

# **An Analysis of Contemporary Iranian-Islamic Architecture based on the Perspective of Traditional Architecture Masters, in Order to Provide a Qualitative Model (Case Example: Shrine of Hazrat-e Masoumeh (PBUH))**

## **Abstract**

Iranian-Islamic architecture has undergone a diverse development process from the beginning of its emergence until now; moreover, during the contemporary period, new coordinates have been introduced; therefore, the examination of these indicators play an imperative role in recognizing the Iranian-Islamic model of architecture. The present research method is a qualitative-phenomenological study. The research environment includes all the masters of traditional architecture as well as all scientific articles and documents published in prestigious scientific journals related to Islamic architecture. The purposeful sampling method is to the point of saturation and thus 14 candidates of masters in traditional architecture were selected for the research. To complete the necessary codes, 41 articles related to Islamic architecture from domestic and foreign reliable databases were also used. The data collection tool for the qualitative method was an in-depth interview. The seven-step method of Clayseay was used to analyze the data. In general, the results of the research showed that the opinions of the masters of traditional architecture in relation to the quality of Islamic architecture based on the shrine of Hazrat-e Masoumeh (PBUH) include nine general themes (perception of unity, perception of value, perception of becoming royal, perception of sense of belonging to a place, perception of immortality, perception of meaning, perception of the world of existence, perception of purposefulness of the universe and perception of reasonable life), 9 organizing themes and 202 basic themes.

## **Research aims:**

١. Analysis of contemporary Iranian-Islamic architecture from the perspective of traditional architecture masters based on the shrine of Hazrat-e Masoumeh.
٢. Exploration of Iranian-Islamic architecture in order to provide a qualitative model.

**Research questions:**

١. What are the dimensions and components of the enrichment model of Iranian-Islamic architecture in the shrine of Hazrat-e Masoumeh (PBUH)?
٢. What is the interpretative-symbolic model extracted from the perspective of traditional architecture masters and scientific articles and documents to improve the quality of Islamic architecture based on the shrine of Hazrat-e Masoumeh (PBUH)?

**Keywords:** Iranian-Islamic architecture, Hazrat-e Masoumeh's shrine, traditional architecture masters, architectural thinkers.

## **Introduction**

The requirement of the architectural design of the space is to pay attention to the purpose and concepts for which the architecture is made and humans are not able to communicate with architecture without a purpose. The basis of architecture is to pay attention to the intention it implies. The architectural design of holy places is of particular importance, since long ago places of worship have been the ultimate platform for the spiritual evolution and excellence of people, and spiritual and sacred architecture have created an environment for the collective worship of believers. Iranian-Islamic architecture, with the aim of manifesting spiritual values and promoting human spirit to get closer to the creator of the universe, has constantly strived to use artistic subtleties and aesthetic sense in designing sacred and religious space; also, the use of design techniques make it possible to bring the spirit of visitors closer to the Creator. Therefore, while paying attention to the subtleties of Islamic architectural art in the form of decorations such as mirrorwork, brickwork, plastering, tilework, sculpture, woodcarving and painting throughout the Islamic era, it has been attempted to incorporate it into the design of the architectural space of religious holy places. It should be provided that the souls of the pilgrims will be transformed by being in the space in such a way that they will walk in high spiritual ranks. In such a situation, the

pilgrims are affected by the pilgrimage atmosphere and the spiritual changes reach the point of internalization. Although there have been some studies related to the shrine of Hazrat-e Masoumeh (PBUH), among them Jafari (۲۰۱۵) has conducted a research regarding the architecture and decorations of this holy shrine and has accomplished a detailed study of its decorations. Motahen and Nari Qomi (۲۰۱۶) have discussed the relationship with a reflection on the concept and value of creativity and presented the creative value of model-based architecture. Rezaei Nadushan and his colleagues (۲۰۱۸) have studied the evolution of the Shrine of Hazrat-e Masoumeh, emphasizing the hierarchy of entry of "Tasharof". Kamili (۲۰۱۸) analyzed the evaluation indicators of the religious sidewalks of Hazrat-e Masoumeh's shrine. However, in the conducted studies, the dimensions and components of the enrichment of the shrine architecture were not based on the analytical view of traditional architecture masters, and this is while the architecture of the shrine ought to have characteristics that pilgrims can connect to its spiritual atmosphere and establish a relationship and achieve spiritual excellence, and this is an issue that should be given more serious attention by architects in Islamic architecture in general. Therefore, the problem that has been specifically followed in this research is determining the dimensions of the architectural enrichment of the Holy Shrine of Hazrat-e Masoumeh (PBUH). Places that are designed with the coordinates and characteristics of Islamic architecture can help people in the direction of spiritual purification and cultivation; thus, such an atmosphere is more effective in strengthening the spiritual attitude and intellectual transformation of pilgrims.

The studies of Pakzad (۲۰۱۲), Veisi (۲۰۱۵), Mebeli et al. (۲۰۱۵), Zirdestan, Mohed, Vakhmiri (۲۰۱۶), Nimirzi and Thani (۲۰۱۷) indicated that the recognition of the system of environmental meanings in the architectural space, in the sense of the development of people's identity is effective and related to the fluid understanding of the space in which people are present. Therefore, it seems that one of the factors of enriching the architecture of the holy court of Hazrat-e Masoumeh (PBUH) is improving the perception of meaning in space. The real perception of an architectural work occurs with movement in the created space and this movement is not only limited to the external senses, nonetheless in its higher levels, it brings the inner senses of the observer under the radius. Perception of space as the essence of architecture is possible through movement; Therefore, it is important to deal with the relationship between movement and perception. Iran's Islamic architecture has registered countless works in its history, in all of which it has made its main task to connect the world of matter to the world of meaning (Shajari and others: ۲۰۱۷).

Studies of Noghrekar and Raisi (۲۰۱۲), Damyar (۲۰۱۳), Quds Vali (۲۰۱۴), Qaraati (۲۰۱۵), Dabaghi and Forozanfar (۲۰۱۵), Azhdari (۲۰۱۹); Omar (۲۰۰۸), Khaki and Abd (۲۰۱۵) showed that human perception is related to identity factors in architecture. Therefore, it seems that one of the dimensions that should be paid attention to by the architects in Islamic architecture is the perception of value that people gain when they are placed in a specific architectural space. The designed space can communicate with humans, the end of this communication is not of a mechanical type that is apparent, but of a metaphysical type in such a way that humans can understand it at a level of intuition. Therefore, the spaces that belong to the Infallible Imams and have high respects are such that a person feels valuable by being in them (Zirdostan et al., ۲۰۱۶). In any case, since the development of holy places due to the increase of pilgrims, including the holy threshold of Hazrat-e Masoumeh (PBUH) seems to be necessary and compulsory, therefore, thoughtful attention should be paid to the enrichment of its architecture. As a result, the main problem of the current research is studying the dimensions and components of the enrichment of Iranian-Islamic architecture of the contemporary period from the perspective of traditional architecture masters and scientific articles and documents based on the holy threshold of Hazrat-e Masoumeh (PBUH) in a qualitative model.

The current research has a developmental-applied objective. In terms of research method, it is varied that is both qualitative and quantitative; and more specifically a qualitative method-thematic analysis has been applied. Based on this, the themes obtained from the interviews and also the articles and scientific documents were studied, categorized and arranged by the coding method, namely open coding, central coding and selective coding. The research environment in the qualitative part included all traditional architecture masters as well as all scientific articles and documents published in reliable scientific journals related to Islamic architecture. Eighteen people of traditional architecture masters were interviewed in relation to the enrichment of the holy shrine of Hazrat-e Masoumeh (PBUH) by purposeful sampling until data saturation. Also, ۴۱ valid scientific-research articles related to the research title were selected for data extraction. The data collection tool for the qualitative method was an in-depth interview. In relation to the validity and reliability of the interviews conducted in the qualitative section, their reliability was examined. Goba and Lincoln (۱۹۹۴) proposed reliability as a standard to replace validity and reliability in quantitative studies to evaluate scientific accuracy in qualitative research using two methods. In this research, regarding the first criterion of Goba and Lincoln, entitled believability, was used

after each interview and text typing. In the first method; That is, the review by its participants, with the interviewee through a back-and-forth communication process, the opinions of traditional architecture masters were reviewed in relation to the themes and perceptions of the researcher and in addition to the interview text, the researcher's preliminary analyzes were at his disposal. It was decided in this way to ensure the correctness of the interviewer's perceptions with the interviewee's feedback. Also, in the second accreditation method; That is, peer description, an experienced researcher who had previously conducted a qualitative study and used this method was asked to write one of the written texts of the conducted interviews after reading the entire text and taking notes into account. Before and during the interview, the researchers should briefly interpret and write notes. Alignment between perceptions has been a proof of validity. The method of data analysis is based on the seven stages of Claesi and was carried out as follows: In the first stage, at the end of each interview and field notes, the opinions of the masters of traditional architecture are repeatedly listened to and their statements are written down word by word; thus, their experiences are studied several times. In the second stage, after studying all the opinions of the traditional masters of architecture, below the information with the meaning and statements related to the discussed phenomena are underlined and in this way the important contents are identified. In the third stage, which is the extraction of formulated concepts, after specifying the important phrases of each interview, an attempt is made to extract a concept from each phrase that expresses the meaning and the basic part of the person's thinking. Of course, after acquiring these compiled concepts, it is attempted to check the relevance of the compiled meaning with the main and primary sentences and ensure the correctness of the connection between them. After extracting the codes, according to the fourth step, the researcher carefully studies the compiled concepts and categorizes them based on the similarity of the concepts. In this way, a subject category is formed from the developed concepts. At this stage, the results are combined for a comprehensive description of the phenomenon under study and create more general categories. In the sixth step, a comprehensive description of the phenomena under study are presented (as clearly and unambiguously as possible). In the final step, validation is done by referring to each sample and questioning the findings.

## Conclusion

The findings of the research presented that one of the dimensions and components of the Iranian-Islamic architectural enrichment model of the shrine of Hazrat-e Masoumeh (PBUH) is the matter of perception in reasonable life. The results of the research were consistent with the studies (Zare and Shanzari, ۲۰۱۶; Vesco, ۱۹۹۱; Krimes, ۲۰۰۲; Akach, ۲۰۱۲; Salimi et al., ۲۰۱۶; Bianco, ۲۰۱۸). The results of their research also revealed that the improvement of Iranian-Islamic architecture is dependent on the development of a reasonable perception of life for pilgrims who visit holy places. The perception of reasonable life is dependent on the space of solitude and spiritual connection with God, which liberates a person from the bondage of the mortal world and existential egos and brings him into a spiritual realm that is free from any materiality and abundant with peace; moreover, it is an insight, a refuge in which there is no trace of egoism and everything that exists is related to one and only God (Sirfian and Lavafi, ۲۰۱۶). The main purpose of creation is the existence of mankind; thus, in the Holy Qur'an and the sayings of the Infallibles, especially the Nahj al-Balagheh, the interpretation and justification of human life and the presentation of logical solutions in the direction of the transformation and evolutionary movement of man and his entry into the good life are explained in a completely fundamental and original way and ample attention is considered in this field. The perception of reasonable life is the same as the understanding of the world of power, which is dependent on the understanding of meaning that is above the realm of the kingdom. Perception of such a life, as philosophers believe, means that since the world of theology and God's essence is vast and unique and is all pure simplicity, Allah is free from everything imaginable, that is to say, something that has no components at all, neither an external component (matter and form), nor an intellectual component (gender and season) nor a quantitative component (that is, it cannot be divided quantitatively) cannot directly and indirectly be the originator and creator and the environment of the world of nature and the world of the Kingdom, therefore, they are considered to be the "first originator" (that is, the first creation or the first thing that was issued from the essence of truth) which is without intermediaries and directly God's Holy Essence has paid attention to him and they have claimed that the first emissary must be the most perfect and simplest possible (that is, he must be the highest of creations) to bring grace to other beings lower than himself, such as being must be apart from matter, time and space. Therefore, the world of power means that God created the universe through an intermediary called the single intellect or the supreme intellect of creation, or the perfect intellect which is the mirror of the full

view of God's knowledge and the origin of all beings in the world goes back to this intellect. So this intelligence is the source of God's knowledge or the perfect intellect according to the narrations of the Holy Prophet, may God bless him and grant him peace. The findings of the research showed that one of the dimensions and components of the Iranian-Islamic architecture enrichment model of Hazrat-e Masoumeh's shrine is the perception of the universe. The results of the research were in line with the studies (Nasr, ۲۰۱۴; Sirfianpour and Loafi, ۲۰۱۶; O'Brien et al., ۲۰۱۰; Petrocioli, ۲۰۱۳). The outcomes of their research also showed that the understanding of the world of existence is dependent on the enrichment of the architecture of the center space, which is sacred to pilgrims. According to MolaSadra, there are three general realms of existence: ۱) The world of sensations, which is the world of the world. ۲) The world of examples, i.e. the world of the form of a quantity which is the same as the world of sensations, with the difference that it is devoid of matter. ۳) The realm of reason, which is devoid of matter and material properties. On the other hand, humans have three types of perception: ۱) sensory perception, ۲) imaginary perception, ۳) intellectual perception. Human being is a fact that exists in one of the worlds of existence based on the validity of each of his perceptive powers, in such a way that by understanding sensations, in the world of sense, in the world of imaginary perception, in the world of examples and in the world of universal perception. In addition, reasonable things are placed in the realm of reason. MolaSadra considers the origin of all perceptions to be external objectivity, which reach a degree of abstraction as soon as they enter the human mind. According to some philosophers, the mind is assumed to be a container for information. According to MolaSadra, there is nothing but the perceptions and information that the human soul creates with its own creativity. Therefore, if the architectural design of the space of holy places contains codes and symbols that by observing them, the pilgrims can reach the highest and uppermost level of perception of the world of existence, which is the understanding of the one truth, an enormous revolution will be created within them. Such a perceptual transformation can cause the pilgrims to go beyond the sensory and imaginary awareness and reach the intellectual perception which is the world of intellects and abstractions. MolaSadra believes that when the human soul reaches one of the external beings, due to the transparency and isolation of the soul, intellectual, imaginary and sensual forms are obtained; as the role of these objects is reflected in the mirror, with the difference that the role found in the mirror is a kind of acceptance, while what is achieved for the soul is a kind of action and creation, that is, the soul. It is not a receptive relationship, but it is also constructive and creative. Therefore,

the development of Islamic architecture based on religious, spiritual and aesthetic codes, as it is receptive to the clear soul of man, can be developed and promoted to the highest level of spiritual crystallization of pilgrims and people who are present in holy places.

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