. Light can also evoke the unity of reality in the mind, and even eliminate the material and abstract boundaries, set aside what is material but not rational or enlightened, and introduce the whole universe as a truth with its dissimilar degrees (Dibaji, 1390: 19). Therefore, in the wisdom of enlightenment, everything has a goal, and that is the unity among all beings and objects in the universe. The reflection of

the wisdom of enlightenment and the emphasis on the position of light in Islamic culture and in parallel in Islamic architecture is also evident. Light, the most immaterial tangible element of nature, is always present in Iranian architecture and is in fact a sign of the sublime world and spiritual space. In the era of traditional architecture, the way of observing the light under the influence of Islamic thought reached its highest level and is known as the manifestation of sanctity and the spiritual world. Iranian architecture is the architecture of truth, truth is in the architecture of perfection, and perfection is the burden of transcendence, and everything in this architecture is facing the truth. Light is a sign of moving towards the truth (Mahdi Zadeh and Ghani Zare, 2016: 10). With these interpretations, the study of light and the manifestations of the wisdom of enlightenment in Islamic architecture can be considered.

Conclusion

Islamic architecture is manifested more than anything in the existence of the mosque, which is the embodiment of harmony, order and tranquility in nature. The mosque is a place of worship for Muslims and means a place of prostration. The space that God has designated as the eternal home of Muslims for worship. The architecture of mosques has undergone various changes in different eras and each historical period has shown its own characteristics. Comparative comparison between Isfahan Imam Mosque and Al-Ghadir Mosque in Tehran as two examples of two different Safavid and contemporary periods, show the architectural features of their time. Imam Mosque is dissimilar from Isfahan Grand Mosque. Imam Mosque has been called by diverse names throughout history: The Shah Mosque, the New Soltani Mosque and the Abbasi Grand Mosque are its most famous names; at times, it was also known as Mahdiah or Al-Mahdi Mosque. After the revolution, like many other buildings in Iran, it was renamed the Imam Mosque and is now known by this name. Al-Ghadir Mosque was built between 1976 and 1977 according to the styles of Islamic architecture and modern technology in the northern areas of Tehran with the design of Jahangir Mazlum Yazdi. The Imam Mosque of Isfahan is a reflection of the Islamic culture and philosophical thought of the school of illumination in the architecture of the space and the decorations, and unity is evident in it in addition to its multiplicity. Al-Ghadir Mosque in Tehran, with its traces of traditional architecture, shows the new traditions of modern architecture in terms of external and internal form of the building. While the use of decorations in the architecture of Isfahan Imam Mosque is seen in the form of lines and colors, in Al-Ghadir Mosque in Tehran, a combination of geometric shapes is perceived.

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