Study and Analysis of the Inscriptions Arrays of Imam Mosque in Tehran

Soheila Abipour
Department of Archaeology, Science and Research Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran
Nader Karimian Sardashti
Department of Archaeology of Iranian Center for Archaeological Research (ICAR), Tehran, Iran
Sina Foroozesh
Department of Archaeology, Science and Research Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran

Abstract: Calligraphy in Islamic art is regarded as sacred due to its connection with the divine word. The Quran itself references the sanctity of the pen, the value of writing, and swears by them. Inscriptions are the only visual elements that directly carry meaning and hold significant importance in the architectural structures of the Islamic period in Iran from both visual and content perspectives.. The aim of this paper is to achieve favorable results in response to the following questions: What were the goals and expectations of the designers and writers in composing and designing the inscriptions? What elements and components shaped the themes of the mosque's inscriptions? The results of field and library studies indicate that the artists' goal in writing and designing the inscriptions was to create a building worthy of the Muslim community that would attract the attention of every viewer and provide spiritual tranquility. Additionally, the expectation of the designers and writers in composing these inscriptions was to immortalize their memory in the field of art and architecture. Based on the study and analysis of the inscriptions, it appears that most of the inscriptions in Imam Mosque are derived from the Quran and contain poems praising FathAliShah, the names of Qajar kings, the names of artists, poets, and verses that indicate the date of the building's construction.

Keywords: *Imam Mosque, inscription, Fath Ali Shah, Qajar period, Tehran.*

* Corresponding Author
Email Address: sardashti@yahoo.com *(Nader Karimian Sardashti)*

1. Introduction

Inscriptions combine the two words "inscription" and "writing." In Arabic, "inscription" is referred to as "katabah," which means "army" and "the charge of horses" (Behpour, 1384: 84). In Islamic art, inscription writing is considered sacred due to its connection with the divine word, and calligraphy has been one of the essential means of communication and connection for Muslims, including Iranians, with Islam. Although art and architecture during the Qajar era declined compared to the Safavid period, Qajar art, by incorporating Western elements while maintaining Iranian identity and adhering to past architecture, has unique characteristics that distinguish it from other periods (Makinejad, 1388: 30). The tradition of inscription writing and calligraphy during the Qajar period continued to be distinct from previous eras, with the difference that the Thuluth script no longer held the primary and foremost position (Solhjoo, 1396: 35). Instead, the Nasta'liq script, recognized in the second half of the 8th century AH (Zabih, 1364: 70), gained significant popularity due to its appeal and the Qajar society's need for writing and Iranian identity, as well as the lack of prominent artists in the Thuluth style (Makinejad, 1388: 38). The aim of this paper is to study and analyze the inscriptions of Imam (Shah) Mosque in Tehran, as no comprehensive study has been conducted on it thus far. Therefore, the study of the inscriptions of Imam (Shah) Mosque in Tehran, as the most prominent architectural work of the Qajar era, can reveal the changes and developments in the tradition of inscription writing and the status of this art during the Qajar period. It is assumed that by relying on the inscriptions of Imam (Shah) Mosque, insights into the beliefs and customs of the people of Tehran during the Qajar era, as well as the reasons for creating various inscriptions on different parts of the building, can be uncovered. Additionally, efforts will be made to assess the subject of study and achieve favorable results by answering the following questions: What were the goals and expectations of the designers and writers in composing and designing the inscriptions? What elements and components shaped the themes of the mosque's inscriptions? The results of field and library studies indicate that the artists' goal in writing and designing the inscriptions was to create a building worthy of the Muslim community that would attract the attention of every viewer and provide spiritual tranquility. Furthermore, the expectation of the designers and writers in composing these inscriptions was to immortalize their memory in the field of art and architecture, with most of the inscriptions in Imam (Shah) Mosque being derived from the Quran and containing poems praising Fath Ali Shah, the names of Qajar kings, the names of artists and architects, poets, and verses that indicate the date of the building's construction.

2. Research Methodology

The method of conducting research depends on the objectives and questions of the study, the scope of the research, the nature of the subject, and the available practical resources. This research is characterized as archaeological-historical in nature with a qualitative approach, and in terms of writing and compilation style, it falls under descriptive-analytical research. The information for this study has been collected through fieldwork, library research, and by consulting documents, books, articles, and other printed materials. The analysis of the information has been conducted qualitatively, based on reason, logic, and reasoning. Additionally, the researcher has employed a content analysis approach to address the research questions and achieve the set objectives, interpreting the qualitative data accordingly. Therefore, it can be said that this research is based on an interpretive paradigm that relies on the researcher's understanding of the meanings of events.

3. Importance and Necessity of the Research

The significance and value of this writing lie in the fact that there has not yet been a comprehensive and cohesive study related to the "Study and Analysis of the Inscriptions of Imam (Shah) Mosque in Tehran." Consequently, this research can shed light on the types of scripts used in the inscriptions, the reasons for selecting specific scripts, and how reading the themes of the inscriptions can provide comprehensive information about the founders, builders, and artists, as well as the religious, political, and social thoughts of the people of Tehran during the Qajar era. Furthermore, this research can demonstrate that inscriptions, being among the most documented sources for studying a building, attract the attention of researchers and scholars, and they always take precedence over historical quotations; thus, accurately reading and extracting information from them is of special importance.

4. Background of the Research

James Morier, the British deputy ambassador during the Qajar era, was one of the first individuals to mention Imam Khomeini Mosque (formerly Shah Mosque), referring to it as the only notable building in Tehran and noting that its construction had not yet been completed (Kariman, 1355: 192). James Baillie Fraser mentioned the gilded dome of Shah Mosque (Fraser, 1364: 218-219). In 1264, a depiction of the current site of Imam (Shah) Mosque was drawn by "Jules Laurence," which is very significant for studying the minarets on either side of the northern portico and the dome above the portico (Kariman, 1355: 200). Mirza Saleh Shirazi wrote about Shah Mosque: "Fath Ali Shah has built a very magnificent mosque named after the Shah, which has been under construction for two years" (Saleh Shirazi, 1364: 245). Dr. Jacob Edward Pollak noted that there were almost no significant buildings found in the city, mentioning only Shah Mosque, which was founded by Fath Ali Shah, as the most interesting mosque in Tehran (Pollak, 1368: 45). Eugène Flandin spoke of the closed site of Shah Mosque (Flandin, 1326: 114-159), and in the map by Barzin, dated between 1245-1260 AH, the name Shah Mosque is referred to as "King's Mosque" (Mo'tamedi, 1381: 139).

Figure 1: Map prepared by Barzin of Tehran dated 1245-1260 AH (Mo'tamedi, 1381: 139).

   Although Imam (Shah) Mosque in Tehran has been the subject of study for numerous re-searchers in the past decades (Moshkooti, 1349; Kariman, 1355; Belaghi, 1350; Mostafavi, 1361; Ganjnameh, 1377; Mo'tamedi, 1381; Nourbakhsh, 1381) and recent years (Sadat Razavi et al., 1398), none have comprehensively and cohesively addressed the historical inscriptions of Imam (Shah) Mosque and their analysis. Among the most notable studies conducted on the subject is the thesis by "Majgan Fadaei" titled "Form and Meaning in the Inscriptions of the Tile Work of Qajar Mosques in Tehran" (Fadaei, 1395), which only addresses the Quranic in-scriptions of the mosque and provides no information regarding the construction inscriptions, founders, architects, and artists, as well as the type of script and language used in the inscrip-tions.

5. Location and Description of the Building

   Imam Khomeini Mosque (formerly Shah Mosque) is located at 15 Khordad Street, east of Naser Khosrow Street, next to the Tehran Bazaar, with geographic coordinates ZONE: 39S -E 538193.69 m - N 3948115.30 m (Figure 2). In other words, the Imam (Shah) Mosque in Tehran is bounded to the southeast by the Bazaar of the Two Holy Shrines and to the southwest by the Imamzadeh Zayd in the cobblers' market. This building was registered in the list of national monuments of Iran in 1363 under number 1667.

   Imam Khomeini Mosque in Tehran, also known as Shah Mosque and formerly referred to by Hojjat Belaghi as the New Grand Mosque (Mo'tamedi, 1381: 104), covers an area of ten thou-sand square meters (Nourbakhsh, 1381: 314, Vol. 1) and is one of the largest and most famous mosques in Tehran. It was commissioned by Fath Ali Shah Qajar and built at the personal ex-pense of Mahd Aliya (Asiyeh Khanom), his mother, in the first half of the 13th century AH (1225 AH) (Figure 3) (Mo'tamedi, 1381: 104). The Shah Mosque is notable for the size of its courtyard, which measures 64 meters on each side (Nourbakhsh, 1381: 315, Vol. 1), and for its beautiful porticos, the grand tiled dome, arches, alcoves, and magnificent entrance. Unique tile works can also be seen here. Additionally, the design of the main dome has been altered to a segmented shape due to recent renovations (Moshkooti, 1349: 153), and the large tiled dome adorned with a smaller golden dome above it is a distinctive feature of this building (Mostafavi, 1361: 87). During renovations in 1307 AH, Naser al-Din Shah added two minarets around the dome of Imam (Shah) Mosque. Furthermore, between 1322 and 1323 AH, a clock was installed between the two minarets, and about 50 years ago, a qibla indicator was placed next to the mosque's pool. Previously, the water for this pool was supplied from Shah Qanat, and a sundial was lo-cated on its northern side to determine the legal noon. In recent years, the walls and ceilings of the porticos have been painted, and geometric tile designs have been painted on them. A design similar to the tile work beneath the dome of Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque has also been painted under the dome chamber. The construction of two ablution facilities at the northern entrance and the renovation of the pool have also been among the activities of these years (Nourbakhsh, 1381: 315, Vol. 1; Ganjnameh, 1377: 13). Concurrently with the construction of this mosque in Tehran, similar mosques were built in other cities such as Semnan, Qazvin, Borujerd, and Kashan, which also became known as Shah and Sultan Mosques. The architectural style of the Sultan Mosques followed the design of Vakil Mosque in Shiraz, and like other buildings of that time, the Qajar monarchs employed Shirazi artists and masters in the design and construction of these buildings (Moshkooti, 1349: 154; Mostafavi, 1361: 87; Nourbakhsh, 1381: 314, Vol. 1).

Figure 2: Location of Imam (Shah) Mosque in the current urban fabric of Tehran (Google Earth: 2024).
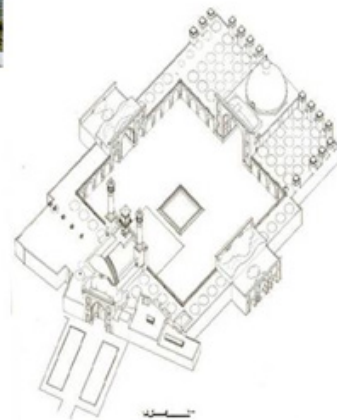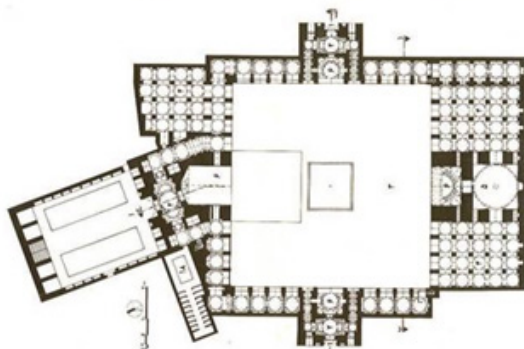

Figure 3: Overall view with a plan and 3D image of Imam (Shah) Mosque in Tehran (Authors, 1403).

One of the mosque's unique and distinguished decorations is its pulpit, made of marble with thirteen steps, located in the mosque's sanctuary and a stone basin in the northern corridor. The pulpit, intricately inlaid, was constructed by order of Haji Mirza Hassan, son of Haji Mirza Khalil Shirazi, in Shiraz. The east and west sides of the mosque have two entrances, with the western door leading to the Grand Bazaar and the eastern door opening to the area between the two holy shrines and the Grand Mosque. In the middle of Fath Ali Shah's reign, the Shah Mosque was closed and designated as a refuge, and during Naser al-Din Shah's time, it was reopened by the approval of Mirza Abolqasem Isfahani, the imam of Friday prayers (Mo'tamedi, 1381: 105). Upon completion of the building in 1248 AH, Fath Ali Shah invited Seyyed Mohammad Mahdi, a scholar and descendant from Khatunabad Isfahan, to serve as the mosque's imam (Belaghi, 1350: 67).

6. Inscriptions Arrays of Imam (Shah) Mosque in Tehran**

The construction of Imam (Shah) Mosque in the new capital of Iran marks it as the first building of the Qajar era, inspired by the mosques of the Zand period and serving as a model for mosques of the Qajar era in various cities of Iran. This highlights the importance and significant role of this structure in archaeological studies of the later Islamic centuries. Although Fath Ali Shah aimed to evoke the mosques of Isfahan from the Safavid era with this mosque, he could never compete architecturally or urbanistically with Shah Abbas I. Various inscriptions have been implemented in different sections of this building, which can be seen as the focal point of many cultural, social, political, artistic, and architectural events of the early Qajar period. The language of the inscriptions in Imam (Shah) Mosque is Arabic and Persian, using the Thuluth and Nasta'liq scripts. Generally, the inscriptions can be classified into two categories: construction inscriptions and religious inscriptions.

6-1. Construction Inscriptions

The construction inscriptions of Imam (Shah) Mosque are of historical significance, containing information such as the name of the founder, the date of construction, the names of Qajar kings (Fath Ali Shah and Naser al-Din Shah), the names of artists, praises and introductions of rulers and their decrees, as well as descriptions of historical events. From an archaeological perspective, these inscriptions hold special value and importance for historical studies and the correction of historians' accounts regarding the construction of this mosque (Table 1).

6-2. Religious Inscriptions

The religious inscriptions contain religious themes and encompass many spiritual truths and mystical discussions. These inscriptions can be considered decorative and functional elements in Islamic architecture, similar to other decorative arts. Generally, the content of the religious inscriptions in Imam (Shah) Mosque includes Quranic verses from Surahs such as Al-Jumu'ah, Al-Munafiqun, Al-Mulk, Al-Insan, and Al-Fatiha, as well as parts of verses from major Surahs like Al-Baqarah, Al-Imran, and all verses from smaller Surahs in the 30th Juz, such as Al-Zalzalah, Al-Alaq, Al-Qadr, Al-Nas, and verse 35 of Surah Al-Nur, which are repeated three times in different parts of this building (Table 2).

7. Discussion and Analysis

Imam Khomeini Mosque, formerly known as Shah Mosque, is one of the earliest buildings of the Qajar era in Tehran, constructed under the order of Fath Ali Shah, who employed the best artists and architects of his time for its construction and decoration. Despite the importance of this building in archaeological studies of the Qajar period and later Islamic centuries, a compre-

Table 1: Construction Inscriptions of Imam (Shah) Mosque in Tehran (Authors, 1403).

Row	Architectural elements	Image	Considerations
1	Inside the dome of the house		Inscription dated 1224 AH. Q
2	Inside the vestibule and above the main door of the mosque		It includes an ode by Seyyed Hossein known as "Majmar" and nicknamed "Mujtahid al-Shaara" containing the praises of Fath Ali Shah and a description of this lofty and noble building with the date of 1225. In such a way that "Klak Mujamar will figure out the date of the year / Before this mosque, the Qibla worshiper should come in prayer"
3	Jalojan leading to the door of Sadr School and the bathroom of Haj Mirza Aghasi		An ode from the poems of Fath Ali Khan Saba, entitled Malek Al Shaara', in praise of Fath Ali Shah and description of the mosque, is inscribed, which is informed by this ode "Emperor of Time, Jamshid Duran, Khosrow the World / Lord of the Earth, Owner of Iran, Great Judge" and the history of this ode is also verse is below " .The secretary of Kalk Saba counted from his history/ this is the mosque of Fath Ali Shah Kaaba II (1230)" is the head of the same entry dated 1241 and 1307 AH.
4	South porch inscription		Dated 1240 AH and named Fath Alishah
5	The plinth of the south porch		Prayer complaints are written on the upper side of the stone in the script of Agha Mahdi Khoshnavis and the scribe Fath Alishah. The name of Fath Alishah is written in a very clear pen in the mentioned porch and the date 1229 is written below it.
6	Inscriptions above the south porch		It is inscribed with the date of 1224 in the handwriting of Agha Mahdi Malik Al-Katab
7	The west gate of the mosque		In Nastaliq script, there is an inscription of the poet Shadran Saba under the chalk work, which is informed by the following: "Bahin salaleh Hawa Mahin result of Adam / the power of power and the power of the power of Fath Ali" "the material is its history
8	South porch		The name of Fath Ali Shah on the forehead of Ivan in Nastaliq script
9	Jalukhan Masjid Head		The name of Naseruddin Shah

hensive and coherent study regarding its architectural structure and decorative elements has yet to be conducted. This paper aims to thoroughly study and analyze the inscriptions of Imam (Shah) Mosque in Tehran, relying on fieldwork and library research. The inscriptions can be discussed and analyzed from various angles, including their significance and application, text type, script, language, and execution technique. Inscriptions are the only visual elements that directly carry meaning and are significant in Islamic buildings from both a visual and content perspective (Makinejad, 1388: 30). Inscriptions are also important and noteworthy from the perspective of non-Muslims. According to the famous Iranian scholar Professor Pope: "Inscriptions, which create much excitement in the complexity of their lines, must truly be examined in their place. They are worthy of the highest admiration as pure designs, but at the same time, Muslims consider them to possess inner qualities" (Pope, 1388: 15). Another important goal of the inscriptions is to create a spiritual atmosphere through the use of Quranic verses, which Martin Lings referred to as a Quranic perspective (Makinejad, 1388: 88). On the other hand, important historical information is embedded in the inscriptions, and since they are among the most documented sources in research about a building, they are of great interest and always take precedence over historical quotations (Behpour, 1384: 84).

In general, the inscriptions of Imam (Shah) Mosque can be categorized into two groups: construction inscriptions and religious inscriptions. The construction inscriptions are primarily found in the spaces inside the dome chamber, inside the entrance vestibule above the main door of the mosque, the courtyard leading to the door of the Sadr School and the bathhouse of Haj Mirza Aghasi, the southern portico, the base of the southern portico, the inscriptions above the southern portico, the western entrance of the mosque, and the entrance of the courtyard. The oldest date mentioned on the inscriptions corresponds to the year 1224 AH, coinciding with the twelfth year of Fath Ali Shah's reign, which is inscribed in the interior of the dome chamber and on the inscriptions of the southern portico. The inscription of the southern portico is written in Thuluth script by Mirza Mohammad Mahdi. Mirza Mohammad Mahdi, titled "Malek-ol-Ketab" and pen name "Eshrat," was a calligrapher and poet of the Qajar era, born in 1182 AH in Farahan and died in 1270 AH during the reign of Naser al-Din Shah. He was also an important figure in the affairs of Fath Ali Shah's era, actively engaged in the Qajar court as a calligrapher and held the title "Jalil Malek-ol-Ketabi" (Ghaem-Maqami, 1327: 22-34). The second date, 1225 AH, pertains to the vestibule space or above the main door of the mosque, which includes a poem by "Seyyed Hassan," pen name "Majmar," praising Fath Ali Shah and describing the mosque's construction. Seyyed Hossein Tabatabai, known as Majmar, was born in Isfahan in the late 12th century AH and died in 1225 AH. He came to Tehran during the onset of the Iran-Russia wars and was introduced to Fath Ali Shah in the camp at Yerevan in Rabi al-Thani 1219. During this period, Majmar composed epic poems praising Fath Ali Shah, the commander of all military forces, to inspire the Iranian troops and later received the title "Mojtahed al-Sho'ara" from Fath Ali Shah (Abdolmaleki, 1395: 184-186). In 1229 AH, in the base of the southern portico, prayer complaints were written by Mirza Mohammad Mahdi, where the name of Fath Ali Shah is beautifully inscribed. In 1230 AH, a poem by "Fath Ali Khan Saba," pen name "Malek al-Sho'ara," praising Fath Ali Shah and describing the mosque's construction was also written in the courtyard leading to the door of the Sadr School and the bathhouse of Haj Mirza Aghasi. Fath Ali Khan Saba Kashani was born around 1180 AH in Kashan and died in 1238 AH. In 1222 AH, at about thirty years of age, he was honored with the title of Malek al-Sho'ara at Fath Ali Shah's court. Saba was a student of Sabahi Bigdeli and was nurtured in the school of Hafez Isfahani and Azar Bigdeli. This poet gained great fame during Fath Ali Shah's reign for his lengthy and grandiose poems and extensive praises of the king and his children (Khodadadi Nayini, 1390: 49). Addi-

Row	Architectural elements	Image	Considerations
1	The dome		Verse 35 of Surah An-nur اللَّهُ نُورُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ... وَاللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ Surah An-Nasr بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ إِذَا جَاءَ نَصْرُ اللَّهِ ... وَاسْتَغْفِرْهُ إِنَّهُ كَانَ تَوَّابًا
2	South side of the yard		Surah Al-Jumu'ah بِسْمِ اللَّهِ ... يُسَبِّحُ لِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ ... وَ مِنَ التِّجَارَةِ وَاللَّهُ خَيْرُ الرَّازِقِينَ Surah Al-Munafiqun بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ إِذَا جَاءَكَ الْمُنَافِقُونَ قَالُوا نَشْهَدُ ... إِذَا جَاءَ أَجَلُهَا وَاللَّهُ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ
3	Eastern porch		Surah Al-Jumu'ah بِسْمِ اللَّهِ ... يُسَبِّحُ لِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ ... وَ مِنَ التِّجَارَةِ وَاللَّهُ خَيْرُ الرَّازِقِينَ
4	West porch		Surah Al-Munafiqun بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ إِذَا جَاءَكَ الْمُنَافِقُونَ قَالُوا نَشْهَدُ ... إِذَا جَاءَ أَجَلُهَا وَاللَّهُ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ Surah Al-Asr بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ وَالْعَصْرِ إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لَفِي خُسْرٍ ... بِالْحَقِّ وَتَوَاصَوْا بِالصَّبْرِ Surah Al-Qadr بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ فِي لَيْلَةِ الْقَدْرِ ... سَلَامٌ هِيَ حَتَّى مَطْلَعِ الْفَجْرِ
5	North porch		Surah Al-Malik بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ تَبَارَكَ الَّذِي بِيَدِهِ الْمُلْكُ وَهُوَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ الَّذِي... إِنْ أَصْبَحَ مَاؤُكُمْ غَوْرًا فَمَنْ يَأْتِيكُمْ بِمَاءٍ مَعِينٍ
6	clock tower		Verse 35 of Surah An-nur اللَّهُ نُورُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ... وَاللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ
7	The space under the dome		Surah Al-Insan بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ هَلْ أَتَى عَلَى الْإِنْسَانِ حِينٌ مِنَ الدَّهْرِ لَمْ يَكُنْ... وَالظَّالِمِينَ أَعَدَّ لَهُمْ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا Surah An-Nasr بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ إِذَا جَاءَ نَصْرُ اللَّهِ ... وَاسْتَغْفِرْهُ إِنَّهُ كَانَ تَوَّابًا
8	Decorations of the dome space		Al-Zalzalah Surah بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ إِذَا زُلْزِلَتِ الْأَرْضُ زِلْزَالَهَا ... مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ شَرًّا يَرَهُ
9	The walls of the western nave		Surah Al-Jumu'ah بِسْمِ اللَّهِ ... يُسَبِّحُ لِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ ... وَ مِنَ التِّجَارَةِ وَاللَّهُ خَيْرُ الرَّازِقِينَ Surah Al-Alaq بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ اقْرَأْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ ... لَا تُطِعْهُ وَاسْجُدْ وَاقْتَرِبْ Surah Al- Fatiha بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ ... صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّالِّينَ
10	The altar and its surroundings		Verse 35 of Surah Noor اللَّهُ نُورُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ... وَاللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ Verse 37 of Surah Al-Imran فَتَقَبَّلَهَا رَبُّهَا بِقَبُولٍ حَسَنٍ وَأَنْبَتَهَا نَبَاتًا حَسَنًا وَكَفَّلَهَا... مَنْ يَشَاءُ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ

Table 2: Religious Inscriptions of Imam (Shah) Mosque in Tehran with Quranic Verses (Authors, 1403).

tionally, in the mentioned courtyard, two dates, 1241 and 1307 AH, corresponding to the reign of Naser al-Din Shah, indicate repairs to the Imam (Shah) Mosque and the addition of minarets around the dome. The name of Fath Ali Shah is also beautifully inscribed in Nasta'liq script on the southern portico. The content of the construction inscriptions indicates the establishment of Imam (Shah) Mosque in Tehran during Fath Ali Shah's reign from 1224 AH to 1241 AH and its repairs during Naser al-Din Shah's era. Furthermore, Fath Ali Shah commemorated his memory through the poems of his court poets and calligraphers, including Majmar, Fath Ali Khan Saba, and Malek-ol-Ketab.

The religious inscriptions of Imam (Shah) Mosque in Tehran are also found in spaces such as the dome, the southern side of the courtyard, the northern, eastern, and western porticoes, the clock tower, the space beneath the dome chamber, the squinches of the dome chamber, the walls of the western prayer hall, the mihrab and its surroundings, and inside the southern portico. Overall, the content of the religious inscriptions includes Quranic verses from Surahs such as Al-Jumu'ah, Al-Munafiqun, Al-Mulk, Al-Insan, and Al-Fatiha, parts of verses from major Surahs like Al-Baqarah and Al-Imran, or all verses from smaller Surahs in the 30th Juz, such as Al-Zalzalah, Al-Alaq, Al-Qadr, Al-Nas, and verse 35 of Surah Al-Nur, as well as the blessed words Allah and Ali (Table 3). Among these, Surah Al-Jumu'ah and verse 35 of Surah Al-Nur are repeated three times, Surah Al-Nas and Al-Munafiqun are repeated twice, and Surahs Al-Asr, Al-Qadr, Al-Mulk, Al-Insan, Al-Zalzalah, Al-Alaq, Al-Fatiha, and verse 37 of Surah Al-Imran and verse 144 of Surah Al-Baqarah are used once to adorn various spaces of the mosque. The inscriptions derived from the verses of the Holy Quran on the walls of the mosque confirm that the very fabric of Islamic life is woven from Quranic verses and is spiritually reliant on the recitation of the Quran, taken from the heavenly book. The use of designs and scripts based on Quranic verses indirectly transforms the worship space into a center for preaching and remembrance, emphasizing that through this simple art, the Quran and the remembrance of God are always present in the lives and worship of Muslim people, which has an educational effect and conveys the connection between life and religion (Saki, 1401: 476-477). In fact, the artists' goal in writing and designing these inscriptions was to express religious beliefs and values, as well as to articulate the demands and wishes of the religious community to those in power.

As mentioned, the authors and designers of the inscriptions aimed to attract the audience's attention aesthetically by using Quranic verses alongside poetry from the Qajar era, employing scripts such as Nasta'liq, Thuluth, and Bina'i on the walls, porticoes, dome of the building, and also the mosque's mihrab, executed with masterful tile work in seven colors and brickwork. One of the most significant characteristics of the Qajar era in the tradition of inscription writing was the use of Nasta'liq script for the inscriptions. The inclination towards Nasta'liq during the Qajar period and the neglect of Thuluth and other scripts can have various reasons, including the attractiveness of this script and the Qajar society's need for writing. Another aspect relates to its identity, which is entirely Iranian, devoid of Arabic or Turkish influences, and given the Western invasion of Iran, Iranian culture needed a strong foundation. In this regard, Nasta'liq provided a reliable base for establishing its position against other scripts. Furthermore, distancing from the Thuluth base, namely Turkey, was significant, as Iran did not have good relations with its western neighbor at that time, and cultural exchanges were also affected by this issue, consequently harming the quality of Thuluth script (Maki Nejad, 1388: 37).

The language of the inscriptions in Imam (Shah) Mosque in Tehran is Arabic, supplemented by Persian. Quranic phrases and hadiths are written in Arabic, while poetry and prose are in Persian. The decorative elements of these inscriptions include swirling arabesques and Khatayi

Row	Architectural elements	Image	Considerations
1	The roof of the main entrance vestibule		Muhammad, Muhammad Rasulullah, Ali and Ali Wali Allah
2	North porch		Allah, Muhammad, Ali, Fatima, Hassan and Hussein
3	West porch		Allah, Muhammad and Ali
4	South porch		Muhammad, Muhammad Rasulullah, Ali and Ali Waliullah
5	Eastern porch		Allah, Muhammad and Ali

Table 3: Another section of religious inscriptions in Muqarnas script on the ceiling of the entrance vestibule and the porticoes of the mosque (Authors, 1403)

motifs adorned with various flowers and petals, with most backgrounds consisting of azure mosaic tiles featuring white and ochre lines. The use of seven-colored or brick tiles during the Qajar period replaced the more complex mosaic technique due to its ease of use, and this was prominently pursued in the inscription writing of the 10th and 11th centuries AH (Danesh-Yaz-di, 1387: 45). Notable tile artisans involved in the construction of Imam (Shah) Mosque in Teh-ran, whose names can be seen around the courtyard, include Asadollah Abedin, Asadollah Hos-seini, Ahmad Ali Asghar, Ali Akbar Mohammad from Tehran, and Mostafa Tabatabai, Fathollah Abdul Rahim, Hossein Baqer, and Ibrahim Kazem from Isfahan (Ganjnameh, 1377: 12).

8. Conclusion

The current Shah or Imam Mosque is one of the most prominent structures of the Qajar era in Tehran, built and expanded from 1224 AH to 1241 AH by Fath Ali Shah Qajar and funded personally by Mahd Aliya. Fath Ali Shah sought to immortalize his name through philanthropic activities and the adornment of this mosque, utilizing the talents and writings of the greatest poets and artists of his court, such as Majmar, Fath Ali Khan Saba, and Mirza Mohammad Mah-di, known as Malek-ol-Ketab. The artists' goal in writing and designing these inscriptions was to express religious beliefs and values, as well as to articulate the demands and wishes of the religious community to those in power, including the Qajar government. Overall, the decorative inscriptions of Shah Mosque in Tehran can be categorized into two groups: construction and religious inscriptions. The construction inscriptions encompass the years of establishment and expansion of Shah Mosque from 1224 to 1241 AH and its repairs in 1307 AH, the names of

Qajar kings such as Fath Ali Shah and Naser al-Din Shah, and poems from famous poets of Fath Ali Shah's court, such as Fath Ali Khan Saba and Majmar. Moreover, most of the construction inscriptions of Imam (Shah) Mosque are in the handwriting of Mirza Mohammad Mahdi, one of the most renowned calligraphers of Fath Ali Shah's time. The religious inscriptions of Imam (Shah) Mosque include Quranic surahs such as Al-Jumu'ah, Al-Munafiqun, Al-Mulk, Al-Insan, and Al-Fatiha, parts of verses from major surahs like Al-Baqarah and Al-Imran, or all verses from smaller surahs in the 30th Juz, such as Al-Zalzalah, Al-Alaq, Al-Qadr, Al-Nas, and verse 35 of Surah Al-Nur, as well as blessed names like Allah and Ali. Each of these inscriptions was crafted and executed on seven-colored and brick tiles by artisans from Isfahan and Tehran. The scripts used in the decorative inscriptions of Imam (Shah) Mosque in Tehran include Nasta'liq, Thuluth, Muqarnas, or Bina'i, with Nasta'liq script gaining significant prominence during the Qajar period due to the Qajar society's need for writing and its Iranian origins. Additionally, Arabic was used for writing the words of God, while Persian was employed for poetry and prose alongside Arabic.

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