

# The Manifestation of the Collective Unconscious in the Architecture of the Safavid Era in Iran (Case Study: Imam Mosque in Isfahan)

<sup>1\*</sup>Elham Parvizi

<sup>1\*</sup>Assistant Professor, Department of Art and Architecture, Kharazmi University, Tehran, Iran.

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**ABSTRACT:** Believing in the world of Mesal has always been relevant in the beliefs of the illuminationists (ishrāq). This world has proximity to the world of Barzakh in the viewpoints of Muslims as the layers of the spiritual unconscious. Therefore, it's borne results in the ideology of philosopher's line Mulla Sadra in the Safavid era. Since architecture has always been a language for the values of its time, especially the unconscious of the society, to find out how and if the world of Mesal is manifested in the Safavid architecture, this writing is studying this case in the architecture of this era. Using the descriptive-analytical method, the present study has studied the ornaments of Isfahan's Imam Mosque to evaluate its conformity with the world of Mesal in the Muslims' beliefs. The descriptive-analytical research method and information-gathering are through the library and observational sources. It's concluded that the ornaments of Isfahan's Imam Mosque could be the manifestation of the details of the Muslims' beliefs and spiritual subconscious in the Safavid era in Iran, especially Isfahan, and the amount and manner of this matter in the of decorative patterns topic, the numbers used in them and then, the colors in the architectural ornament have been studied.

**Keywords:** *Collective Subconscious, the World of Mesal, the Safavid Architecture, Imam Mosque, Ornaments in Architecture.*

## INTRODUCTION

The architecture of the Safavid Dynasty in Isfahan has drawn the attention of many researchers and has inspired natural discovery and observation. People like "Sterlin" and "Corbin"<sup>1</sup> have interpreted it with a decrypting vision. But it seems that understanding the thoughts and ideas of the society, especially the dominant layers of thinking, in which these artworks have been set up is necessary to perceive the architectural values of the Safavids<sup>2</sup>.

Constructions also have a close link with memory and from this point of view, it is surprising that social psychology has not paid more attention to them. This is even more disturbing since, for several years, the notion of collective memory (Halbwachs, 1950, 54) seems to have taken a significant place in this discipline (Laurens & Roussiau, 2002, 86). Moreover, since Nora's (1984) work, it must be acknowledged that

commemorative monuments also have a link with the identity of those who recognize them as 'places of memory' (Moliner & Bovina, 2019).

The world of Barzakh that is the interface between the worlds of Jabrut and Nasut has a special ideological place in the Shia religion. In his Shialogy research, "Corbin"<sup>3</sup> states that in Shia, the world of Mesal is the platform for the realization of a science field named the "Maraya Science", and this science expresses a display of appearance, which Corbin calls the display of mirror<sup>4</sup>, and has a significant role in allegory and symbolism of imagination on the other hand, which in the image of heaven, as every human's ultimate wish, by adhering to Barzakh, that is the interface between "the Great World" and "the Little World" with the knowledge the Shia artist gains by the Quranic verses and hadiths, by encrypting the patterns and geometry that announces his discovery and intuition in the

\*Corresponding Author Email: [parvizi.e@khu.ac.ir](mailto:parvizi.e@khu.ac.ir)

world of imagination, it can be the interface between the great world's heaven and the field of architecture and the artist can embody it on the earth by participating in the creation's arc of descent. Therefore the world of Mesal that is rooted in the "Platonic theory of forms" has been transferred to this era and has been interpreted after being developed in the thoughts of philosophers, especially the illuminationists, and then has been able to pay off in a society that believes in the world of Barzakh as the interface between the world of Tasut and Jabrut<sup>5</sup>.

In this regard, to prove the hypothesis that the builders of these buildings have tried to portray this world in the buildings' architecture as a conscious individual or under the influence of a collective belief of the world of Mesal, the present writing first deals with explaining it from Plato's to Mulla Sadra's era and also in Shia ideology, then explains the effect of belief in the world of Mesal on these buildings by studying the ornaments of Isfahan's Imam mosque.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

This article is done a qualitative method and its approach is content analysis. This article examines the possibility of manifesting the collective unconscious in architecture. Hence, it deals with the unconscious analysis of society and its manifestation in the architecture of the Safavid period.

In this article, the ornaments in the Imam Mosque of Isfahan have been studied to measure the degree of its conformity with the world of Mesal in Shiite beliefs. The sources of information collection are libraries and second-hand documents.

Initially, by analyzing library resources and documents, the collective unconscious and its manifestation in architecture are examined. And then the Safavid era, in which, architecture and the world of Mesal as collective unconscious are very much related, is studied. To test the hypothesis of Imam Mosque as one of the important architectures of the Safavid era in ornaments is studied. Because ornaments is one of the most delicate and meaningful elements of architecture, that can show the collective wisdom in that era.

## Theoretical Framework

### The Safavid Era and Collective Memory

We owe the term 'collective memory' to the sociologist Maurice Halbwachs (1950). Analyzing the formation of individual memory, this author emphasizes first of all the

eminently social character of the human subject. Then, he deduces that most of our experiments take place in 'social frameworks' that we share with others (social belongings, social practices, language, etc.). But these social frameworks are also benchmarks that we use when we recall an event, and that individual memory is necessarily affected by the seal of social inserts. Hence, collective memory can be defined as the product of the convergent activity of individuals who remember the past as members of a group or a community (Fraïssé, 2008).

Hence, cultural canons define epochs of civilization. Neumann (1951) further states that "the cultural canon is always a fortress of security; and since it is a systematic restriction to a dogmatic section of the numinous, it carries with it the danger of one-sidedness and congealment". The picture that emerges from these psychological observations is one in which a society develops a system of beliefs, values, and philosophical attitudes that are rooted in numinous symbols. These symbols are alive and connect social consciousness to the deep strata of the collective unconscious. The living symbols provide a sense of security and even give society guiding principles for future development (Kiehl, 2016).

The Safavid era was created as the first national government in Iran, and the era of the School of Isfahan's emergence in arts and architecture, when Shah Ismail I took power in the year 95 AH. The security and boom created in the Safavid era was a great platform that resulted in the flourishing of Muslim intellectual life, and fertility and the growth of Iran's Islamic arts in every field. This era was one of the most creative eras of Islamic art and also Islamic philosophy and metaphysics. Different art disciplines including literature, painting, and music that find a deep connection with the Shia religion and its intellectual-philosophical Schools, become the language of stating this religion's thoughts. (Ahari, 2001, 9).

As shown in Figure 1, collective memory had gone towards unity in such a way that even some philosophers in this era have dealt with architecture, among those Shaykh Bahai, one of Mulla Sadra's mentors is worth mentioning.

As a philosopher, Shaykh Bahai also influenced beyond the circle of philosophy and deeply influenced architecture, fiqh, Arabic grammar, and poetry. Even though he isn't very famous for the books he's written on wisdom, however, he's tried to reflect the spirit of wisdom in his architectural designs (Razavi, 1998, 196). Architects and philosophers had in fact communications and meetings with each other, the effect

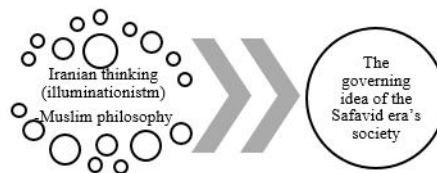


Fig. 1: The factors influencing the idea of the Safavid era

of which is evident in the architectural works of this era; as Shaykh Bahai and “Ali Akbar Isfahani”, Imam Mosque’s architect, consulted on building this mosque.

Therefore, it could be said that this era’s architecture and urbanism have a Muslim-Iranian atmosphere where Suhrawardi’s Khosrawani philosophy in Mulla Sadra’s thoughts and the Muslim yielded philosophy is flowing.

This is the era of mixing philosophy and sharia, and religionization of every Islamic world’s education. Illuminations mysticism and ideas heavily influence the thinking of philosophers and theologians and Faqihs and gather among the five theoretical and practical educations of Islam (Peripatetic philosophy, Illuminationist philosophy, Kalam, Mysticism, and Fiqh). Of course, this doesn’t mean that there are no more disputes among the faqihs and philosophers and mystic. But the point is that there’s no more of the past conflicts among Kalam, philosophy, and theoretical mysticism, because many of the philosophers of this era, like Khaqani and Sanai, disassociated themselves from the Greek philosophy. In the third era, philosophy is totally and completely connected to Sharia and order, and even politics become more religious. “While maintaining the hierarchy and avoiding rationing extremism, all these philosophers believe in the independent existence of rational forms and the Platonic theory of forms. The tendency towards optical illuminationism, Mesal dreams, celibacy of the dream, and the world of ghosts and angels in the Safavi’s era’s illuminationist thinking, realized the theoretical foundations of the philosophy of Islamic art (Madadpoor, 2001, 72).

Therefore, even though heaven is the depot of all religions in the shrines from Esirlen’s perspective, but as said before, it is more clearly the source of Muslim artist’s ideology in the Safavid era.

A mosque or masjid for Muslims is a place of worship, mosques were constructed as simple buildings for offering prayers five times a day; however, in subsequent periods, various features of ornamentation in the form of geometry, arabesque, and calligraphy were applied to the surfaces of mosques to portray paradise symbolically (Othman & Zainal-Abidin, 2011, 108).

The question of the growth and character of the Islamic architectural design of ornamentation has never been discussed in entirety and deeply. The concept of ornament in Islamic art is flexible in nature, independent of form, material, and scale, transforming the whole space ambiance. According to Grabar, before going deeper into certain ornamentation in Islamic art it is important to classify the transformations in visual forms from religious understanding and opinion. The classification will be the evidence of civilization with some communal symbolism or motifs in the ornamentation and also the yardstick in measuring the technology level of the Muslim community around the globe (Othman & Zainal-Abidin, 2011, 106).

### **The World of Mesal as a Collective Unconscious**

As was stated, believing in another world is heavily rooted in the collective unconscious and the intellectual philosophy of the Safavid era. In his theories, in addition to stating Iran’s Khosrawani philosophy, Suhrawardi has been under the influence of the ideology of the Greek philosophers including Plato, and has addressed this issue (Ebrahimi Dinani, 1985, 56). After him, Islamic philosophers like Sadr-ol-Mote’allehin Mulla Sadra have explained it more deeply in the Safavid era.

Plato believes that essences shouldn’t be left separate from each other and a principle for unity must exist. It could be said that in this theory, Plato pays attention to the principle of unity, so that all generic essences can be united under a superior gender essence. Plato calls these objective essences, forms (ideas). But they shouldn’t be mistaken with the concept of mind, because “form” refers to the objective reference of general concepts. In other words, “form” forms the reality or essence of objects. As is stated in Table 1, he believes the source of the sense of unity to be in the existence of “forms” or idea and form for objects and the world of the mind (Ebrahimi Dinani, 1985, 191).

Suhrawardi believes that the window of understanding the world of Mesal opens towards the world of imagination. On the other hand, this world won’t fit inside the soul, and exists separate from the soul, because the Great world’s (the world of Mesal) adaptation to the Little world (soul) is impossible. Besides, it can’t be imagined in the objective world and it’s not visually and sensually observable by individuals.

In his view, the world of Mesal isn’t born of imagination, rather imagination is a passenger of that world recites his observations over there, and of course, if he’s released of the duties of this world, he can understand it (Davari Ardakani, 2004, 146).

Among Illuminationist thinkers and philosophers, Mulla Sadra has dealt with this issue more seriously. In his view, “the world of Mesal has value like physical essence and is luminous like the incorporeal world on the other hand. It’s neither made of the material objects nor of the rational incorporeal world; it’s rather the interface between those two” (Dehkhoda, 1998, 1576).

Therefore, physical effects like modernity and movement and corruption do not apply to this world. So it’s incorporeal and made of the world of spirits. On the other hand, because of having form and shape, it’s similar to the world of objects. Therefore, like Suhrawardi, Mulla Sadra believes imagination to be the window towards the world of Mesal, but his difference with Suhrawardi begins where Suhrawardi doesn’t think the world of Mesal to be born of imagination, rather believes imagination to be a window towards it and separate from the soul. But Mulla Sadra thinks of imagination as the construction site for the world of imagination and therefore, the world of Mesal is connected to the objective world in his view.

“In the arguments, he’s made in the book of the soul, he

believes that human imagination creates Mesal and finally concludes that every form of Barzakh exists inside the arc of ascending provided by the human itself. Everyone's ascending Barzakh is a self-made world, and by exiting the world, every human enters a world made by him. In other words, he proves the world of Mesal through the world of imagination. Therefore, he accepts the ascending and an absolute and constrained world of Mesal through Human's globalization characteristic and believes that what becomes human Barzakh's tomorrow and his life's hereafter is property and dignity, products, forms, and his creations and it's his inward formation that is embodied (Sheykh ol-Eslami, 2004, 30).

Since Mulla Sadra considers the world of Mesal as being made by human actions in this world, it's closer to the Muslim beliefs. Allamah Majlesi quotes the following story of Imam Sadiq through Shaykh Bahai in the book, Bihar al-Anwar: There's a Mesal for the believer in heaven. When he starts prostration and bowing, his Mesal also starts doing the same. At this time, the angels send greetings towards him and ask for His forgiveness (Majlesi, 1982, 354).

It has shown in Table 1, in all three views, the world of Mesal manifests another world that states some facts. But there are differences in all three. In this writing, we refer to Mulla Sadra's view that is closer to the Muslim world of Mesal or the world of Barzakh; and in fact, explains the Muslim world of Barzakh philosophically.

Therefore, the ideology of the Greek philosophers like Plato has influenced Suhrawardi's opinions (Ebrahimi Dinani, 1985, 56), and the world of Mesal in the ideology of Mulla Sadra as one of the illuminationists is the continuation of the Platonic theory of forms. Henry Corbin believes that the Muslim prophetic philosophy calls for the prophetologic perception of the Platonic philosophy. The prophet's mission is to the confluence between earth and heaven, but this confluence is figurative and based on the manifestation in Barzakh and the world of Mesal. This perception is flawlessly coordinated with Suhrawardi's perception. Together, these two perceptions

shed light on the illuminationists' school (Corbin, 1990, 38). Therefore, the illuminationist philosophy flourishes in the Safavid era as a result of its coordination with Muslims, and Mulla Sadra is the standard-bearer of this. Even though he has been neglected in this era, but what's been manifested in his opinions is influenced by the heart of the society's prevailing ideology.

The principles of the Muslim world of Barzakh in Mulla Sadra's philosophical view are as follows:

- Barzakh is between the worlds of mind and object.
- It forms the rational essence and gains matter from the objective essence.
- It's the world of discovery and intuition.
- In the hierarchy of existence, this world exists in both the arc of ascend and the arc of descend.

### Heaven in Collective Memory and Mesal World

Therefore, the world of imagination's heaven that is every Muslim's ultimate dream is that fantastic painting which the Muslim artist dreams of drawing. So heaven is the reward for the selected and the Muslims' dream. The Iranian Muslim always thinks about the higher world and heaven, as if it's the world of dreams. This has a long history in Iranian culture as well. The oldest information about the other world, tradition, and the people, in this case about three cities of Jabolgha, Jabolsa and Hurgholia could be found in Tarikh al-Tabari (Sterlin, 1998, 169).

The Muslim artist recognizes heaven through the rightful verses of the Quran and narratives of the infallible Imams; starts discovering it in the world of imagination and visualization. Some of the concepts and elements related to heaven are as follows: a bridge that the selected reach heaven by passing through it; hierarchically of heaven; the tree of life that exists in heaven (the white Haoma, the blessed olive tree, the Tuba tree). These concepts have appeared in Iran's traditional arts in different forms including in form of a figure, like the bent cypress tree (paisley) in handicrafts, and Shamseh, and also

Table 1: The world of Mesal from the viewpoint of philosophers

| Philosopher | The World Of Mesal   | Position  | Separate | Connected | The Purpose Of Stating The Theory                                  |
|-------------|--|---|----------|-----------|--|
| Plato       | It's merely incorporeal  | It's located inside the minds                       |          |           | Creating unity in understanding the world                          |
| Suhrawardi  | It's located between the objective world and the incorporeal world   | Independently but through the window of imagination |          |           | Revelation and discovery and intuition and understanding the facts |
| Mulla Sadra | It's located between the objective world and the incorporeal world, but it's the result of the human's actions | It's created inside the world of imagination        |          |           | Revelation and discovery and intuition and understanding the facts |

the Hasht Behesht pavilion in architecture, and The Allahverdi Khan Bridge (Si-o-se-pol) in urbanism as well. So what shapes the urban atmosphere isn't different from the creating concept of architecture, as the garden's figure is pictured on the carpet and is also seen on the ceiling (Tahoori, 2005, 4). In other words, unity is seen in the ideology of the creation of society. Therefore, if the belief of heaven's incarnation exists in a society, it would become visible in the whole creation, and this was achieved in the Safavid era.

One of the important beliefs in this context is hierarchical of fact which causes the other worlds like the world of Mesal to be placed between the absolute truth and the world of objective plurality. In its first multiplicity, the oneness position turns into unity, and from there, it dresses the creatures in form of light. The existence's movement isn't in the linear path and time-dependent but is rather in a circular path. It begins by moving from one point and returns to the same point by moving towards perfection in the arc of ascending after going through the arc of descent. So the truth of existence is from him and rises from him and all of the existence is under his oneness (Tahoori, 2005, 5). This transcendental movement is known as the spiral movement in mathematics and is an existential movement itself. In this system, heaven is of particular importance as the highest position and the beginning and performing point (Tahoori, 2005, 6).

### Case Study

#### The Ornaments in Imam Mosque

As stated in figure 2, the ornaments in the architecture of mosques are represented in four forms: plant, animal (rarely), lines, and geometrical patterns. The technique used in the ornaments is also of different forms: bedding, brickwork tiling, etc, among which tiling can be seen more than any other technique. Tiling has also been performed in different ways including mosaic, Bannai script, and seven-color. In the Safavid era, to speed up the work, more clarity, and also the possibility of creating complex plant and geometrical patterns, the seven-color tile has been used (Sterlin, 1998, 106).

Imam Mosque is one of Iran's architectural, tiling, and lithographical masterpieces in the eleventh century AH, and the last date year that's seen in the mosque is the year 1077 AH, meaning the last year of Shah Abbas II's kingdom, and 1078 AH is the first year of Shah Suleiman's kingdom. This building is located on the south side of Naqsh-e Jahan Square. The mosque's ornaments began from the era of Shah Abbas and ended at the era of his successors, Shah Safi, Shah Abbas II, and Shah Suleiman. The structures of the decorated spaces in this mosque can be seen in figure 3. And in Table 2, the study of Isfahan architectural ornaments has been done according to the method of the article.

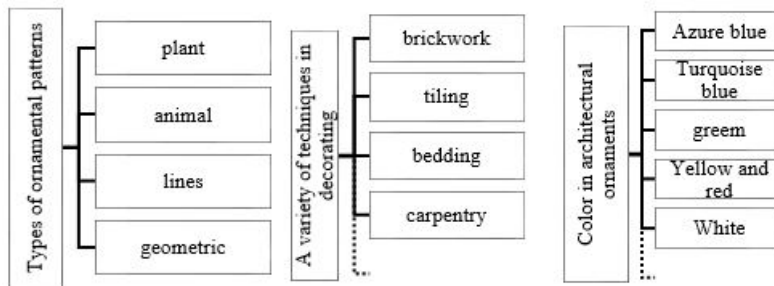


Fig. 2: Classification of ornament type in the architecture of the Safavid mosques

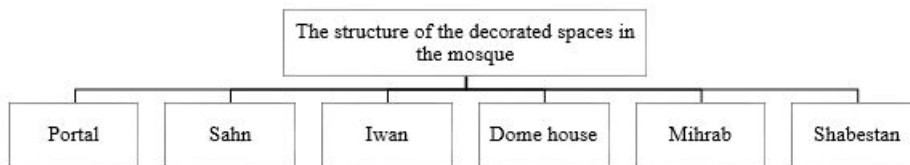


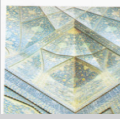
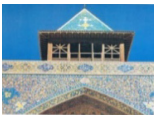
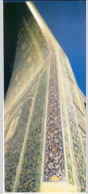




Fig. 3: The structure of the decorated spaces in the architecture of Isfahan's Imam Mosque


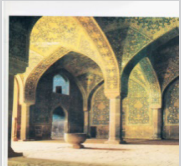
Table 2: Studying the architectural ornaments of Isfahan's Imam mosque

| Space Name  | The Studied Spaces  | Ornament Type   | Shape of Ornament       |                               |                |                |       | The Dominant Color |            |       |                      |
|---|---|---|-------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------|----------------|-------|--------------------|------------|-------|----------------------|
|   |   |   | Plant                   | Geometric                     | Line           | Animal         | White | Turquoise Blue     | Azure Blue | Green | Yellow and Ochre red |
| Portal  |    | Imam mosque (Sterlin, 1998, 90)   | Tile-work, muqarnas *** | Flower and Shamsah ***        | N/A            | Quran verses * | N/A   | N/A                | **         | **    | N/A                  |
|   |    | Imam mosque's entrance portal with a 26.5-meter height or a coating of muqarnas (Sterlin, 1998, 91) | Muqarnas, Tilework      | Flower and Shamsah ***        | N/A            | Quran verses * | N/A   | N/A                | *          | *     | *                    |
|   |   | One of the muqarnas portals (Sterlin, 1998, 91)   | Tilework and muqarnas   | Spiral rope vase – *** flower | N/A            | N/A            | N/A   | N/A                | N/A        | N/A   | **                   |
|   |  | Parts of muqarnas hives or honeycomb structures coating the entrance (Sterlin, 1998, 96)            | Hive muqarnas – tile    | Blossom ***                   | Pentagon star  | N/A            | N/A   | N/A                | **         | **    | **                   |
|   |  | The northwestern angle of Imam mosque's courtyard (Sterlin, 1998, 91)                               | Tilework                | Flower and blossom ***        | N/A            | N/A            | N/A   | N/A                | **         | *     | **                   |
|   |  | Part of the arcade ornament all around the mosque's courtyard (Sterlin, 1998, 131)                  | Tilework                | Flower and blossom ***        | N/A            | N/A            | N/A   | N/A                | *          | *     | **                   |
|   |  | Part of a group of square tiles of an arcade facing the mosque's courtyard (Sterlin, 1998, 91)      | Tilework                | Flower and blossom ***        | N/A            | N/A            | N/A   | N/A                | **         | **    | N/A                  |
|   |  | Part of a glazed tile (Sterlin, 1998, 112)  | Tile-work               | Flower and blossom ***        | N/A            | N/A            | N/A   | Birds ***          | *          | *     | **                   |
|  | The roofed passage in the mosque (Sterlin, 1998, 128)                               | Tilework  | Flower and blossom ***  | N/A                           | Quran verses * | N/A            | N/A   | *                  | *          | **    |                      |

Continuie of Table 2: Studying the architectural ornaments of Isfahan’s Imam mosque

| Space Name | The Studied Spaces  | Ornament Type       | Shape of Ornament      |                                |                                  |        |       | The Dominant Color |            |       |
|------------|---|---------------------|------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|--------|-------|--------------------|------------|-------|
|            |   |                     | Plant                  | Geometric                      | Line                             | Animal | White | Turquoise Blue     | Azure Blue | Green |
| Iwan       |  The great southern Iwan (Sterlin, 1998, 133)                                    | Tilework, Trombe    | Flowers and plants *** | Half of a twenty-sided polygon | Line **                          | N/A    | *     | ***                | *          | **    |
|            |  A decorative tile's frame (Sterlin, 1998, 91)                                   | Tilework            | N/A                    | Octagon ***                    | Line (Allah Muhan-mad Ali) ***   | N/A    | ***   | *                  | ***        | N/A   |
|            |  The southern Iwan's Trombe (Sterlin, 1998, 134)                                | Trombe, tile-work   | Flowers and plants     | N/A                            | Verses **                        | N/A    | *     | ***                | *          | **    |
|            |  The minaret's wooden structure (Sterlin, 1998, 117)                           | Tilework, carpentry | Flowers and plants *** | Square                         | Taiba names **                   | N/A    | *     | ***                | **         | ***   |
|            |  The eastern foundation of the mosque's eastern great Iwan (Sterlin, 1998,108) | Tilework            | Flowers and plants *** | N/A                            | Verses *                         | N/A    | *     | ***                | **         | **    |
|            |  Part of the dome (Sterlin, 1998, 146)   | Tilework, carpentry | Flowers and plants *** | Hashipar *                     | Verses and salawat ***           | N/A    | *     | ***                | **         | **    |
|            |  The minaret's upper part (Sterlin, 1998, 101)                                 | Tilework, carpentry | Flowers and plants *   | N/A                            | Allah o Akbar, Ayat al-Kursi *** | N/A    | *     | ***                | ***        | ***   |

Continuie of Table 2: Studying the architectural ornaments of Isfahan’s Imam mosque

| Space Name  | The Studied Spaces                                    | Ornament Type                      | Shape of Ornament         |           |              |        |       | The Dominant Color |            |       |                      |
|---|---|------------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------|--------------|--------|-------|--------------------|------------|-------|----------------------|
|   |   |                                    | Plant                     | Geometric | Line         | Animal | White | Turquoise Blue     | Azure Blue | Green | Yellow and Ochre red |
|  | Imam mosque’s praying room (Sterlin, 1998, 140)       | Tilework, carpentry, lithography   | Flowers and plants<br>*** | N/A       | Verses<br>** | N/A    | *     | ***                | **         | *     | *                    |
|  | The western Chehel Sotoon Palace (Sterlin, 1998, 129) | Seven-color arabesque, lithography | Flowers and plants<br>*** | N/A       | N/A          | N/A    | *     | ***                | *          | ***   | *                    |

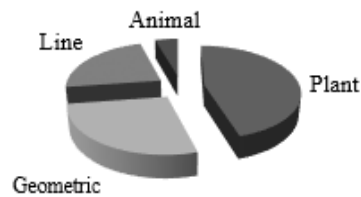
## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Since the imagination of the world of Mesal in the Safavid era’s collective unconscious Is according to the verses and

narratives, therefore, according to Table 3 the article addresses the conformity of believing in the world of Mesal, the narratives, and the obtained results.

Table 3: Analysis of the table of ornaments

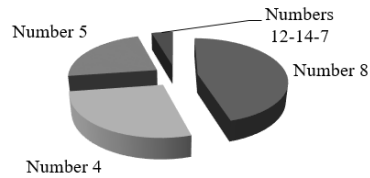
| 1- Analysis of ornament patterns   | Conformity with imagination   |
|--|---|
| <p><b>The world of imagination according to the verses and narratives about heaven</b></p> <p>Allah has promised the believing men and believing women gardens beneath which rivers flow, wherein they abide eternally, and pleasant dwellings in gardens of perpetual residence; but approval from Allah is greater. It is that which is the great attainment. (Surat al-Tawbah, verse 72) (The Holy Quran).</p> <p>Have you not considered how Allah presents an example, [making] a good word like a good tree, whose root is firmly fixed and its branches [high] in the sky? (Surah Ibrahim, verse 24)<sup>6</sup> (The Holy Quran).</p> <p>Sterlin thinks of the plant pattern tilework of Imam mosque as a reminder of the 15<sup>th</sup> verse of Surat al-Rum: And as for those who had believed and done righteous deeds, they will be in a garden [of Paradise], delighted. (Sterlin, 1998, 125) (The Holy Quran).</p> | <p>The verses and narratives have talked about the existence of trees in heaven more than anything else, and the table of ornaments also shows that plant patterns have been used more than anything else.</p> <p>***</p> |





Continuie of Table 3: Analysis of the table of ornaments

**2- Analysis of geometric patterns (analysis of the numbers used)**



**The world of imagination according to the verses and narratives about heaven**

**Conformity with imagination**

Number 8 – And the angels are at its edges. And there will bear the Throne of your Lord above them, that Day, eight [of them]<sup>7</sup>.

Number 4 – According to the narratives, it’s clear that heaven has four gardens.

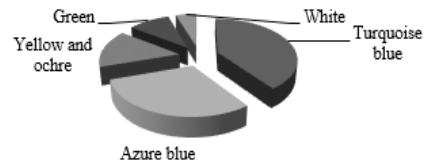
Number 5 – Number 5 refers to the Ahl al-Kisa.

Number 12 and 14 – Twelve is a symbol for the twelve Imams and 14 is a Symbol for the fourteen infallibles.

Number 7 – Seven also has a deep history in Iran, including the seven heavens, Attar’s seven cities of love, etc.

In the Quran, number 8 is used more frequently for heaven, and also, it is used in the ornaments more than others, and therefore, it has the most conformity. \*\*\*

**3- Analysis of color in the ornaments**



**The world of imagination according to the verses and narratives about heaven**

**Conformity with imagination**

Azure and turquoise blue: These colors are known as the colors of the world of Mesal and Alavieh philosophy (Ahmadi Maleki, 1999, 14).

Yellow:

Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth. The example of His light is like a niche within which is a lamp, the lamp is within the glass, the glass as if it were a pearly [white] star lit from [the oil of] a blessed olive tree, neither of the East nor of the West, whose oil would almost glow even if untouched by fire. Light upon light. Allah guides to His light that He wills. And Allah presents examples for the people, and Allah knows things. (Surat al-Nur, verse 35)

White: It’s mentioned in a hadith by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH): God created heaven white, and whiteness is more popular than every color for God. (Nahj ol-Fewahat, 141)

Green<sup>8</sup>. The existence of multiple hadiths about heavenly trees that have been mentioned before shows the presence of green color in heaven.

It seems like the green color is a sign of the world of Mesal, more than other colors. But azure and turquoise blue are more frequently seen in the building. Although turquoise is a combination of green and blue.

The conformity of colors is relatively perfect. \*\*

**CONCLUSION**

What comes out of the ornaments of Isfahan’s Imam Mosque indicate that:

In the ornament’s details and its conformity with the world of Barzakh’s picture in Muslim beliefs that are derived from the narratives and hadiths and are reflected in the architect’s artworks, these results have been obtained:

Plant patterns are frequently seen as an emblem of the tree of life and also as an emblem of the trees that are promised to the believers in the Quran. The abundance of these patterns is a sign of the artist’s purpose of reflecting the world of Mesal that

is pictured in the Holy Quran in the Muslim belief.

The numbers and colors used in the verses and narratives are attributed to heaven, which the artist is the interface for its perception and objection after their revelation from the world of Malakut into the world of Barzakh.

Building earthly heaven has been the theoretical collective unconscious governing that era, since wisdom, philosophy, order, and sharia are united in this era.

The Muslim world of Barzakh is the embodiment of his actions, and this case is made in philosophical terms in Mulla Sadra’s opinions, that this world exists in the hierarchies of

existence both in the arc of ascend and the arc of descent. Therefore, by using verse-processing or referring to the truthful sources that are the verses and narratives, he starts building the earthly heaven, so that the world of Mesal would be an interface between the Little World and the Great World's heaven, and the reality of his action in the heavenly world of Lahut would be more beautiful than what he's made in this world.

Since the world of Barzakh is present in the creation's arcs of ascend and descent, therefore, the artist calls the Great World's heaven for discovery and intuition and participates in its embodiment in the Little World, and also participates in building the Great World's heaven as an effect of human's actions in this world, in the arc of ascend and through the world of Mesal. Because the world of Lahut's heaven is also the embodiment of Human's actions in the world of Tasut.

## ENDNOTES

1. See (Sterlin, 1998, 10).
2. See (Tahoori, 2005, 5-24).
4. The material substance of the mirror metal or mineral, is not the substance of the image. It is simply "the place of its appearance.
5. See "manifestation of Islamic idea in the Safavid era" in this writing.
6. In Suhrawardi's opinion, the Tuba tree is the symbol of Malakut's spiritual sun or heaven. Therefore, the meaning of the large yellow sun tilework of Imam mosque's interior dome's crown that is directly placed under the dome in the form of the tree of life could be understood. On the other hand, this zenith positioning of the sun shows the path and entry point of Al-Malakut (Sterlin, 1998, 174).
7. So the described heaven in the Quran is octagonal. It's because of this that it's believed that heaven has eight doors, which the eighth one is the door of repentance and always open. In other words, entry to heaven will be through eight doors. In general, the octagon is the dominant pattern not only in the formation of architectural and urbanism spaces but also in the decorative patterns of every traditional artwork in Iran. Octagonal space is among the most recognized architectural spaces, and the Hashtpar Shamsheh and the simplified octagonal strapwork (Girih) of the sun are the most popular decorative patterns. The most beautiful noticeable manifestation of good meaning could be found in Isfahan's Hasht Behesht (Tahoori, 2005, 12). It's based on such belief that in Shah Abbas's era, his capital Isfahan's most important passage is called Chahar Bagh to remind the four gardens of heaven on the earth. With this argument, in his book, Isfahan: "A Picture of Heaven", Henry Sterlin states that the reason for Iran's mosques to have four iwans is the number of heaven's doors which is four (Sterlin, 1998, 179).
8. In hadiths of the prophet's verbal sunnah, the emerald color is related to the other world (Sterlin, 1998, p. 171). In his book called "The Malakut Earth and the Resurrection Body", Henry Corbin has called the Mesaleyn cities in comparison to the Book of Revelation's emerald insight (Apocalypse) the Emerald Cities and on the other hand, the emerald rock or the key to the dome of the heavens that are mentioned in the hadiths related to the Islamic cosmology (Sterlin, 1998, 172).

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