

مجلة كلية الطف للعلوم الانسانية والاجتماعية



The Discourse of Islamic Architecture

Asst-lecturer: Hawraa' Farhan
 Mohammad Jawad
 University of Kerbala
 College of Computer Science and
 Information Technology
 hawraa.f@uokerbala.edu.iq

referring to the political and religious legitimacy developed by Timurid, Safavid, and Qajar elites.

Key Words: Discourse, Legitimacy, Sacred, Royal, Architecture

Introductory Note

The article entitled "The Appearance of the Legitimacy Discourses of Iran's Islamic Governments in the Architecture and Ornaments of Astan-e-Quds-e-Razavi" by Saeed Amirhajloo (2023) addresses the manifestation of political and religious legitimacy of Shiite and Sunni kings of Iran in the architecture and ornaments of Astan-e-Quds-e-Razavi. Amirhajloo (ibid) presents the development of architecture in Imam Reza's shrine during Timurid, Safavid, and Qajar periods and concludes that the ornament and building style of Imam Reza's shrine is a means for achieving political and religious legitimacy developed by Shiite and Sunni governments during that time. Amirhajloo (2023) closes his article with the idea that Shiite and Sunni kings were aware of Imam Reza's popularity, therefore they attempted to do their best in the construction and

المخلص

يتناول الكاتب سعيد أميرحاجلو (2023) في مقاله المعنون "ظهور خطابات المشروعية للحكومات الاسلامية الايرانية في عمارة و زخارف العتبة الرضوية المقدسة"، تجليات المشروعية السياسية والدينية للملوك الشيعة والسنة في إيران من خلال عمارة وزخارف العتبة الرضوية. يراجع المقال لتبيين الجانب الآخر للتحليل الذي لم يذكره سعيد أميرحاجلو (2023) و هو يبين أن العمارة في العصور التيمورية، والصفوية، والقاجارية هي وسيلة لتحقيق المشروعية السياسية والدينية من قبل السلطات.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الخطاب, المشروعية, مقدس, ملكي, معمار

Abstract

The article entitled "The Appearance of the Legitimacy Discourses of Iran's Islamic Governments in the Architecture and Ornaments of Astan-e-Quds-e-Razavi" by Saeed Amirhajloo (2023) is reviewed to identify the other side of analysis not mentioned by Amirhajloo (2023)



مجلة كلية الطف للعلوم الانسانية والاجتماعية

reconstruction of the shrine so that they could consolidate their legitimacy among people.

Safavid kings, not only in Iran but also in approximately most shiite's shrines had artistic works and attempted to incorporate well-known architects for building those masterpieces. One of those celebrated architects was the Shiite engineer, poet and sage Sheikh-e- Bahaii.

The Statement of the Problem

While macro-analysis in the present academic research paper is notably represented by Amirhajloo (2023) and the architecture signs of Astan-e-Quds-e-Razavi indicate political legitimacy for the rulers, a major analytical gap remains. Amirhajloo's (2023) study downgrades the micro-analysis and the devotional aspect of the ornaments. By introducing all domes, courtyards and tiles as a power discourse, the work of sages like Sheikh-e- Bahaii with a primary motivation rooted in Ahlulbait devotion is downsized.

The Aim

The current subject review intends to devote its analysis to the devotional aspect or the micro-analysis (the pearl) not the political feature (the shell) or the macro-analysis.

The Process

A brief overview of Amirhajloo's article (2023) and the essence of its analysis is presented. Author's view is introduced. Then a comparison of royal and devotional engineering is discussed. Finally, the conclusion is added to round up.

About Amirhajloo's (2023) Case Study (Macro-analysis)

- The Timurid Era

Amirhajloo (2023) focuses on Goharshad mosque in Imam Reza's shrine. He discusses it was the manifestation of "aesthetic soft power" by Sunni elite to manipulate Shiites.

- The Safavid Age

Amirhajloo (2023) argues how the shrine became the accurate center of the government. The "Discourse of Power" becomes more attractive accompanied with the Shah's name in well-known and brilliant locations.



مجلة كلية الطف للعلوم الانسانية والاجتماعية

- The Qajar Period

Amirhajloo (2023) analyzes the reflection of magnificence and majesty of the elite through “brilliance and light” of mirror work (Aineh kari).

The Architecture of Devotion (Micro-analysis): Author’s View

- Sacred Geometry and Abjad

While Amirhajloo (2023) argues, the decorations and ornaments are “texts” for the community to recite; I argue that the most significant texts were hidden in the architecture for devotional purposes; for instance the 110 symbolism (the statistical value for Ali’s name) is intertwined into the ornaments by Sheikh-e- Bahaii. If the intention was the legitimacy for the power, they would be apparent for the public, while we notice that they are private between the architect and Imam. [2]

- Auditory Architecture

The Courtyards (Sahns) and the Entries (Iwans) were built with unique mathematical relations to intensify sound of Adhan (call for the prayer) and Ziyarat (recitation) so that the elite

and the public could hear the same sound with the same volume.

- The Mirror Work

Amirhajloo (2023) discusses that the mirror work of the shrine is the realization of Qajar king’s majesty. This is when the devotional view realizes it as the “self-effacement”; when the visitor looks into the mirrors, his own image is broken into thousands of small parts. Consequently, this architecture makes the pilgrim cease to be an individual and all is seen there is the magnificence of Imam.

Royal vs Sacred Engineering

In royal style of engineering, we notice the palace is horizontally designed so that the eyes are drawn upward to the king; for instance in Ali Qapu Palace in Isfahan, the balcony is built in order to make both people and the square easily accessible to the king (Shah). This way, the visitor feels himself small and under the domination of the state. This design is by Sheikh-e-Bahaii the Shiite architect and scholar.

On the contrary, in sacred architecture, we observe that the shrine is vertically



مجلة كلية الطف للعلوم الانسانية والاجتماعية

engineered to connect the soul to divine/ Imam; for example in Sahn-e-Atiq in Mashhad the pilgrim feels to be at home. As soon as entering Bast, the visitor notices the protection and safety there. One of the visitors might be the king that was as a servant when entering the shrine; for instance Sheikh-e- Bahaii incorporated mathematical acoustics in a way that the Adhan (call for the prayer) was equally heard by the servants and the king since all eyes were up to the golden dome. [3]

Conclusion

Studying the Islamic architecture has a dual viewpoint; on the one hand, it is viewed as a masterpiece of Islamic engineering and on the other hand, it is analyzed as a means for political domination. While Amirhajloo (2023) provides the analysis for the outer discourse displaying the political intentions, I focused on the inner discourse of the Islamic architecture of Astan-e-Quds-e-Razavi presenting a lens to view the spirituality of the space for the visitors.

References

[1] Amirhajloo, S. (2023). Zohour-e gofteman-haye mashrouiyat-e hokumat-haye Eslami-ye Iran dar memari va tazyinat-e Astan-e Quds-e Razavi [The appearance of the legitimacy discourses of Iran's Islamic governments in the architecture and ornaments of Astane Qudse Razavi]. *Journal of Applied Arts*, 3(1), 27–42.

[2] Ardalan, N., & Bakhtiar, L. (1973). *The sense of unity: The Sufi tradition in Persian architecture*. University of Chicago Press. [See pp. 32–40 for the use of number symbolism and mathematical "hidden" devotions].

[3] Bahramnejad, M. (2018). *History of Iranian culture and civilization in the Safavid period*. Manshour-e Samir. [See pp. 112–115 for the engineering of the Golden Courtyard and the Sang-e Shakhes].