

# The Role of Ornamentations in Retrieving Iranian-Islamic Identity of Urban Façades; Case Study: Mashhad's Bala and Paein Khiaban Historical Axes

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## ABSTRACT

Due to the contradiction emerged between Iranian traditions, Islamic culture and modernization in recent decays, the following questions have been raised; where is the position of our indigenous culture and religious values? And how should architecture and urbanism, which are the explicit expression of such values behave? Meanwhile, urban facades, as part of the cityscape, which convey the cultural concepts and stabilize the urban identity, as well as Islamic ornamentations, which were inseparable parts of the architecture and city in past, play a key role in this regard. The present study is descriptive-analytical research which is carried out using field studies in form of direct observation, as well as library studies. This research evaluates the position of Islamic ornaments of the urban façade using an adaptive-comparative method and scrutinizes their roles in stabilizing the Iranian-Islamic identity. Hence, the historical facades of Bala and Paein Khiaban alleys are studied in terms of colour, material, types of ornamentation, and the location on the façade. Then, the role of these façades in stabilizing Iranian-Islamic identity is evaluated based on the Indicators of Islamic Culture including beliefs, social life, and indigenous values. The results show that the ornaments of the mentioned facades, which are all two-story with the flat skyline, are mainly geometrical ones. The applied materials are brick as well as Moaghelli and Moarragh tiling mostly used in the upper part of the building facade. These ornaments play a noticeable role in retrieving various aspects of Islamic values in urban facades and cityscape.

**Keywords:** Ornaments, Iranian-Islamic Identity, Urban Facades, Cityscape, Bala and Paein Khiaban.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

City and urban spaces, due to the process of development based on globalization during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, have been experienced considerable changes and transformations; This process leads to an identity crisis. Accordingly, the relation between the past and the present of urban spaces were disrupted, and the meaningful relationship between human and its residential environments, as well (Daneshpour, 2005, p. 54). Meanwhile, what is regarded as a crucial concern in various aspects of the culture and affects art, architecture, and cityscape as the expression of the cultural issue, is the identity crisis. This fact is due to the encounter between Islamic culture and civilization, especially in Iran, with global culture, which raises the following questions: What are the valuable and original characteristics of Iranian-Islamic culture and who is Iranian? That is why, nowadays, evaluating our cultural identity and self-consciousness is essential more than ever. The Iranian-Islamic culture and identity represent the cultural characteristics of this country (Iran). This should be epitomized in all aspects of life, specifically in architecture and urbanism fields (Mahdavinejad, Bemanian, & Khaksar, 2010, p. 114). Although the discussion of identity is as old as human life, its study in the cityscape has not the same history. Since the concept of identity encompasses the historical connection to the past, and the human's perception of the city is based on the physical aspects and essentially material environments, the city form has to encompass the past. If there are not any symbols of the past in the city, its identity will fade (Atashinbar, 2009, p. 51). In Iranian cities related to the Islamic era, urban ornaments were regarded as impressive elements of the cityscape. Various examples can be found in different cities such as Isfahan, Yazd, Tabriz, Mashhad, etc. Ornaments in Islamic art and architecture has a specific role (Ansari, 2002, p. 59). In the Islamic era, urban facades kept their unity in all aspects and bestowed a harmonious scape to the citizens through having the same height and sometimes the skylines with a tipping point such as mosque's dome. However, the buildings, with various functions and façade patterns, acted in unity to create a harmonious cityscape. Meanwhile, ornamentations used in the Islamic era in Iran are so effective in retrieving this unity, since, with their various forms, colors, and materials, they provide a unified and harmonious cityscape while bestowing a specific character to every single building.

is the present study aims to explain the concepts of "identity" and "cityscape identity" in order to investigate the role of urban facades in identifying the city as well as to scrutinize the position of ornaments related to Islamic era in Iran in stabilizing the identity. To this end, this study investigates the historical facades of Mashhad's Bala and Paein Khiaban Rasteh (Alleys) in terms of ornament to assesses the level of ornaments' role in retrieving and maintaining the Iranian-Islamic identity.

## 2. RESEARCH METHOD

on the present study is a descriptive-analytical research was carried out by library study. At the first step, to obtain the theoretical background, the concepts of cityscape, identity, and aesthetics were studied from the Islam perspective and based on Islam culture and the role of ornamentation in identifying the cityscape was scrutinize by investigating and analyzing the information, documents, pictorial and internet sources. This research also evaluated the position of Islamic ornaments of the urban façade with the adaptive-comparative method and investigated their role in stabilizing the Iranian-Islamic identity. Afterward, with the presence of the authors in Paein and Bala Khiaban Alleys and direct observation, the urban facades of the mentioned alleys were described and analysed. Then, the ornaments of these urban facades were investigated in terms of the retrieval of the Islamic culture and identity based on the principals applied to realize the Islamic culture in the urban facades.

## 3. RESEARCH BACKGROUND

No comprehensive and direct research has been conducted on the role of Islamic ornaments in identifying urban facades, but abundant research has been conducted on ornaments, ornamentation techniques and methods, and the history of each techniques. Some of the studies have investigated ornament types such as arabesque, Khatei, and geometrical ornaments. In the introduction of his book entitled "Architectural Decorations of Iran in Islamic Period", Mohamad Yousef Kiani referred to the continuous use of the ornamentation methods common in the ancient Iran for decorating architectural monuments the Islamic era. Additionally, Mahdi Makinejad has reviewed all studies conducted on decoration type in a historical period or a certain type of decoration used or a distinctive monument from this perspective in his book entitled "Persian art history in Islamic period: architectural decorations". Meanwhile, Morteza Goudarzi investigated the ornamentations of five historical monuments related to the Qajar era in Tehran and described the features of decorations used in this era in his book entitled "Mirror of imagination, Analysis of Architectural decoration of Qajar Period". Moreover, there are research projects which have developed data, mapped walls, and investigated them. Among them, we can refer to the research project entitled "Body construction of historical-cultural axis of Tarabiat Street" which was carried out in the Research Center of Tabriz Islamic Art University by Zamani and his colleagues and the research project entitled "Investigation of Mashhad's Historical Urban Façade in terms of Ornamentation, Material, and Construction Techniques" by authors and their colleagues, in which the materials, ornamentations and techniques used to construct Mashhad's Bala and Paein Khiaban alleys were investigated.

#### 4. EXPLANATION OF THE CONCEPTS OF IDENTITY AND CITYSCAPE IDENTITY

In addition to literally defining identity using the first name, surname, father name, and other characteristics the person is known by them, Amid Persian dictionary defines the identity as the truth of an object or a person that includes its or his/her intrinsic attributes: character, nature, existence, and entity (Amid, 1984). Moreover, in Dehkhoda dictionary, the word “Hova (He)” has been presented to express the root and origin of the word identity. Sometimes, identity indicates the external existence and sometimes the nature with individuation and is defined as “partial truth” (Dehkhoda, 1958, p. 23596). In the Persian mystical literature, the most comprehensive meaning of “identity” is the absolute essence, and thus it has been sometimes represented with the meaning of existence and being (Rahimzadeh, 2000, p. 263).

Like any other human work, an identity can be considered for the city and the human living environment. In addition to having roots in the human identity and thought, the urban identity strengthens the historical identity, cultural identity, functional identity, physical identity, natural identity, religious identity, and human identity (Naghizadeh, 2007, pp. 350-362). Considering the identity exists in historical monuments, Alexander says: “The identity in these monuments is neither due to the being historical nor being primary of their construction process (Alexander, 2002, p. 457). In defining the environmental identity, some city planners, such as Kalen, further emphasize the physical design styles, details, properties, prominences, and methods through which the spaces and monuments are formed. In fact, this perspective can be considered as a classic, mental-rational perspective in urban design. In his book entitled “Good City Form”, Lynch defines identity with a very simple meaning i.e., place: Identity means the extent to which a person can identify a place as a place distinct from other places such that it has a specific and unique character (Lynch, 2002). Considering all aspects related to identity types and orders, various factors and elements can be considered as the identical signs of a city or architectural element: the identical components of the city can be classified into two main groups: “form” and “content”. Of course, other names can be selected for these two groups, including the appearance and inside, apparent and hidden, physical and conceptual, and objective and subjective. In the first group i.e., form traits, we can refer to the sign, size, number, population, cleanliness, pollution, performance, crowdedness, etc. and in the second group i.e., content traits, we can refer to topics such as symbols, meaning, history, public culture, performance, behavior, beauty, purity, etc., (Naghizadeh, 2007, pp. 351-361).

#### 4.1. View of Urban Facades

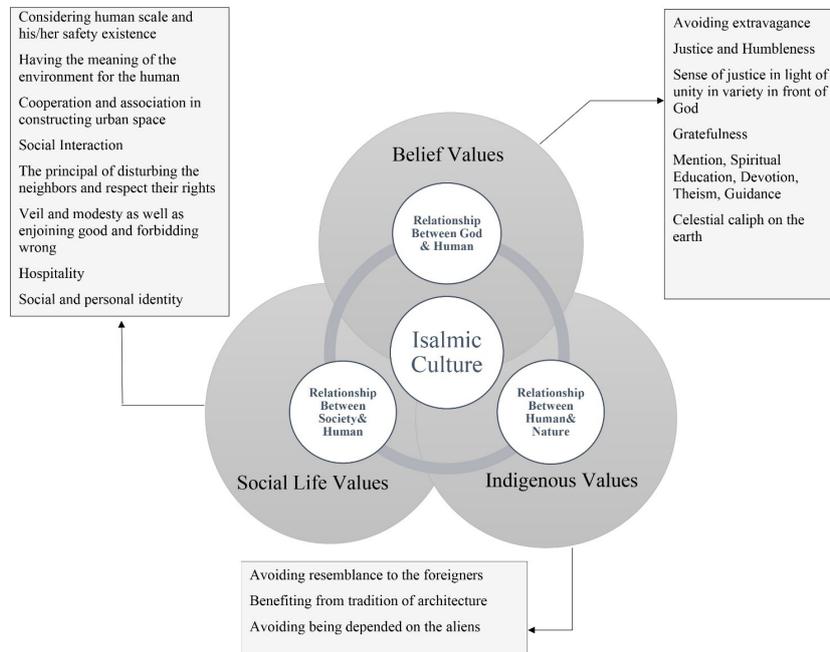
The current city is a space in which human experiences his perceptions of the world. Accordingly, the city as a new element for the next generations, is regarded as part of the environment that plays a role in making their mentality (Mansouri, 2007, pp. 49-50). From Schultz’s points of view, the sense of space and perception of the environment have been tied with memories. He seeks part of the place meaning in human’s experiences and mental states. For him, the place is the same vital space, being alive both in particular and general sense ((Norberg – Shulz, 2003, p. 73). Among urban spaces, streets constitute the most important, sensitive, and largest spaces of a city (Bahreini, 2008, pp. 6-5). According to John Lang, the quality perceived from the city depends on the quality of its streets more than anything else (lang, 2007, p. 130). One of the most important urban physical elements affecting urban space by citizen and strengthening the sense of place is the composition of the buildings’ façades, and in other words, the “urban façade”. To put it differently, the city is a common visual platform that all citizens faces it inevitably every day and should use it (Tashakkori, 2013, p. 3). Meanwhile, the façade is the interface between the building walls and public space which is not only the surface, and can embrace more or less prominent volumetric elements proportional to the building form (Deilmann, Bickenabach, & Pfeiffer, 1987, p. 23). The urban facades can be investigated from several aspects: a. the wall elements and organization of these elements with regard to the general goals and environmental perception, b. the consistency of the wall with citizens’ needs, activities, and behaviors, and c. the legalities related to the construction and maintenance of urban walls with regard to the goals of preservation of the cultural continuity and types of utilizations (Tabatabaei, 2011).

#### 4.2. Explanation of the Concept of Iranian-Islamic Identity and Urban Facades

Islamic-Iranian identity is an issue that should be present in all aspects of life as well as the fields of architecture and urbanism. Undoubtedly, Islam, as the heritage inherited from the prophet Muhammad (PBUH), is one of the main elements constituting our today’s identity such that when about it comes to Islamic-Iranian culture, we mean the cultural system that embraces other elements because in this culture, the criterion of familiarity is adaptability with monotheistic values or at least lack of inconsistency with it (Moftakhari, 2014). Iranian traditional architecture basics refer to the principles and values that firstly root in the religious and spiritual beliefs of Iranians, and secondly, guide the authors of prominent architectural and urban works without historical interruption due to Iranians’ practice, truth-seeking, and modernism, in contact with other civilizations, based on Islamic-Iranian

worldview, in the cultural context and with permanent purification and evolution, and thirdly, can be referred as constant principles (Naghizadeh, 2000, p. 80). In their research conducted based on the characteristics of Islamic culture originated from Islamic worldview and ontology, Naghizadeh et al., (2010) developed a

framework to investigate the effect of these cultural principles on urban facades. The characteristics of Islamic culture, that are formed based on the relationship of human with God, society, history, and nature, are classified into believable, socials, and indigenous values (Figure 1).



**Fig. 1. The Principals of Islamic Culture**  
(Retrieved From Naghizadeh, Zamani, & Eslam, 2010)

The urban walls façade is of the first layers the people face in the city. It is one of the main elements of the city used in conveying the cultural concepts and reading the city identity. Behind urban facades, all buildings indicate the cultural goals of their society at the architectural scale. Among Islamic concepts, three fundamental concepts: the transmission from plurality to oneness (important slogan of monotheism and theism), the transition from appearance to inside (important slogan of resurrection in Islam), and the transition to the lofty goals of life (embracing two aspects: monotheism and resurrection) are regarded as the bases whose concepts are physically expressed in different ways by art and architecture (Noghrehkar, 2015, pp. 331-332). The knowledge of architecture forms social values and beliefs, social culture, traditions and values as the urban façade, and the urban facades show the values created by coexistent traditions, such as generosity, pleasantness, trueness, and the unconditional sense of confidence and respect to others (Falamaki, 2006).

#### 4.3. Ornaments of Iranian Architecture in the Islamic Era and the Identity of the Urban facade

Hossein Nasr, in his book entitled "Islamic art and spirituality", wrote about the beauty and its relation

with the artwork form as follows: the artist's task is to translate the Islamic principles into aesthetic language; conveying them to forms and themes should be realized in structures and be used in decorating all objects, from altars, palaces to the most humble home appliances (Nasr, 1996). Motahhari divided the aspects of aesthetics into three categories including tangible, intangible and rational beauties (Motahhari, 1993). Tending to decoration is one of human's inherent demands required for his social life and given to him by God (Ansari, 2002, p. 66). This matter is mentioned in the verses of the Qur'an including Surah Al-A'raf, verses 31 and 32: O Children of Adam! Have your embellishments at every place of worship. Eat and drink, but do not be extravagant. Surely, He does not love the extravagant (verse 31) and Say: "Who has prohibited the embellishment of Allah which He has brought forth for His servants and clean things from the provision"? That is for those who believe (who are âmenû, who wish to reach Allah before death) in the life of this world. And exclusively for them on the Day of Resurrection as well. Thus, do we explain the Verses individually for people who know (verse 32) (Pourseif, 2013, p. 407; The Noble Quran, 2020). Hillenbrand, in his book entitled "Islamic architecture", expounded that Islamic buildings include aesthetic aspects through applying mathematics, sense of hierarchy, a tendency towards symbolism, excessive love to embellishment

which is more than mere pretense (Hillenbrand, 2001). The ornaments are considered inseparable element of Islamic architecture, discussing Islamic architecture without considering the ornaments is incomplete, since most parts of the Islamic architecture are dedicated to the ornaments that play a noticeable role in realizing the objectives of Islamic architecture and even in its formation and durability (Makinejad, 2002, p. 68). With the beginning of the historical period and development of human civilization, the ornamentation drew more attention to itself, accordingly, the integration between ornaments with architecture has been grown (Makinejad, 2010; Bemanian, Momeni, & Soltanzadeh, 2012). Among the Islamic motifs, geometric ones were highlighted in terms of their importance as a metaphor of celestial unity. For example, Nasr, in his book entitled "Science and Civilization in Islam", claimed that the Muslims' love towards mathematics, especially geometry, is directly related to the gist of Islam's message, which is monotheism. Burckhardt, in the preface of the book "Geometric Concepts in Islamic Art" by El-Said; Ayşe Parman, regards the sacred geometry of the Islamic art to the concept of monotheism: the basis of this geometry is circle which is the image of an infinite whole and it becomes a pitched polygon if divided equally. These polygons may be converted to several star-like polygons and expand in a proportionate and harmonic manner (Necipoğlu, & Al-Asad, 1995). Inscriptions and manuscript ornaments in general have a noticeable role in transferring the Islamic culture. With the beginning of the Islamic era in Iran, previous scripts have been replaced by Arabic scripts that benefited from plentiful attention and sanctity (Makinejad, 2010). Meanwhile, the ornaments should be applied on urban wall façade in such a way that they bring unity and harmony and promote the culture and identity of the society. On the contrary, applying the ornaments in an urban facade improperly makes the cityscape losing its unity, identity and causes visual disturbance as well. So, the ornamentation should be harmonized and not bring visual disturbance for the facade (Tabatabaei, 2011, p. 32). On the other hand, since conceiving the cityscape has the highest dependence on the vision among the other sense, most of the cityscape is conceived by this sense (Parvizi, Ansari, & Salehi, 2012). Hence, ornaments of the urban facades, which are a combination of various patterns and colors, can play a considerable role in the citizen's perception of the city.

According to the beliefs in Islamic culture (Figure 1), Naghizadeh et al., (2010) proposed some principals for designing the building facades by which one can analyze the role of the ornaments: 1) The use of ornaments in the Islamic period based on the principle of avoidance of futility was not merely aesthetic and the issues such as strength and stability against atmospheric conditions were considered. Besides, the ornaments were basically applied in Iranian architecture in the Islamic era by local materials since

self-sufficiency is regarded as an important pillar of this architecture. Hence, brickworks, tiling and other ornamentation with different materials originated from their local context. 2. Justice and humbleness: in Iranian ornaments related to the Islamic era, especially on urban facades, despite encompassing variety and differences, considerable homology was observed on the building facades, showing respect to the whole city context and neighborhoods as well as avoiding any grandstanding among the other buildings. 3. Sense of justice under the shadow of unity in plurality and thralldom: Islamic ornaments, despite having variety in patterns and colors, have given harmony and unity to the urban facades due to being applied in geometrical, Eslimi or Khotaei forms. 4. Mention, spiritual education, thralldom, theism, guidance: Islamic ornaments, especially inscriptions, due to including Quranic spiritual senses, can be effective in educating human beings in the best way. 5. Celestial caliph on the earth: Islamic ornamentations, due to their various forms and colors, represent God's Soul in the building while conveying the koranic concepts and educating human beings.

In relation to the social life, considering the human scale in applying the ornaments is observed. For example, the ornamentations mostly applied in the mosques' domes are less detailed in comparison to the walls and surfaces located nearer to the audience. Preserving personal and collective rights is another issue that can be considered in the study of ornaments. Islamic ornaments, despite having a variety in their design, a wide range of patterns including Geometrical, Kohtaei, and Eslimi, as well as including inscriptions, can bestow specific identity to each specific building and concurrently provide unity and harmony between all the buildings. Using harmonic and appropriate colors can help to this matter. In revival and preservation of indigenous values, Islamic ornaments, in spite of their potential for making changes during their design process, contain historical values and preserve indigenous values, avoiding resemblance to and dependency on foreigners.

## 5. BALA AND PAEIN KHIABAN ALLEYS IN MASHHAD

Until the early 1950s, Mashhad had only one street like Char-Bagh, extended from west to east and constructed by Abbās the Great (the 5th Safavid Shah of Iran). This street was concurrent with the construction of Atigh Courtyard (Sahn) in the Safavid era, as a Char-Bagh with four lines of trees and a stream of water in the middle of the street. In 1638, its constriction was commanded and it was finished in 1645. The west side of it was named "Bala Khiaban" or "Khiaban-e Olia" and its east side was "Paein Khiaban" or "Khiaban-e Sofla" extended from the refuge (bast in Persian) of Paein khiaban towards the east, to Panj-Rah Street (Figure 2). There have been several maps of Mashhad

the first of which was provided by Khanykov in 1858 (Khanykov, 2016). The second map dated to 1876 and produced by MacGregor (MacGregor, 1999). After Herat and Qazvin, Mashhad's street was the third street construction experience in Iran. The direction of this street was north-east to south-east and two gates belonged to Bala and Paein Khiaban were built at the beginning and end of this street (Mahvan, 2004, p. 461; Rezvani, 2005, p. 227).

Haghighat bin et al., regarding the designs of this street (Bala and Paein Khiaban) and Char-bagh in Isfahan, express: They follow the same principals for providing a multi-functional urban public space with the street form. They also stated that these principals were proportionate with the spatial situation and the elements in the site, so they had different forms (Haghighat bin, Ansari, & Pourjafar, 2009, p. 50).

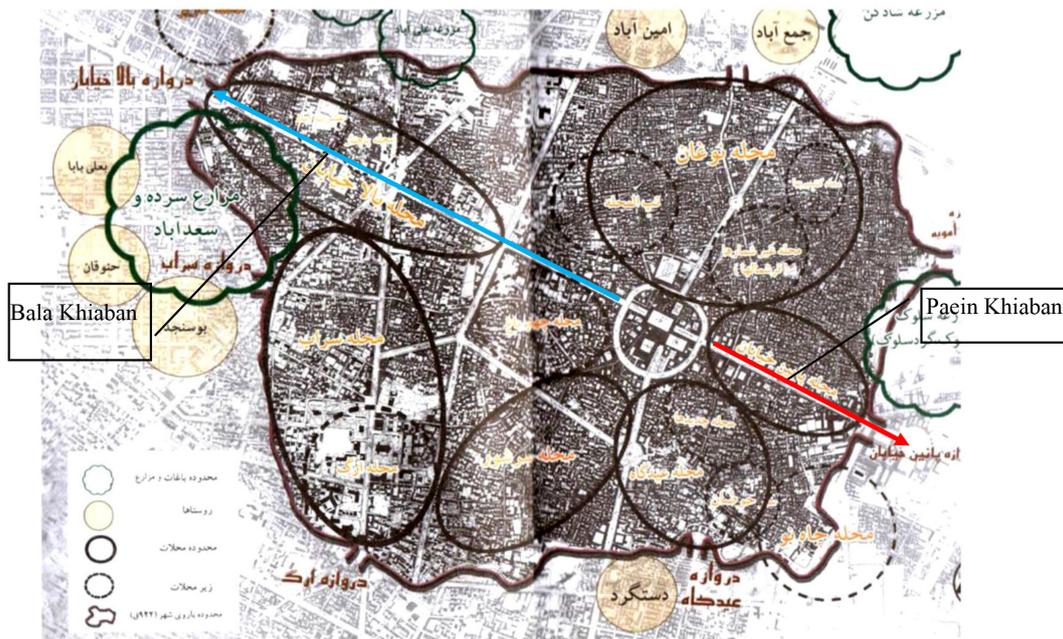


Fig. 2. Mashhad's Map in Qajar Era

In This Map, Paein Khiaban Is Marked with Red Lines, While Bala Khiban with Blue Ones by Authors. (Rezvani, 2005)

From Safavid until early Pahlavi era, Mashhad's Bala and Paein khiaban alleys were the only main streets of the mentioned city. In the early part of the Pahlavi period they were linked with each other by building two squares, North square built in 1930 and South square in 1931, to facilitate the vehicle traffic (Seyyedi, 2009). This issue resulted in building beautiful two-story buildings around the squares. Although both of these streets were built in the Safavid era, in the next periods especially Qajar and Pahlavi, experienced some changes. At the end of the Qajar period, the owners of buildings on both sides of this street and shopkeepers violated street privacy and reduced its width. At the time of deceased Asadi, in order to organize the context of Mashhad City and to develop it, before constructing new streets, he commanded shopkeepers and owners who were exceeded the street boundary to recede considering a 28-meter width for the street. Besides, to unify the Balav and Paein khiaban alleys, he commanded to renovate these two streets, collected all the stands and sellers, constructed short walls on two sides of the water stream and made it a beautiful element (Mahvan, 2014, p. 463). Considering the fact that Bala and Paein khiaban

alleys were regarded as the spine of the City, most of the residential and commercial buildings on margins of the streets had valuable facades. Hence, what have been inscribed as historical and valuable facades in the Cultural Heritage Organization of Iran are of these alleys' facades. These are the facades of 15 buildings, as illustrated in Figure 3 considering their location on the street. According to the information acquired from Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization, all of these buildings have certificates which were inscribed with their previous or current owners' names or their addresses.



**Fig. 3. Mashhad's Bala and Paein Khiaban Façades' Views Registered in Cultural Heritage Organization.** (The Authors Based on Afifi, Talaei, 2014; Achieve of Iran's Cultural Heritage Handicrafts and Tourism Organization)

### 6. STUDY OF THE ORNAMENTS OF MASHHAD'S BALA AND PAEIN KHIABAN FACADES

As abovementioned, 15 buildings of Bala and Paein Khiaban alleys were inscribed by Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization of Iran. All of these buildings are two-story and ornamentations were applied on their upper floor. In Table 1, the location of each building, façade material, types of ornament, their color and patterns are illustrated separately.

Besides, in Figure 4, the information presented in Table 1 is analyzed. It is found that in all buildings, the greatest ornaments were applied on the façade context, followed by window cornice, cymatium, and capital, respectively, and the least ornaments were applied on transom. The material of all of the façades is brick, and brickwork and tiling are used as ornaments on the façades. Among the colors, yellow is used in all of the buildings, followed by turquoise and azure blue with the same degree, brown, grey, pink and white, respectively.

**Table 1. The Ornaments of Mashhad's Bala and Paein Khiaban Axes' Façades. This Table Shows the Locations of All Fifteen Inscribed Buildings, Their Ornament Pattern, Ornament Color, Façade Material and the Location of Ornament on Façade**

Name	Location	Ornament	Types of Ornament	Location of the Ornament			Materials			Colors						
				Window cornicelions	Cymatium	Façade Context	Wood	Brick	Stone	Yellow	Brown	Black	Turquoise blue	Pink	Azure blue	Grey
Ajil-chi			Brickwork Plasterwork Tiling Inscriptions Mirror Work Wood Curving Sculpture Transom													
Dehgahn																
Ghaffarian																



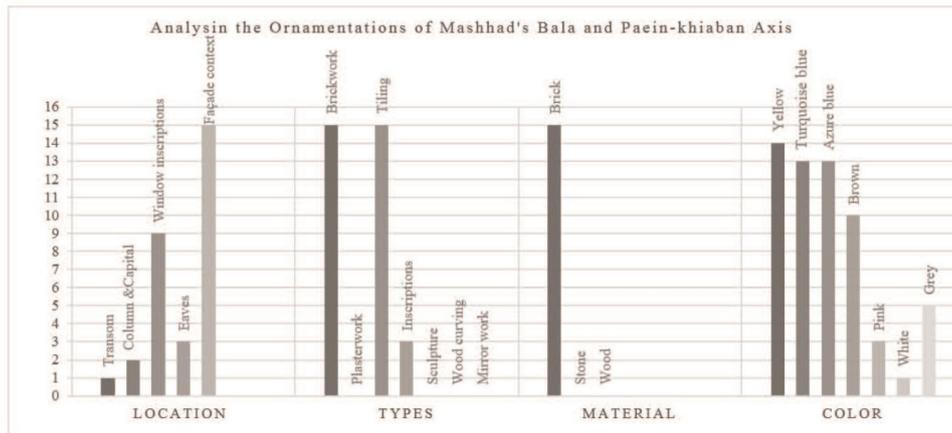


Fig. 4. The Analysis of Ornaments of Mashhad's Bala and Paain Khiaban Alleys Based on the Information Listed in Table 1

In Table 2, the role of ornamentation in realizing the Iranian-Islamic identity is investigated. Moreover, based on the abovementioned principals, the presence of ornaments of Bala and Paain Khiaban and their

role in achieving this objective are analyzed. To do this, the information listed in Tables 1 and 2 has been used to evaluate the presence of ornamentation in these two façades.

Table 2. Investigation of the Role of Iranian-Islamic Ornaments in Identifying the Urban Facades and Analyzing the Potentiality of Ornaments of Bala Nad Paain Khiaban Based on the Abovementioned Principals of Islamic Culture

Islamic Culture	The role of Ornaments in Realizing Islamic Objectives	The Ornaments of Mashhad's Bala and Pain Khiaban Streets	The Level of Impact of Mashhad's Historical Urban Facades on Islamic Identity
Avoidance of Extravagance	The ornaments of Iranian architecture of Islamic era were applied based on the self-efficiency principal, not only in terms of aesthetic aspects but also considering functional objectives. Besides, the applied materials of ornamentation were mainly local, including tiles and brick and where available, wood and stone were used, too.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The ornaments of these façades are mostly tiling and brickwork regarded as local materials of the region.</li> <li>The ornamentations provide aesthetic aspects as well as preventing the façades from being destroyed by precipitation.</li> </ul>	Low Average High
Justice and Humbleness	In the urban façades of Iran's Islamic era, the ornaments were applied mainly on distinct buildings especially dome and transom of the mosques, bazars and schools, etc. Hence, the personal buildings did not have any opportunity for show off. On the other hand, due to applying local materials, the ornaments were not regarded as a superiority for one personal building.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Due to the homology, i.e. similarity in applied geometric patterns of ornaments, in addition to physical indicators, including flat skylines, close relation between form and the context in all buildings, and same colors in all façades, no special façade is more distinguishable and pretentious than the other façades.</li> </ul>	Low Average High
Belief			
Unity in plurality	The ornaments of Iran in Islamic era, especially geometric ones, including Eslimi and Khotaei, unify the urban façades in terms of formalism by their harmony in form in spite of great variety. Moreover, the ornaments are mostly geometric and centripetal. They approach a focal point in spite of expansion in various directions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Façade scale: since the all ornaments applied in the studied façades are geometrical and enjoy almost the same colors, in spite of the fact that the related patterns are so various, there is unity between all of the studied façades.</li> <li>Single building: In some façades, because of various width divisions, there exist various parts. Accordingly, in less buildings, all of the parts have the same color and patterns, so there is not unity in most of the façades.</li> </ul>	Low Average High

Spiritual Education, Theism	Inscriptions, which are regarded as distinguishable ornaments of the Iranian-Islamic era, mostly contain Quranic concepts, so they play an important role in conveying the celestial meaning to the beholders. Besides, the Eslimi, Khotaei and geometrical ornaments are mostly centripetal and draw human's attentions to the transmission from unity to plurality as well as the presentence of the theism.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applying the inscription containing Quran verses on top of the windows and transoms, conveys the concepts of the celestial concepts and plays an educational role in straightening the sense of spirituality for the audience.</li> <li>• The geometrical patterns, which are the dominant ornaments of the façade, express the unity and are a sign of the theism.</li> </ul>	Low	Average	High	
Belief	Human as Celestial Caliph on the Earth	The Islamic ornaments express the creativity of Muslims which was realized in the material through patterns and concepts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The ornaments on the studied urban facades shows the artwork of their creator and his soul blown to the material and patterns.</li> </ul>	Low	Average	High
Social Life	Considering Human Scale	Ornaments can break the big scales of the buildings and represent them in urban scale in proportionate to the human scale. The ornaments of mosques' domes which can be seen from far distances, had less details compared to surfaces at lower levels and near distances.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In the studied facades, since the ground floor mostly consists of commercial land-use with wide openings, most of the ornaments were used on the upper level, while still the pedestrians can conceive them.</li> <li>• At the car scale, due to the fast speed of vehicles, only the color of the ornaments is considerable, while applying them on the second floor, at higher height, shows attention to the distance of the beholder.</li> </ul>	Low	Average	High
Maintenance of Collective Identities and Individual Rights		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Since the Islamic ornaments are so various, urban facades enjoying them, in spite of miscellaneous patterns of the ornaments, can have their unique identity while having the unity with the other building facade in one urban axis and presenting social identity of the city.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Each of the building façade in the Bala and Paein Khiaban has geometrical ornaments and benefits from almost the same color with the other facades. Hence, these two alleys present their identity as a whole to the pedestrians.</li> <li>• Some buildings, in spite of the unity of the whole street façade, lack harmony in their divisions as a single façade. This issue makes their identity to become weaker to the extent that various parts of one facade may seems belonging to the different facades.</li> </ul>	Low	Average	High
Avoiding Resemblance to the Foreigners	The ornaments used in Iranian buildings of the Islamic era benefit from the patterns which are abstraction of plant patterns, geometrical and inspired from Quran verses presented on inscriptions. Accordingly, they are so special and prominent and they have less resemblance to the foreign patterns. So, applying them to urban façades makes them independent form non-local patterns. However, providing variety in local patterns can add the creative aspect to them.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Although the studied facades have Gereh-chini ornament as one of the most prominent Islamic ornaments, and tiles and brick were used as local materials in them, applying colors including black, pink, dark yellow and brown are not related to the traditional tiling in Iranian architecture of Islamic era.</li> <li>• The Sun-Lion (Shir-o Khorshid) symbol used in inscription and on the window cornice is of symbols imported to Iran since the Qajar period.</li> </ul>	Low	Average	High	

## 7. CONCLUSION

Nowadays, cityscape and its role in identifying the city are of great importance. Urban façade is one of the parameters having a noticeable impact on transferring the culture of a city and strengthening its identity and unity. At the present time, in Iran, urban facades, due to lack of dominant principals and lack of harmony in material, skyline and etc., experience indescribable visual disturbance. While, in the past, urban facades and remarkable buildings of the city, such as mosques, had more harmony compared to the current cities. In most of the cities of Iran in the Islamic era, ornamentas played a fundamental role in unifying urban facades. Since the Islamic ornaments, such as inscriptions, contain Quranic verses and narratives, they can best express the Islamic culture and can convey its identifying message to the buildings and the urban facades. On the other hand, the ornaments, such as Eslimi and geometrical patterns, inherently express the concept of “unity in plurality”, which is regarded as one of the profound concepts of Islam to reach monotheism.

according to Figure 4, it can be concluded that in Mashhad’s Bala and Paein Khiaban alleys studied in this research, although a part of their facades is remained, they can express the identity of the Iranian-Islamic urban facades. This is due to the fact that, in terms of physical design principals, there is a noticeable harmony in their skylines, groundline, building form, protrusion, façade outlines, fenestrations, materials, and above all, their ornamentations. However, there are some differences, including the variety in the façade width, which cannot be regarded as a disharmony for

them.

All of the facades are built of brick and in terms of ornaments, all of them include geometrical brickwork and mostly tiling, including Moarragh (Marquetry) and Moaghelli. This is the sign of unity between the studied urban facades. According to Table 2, about the principals used for realizing the Islamic identity by the ornaments, it can be concluded that the ornaments of Balal and Paein Khiaban alleys, in addition to the aesthetic aspects, have a functional role. Moreover, they were constructed using indigenous potentiality and local materials.

On one hand, the harmony between the patterns, material colors and the location of the ornaments on facades represents the consistency, retention of the collective identity and lack of pretension in façade design. On the other hand, according to table 1, despite the harmony between the facades, the design of the ornaments in each single building facade, is specific to that building and shows the personal identity and lack of resemblance to the other urban facades. About the realization of Islamic culture, another principle considered in this research is the human scale as one of the social values. In these urban facades, due to the fact that the ornaments are on the upper part of the facades and have a rational distance to the beholders, it can be inferred that the human scale is considered. Accordingly, they have not excessive details because of their far distance. In general, Islamic ornaments of these facades with geometrical patterns and inscriptions, containing God’s words, are the expression of the spirit of monotheism epitomized in the material and have a considerable role in conveying the Islamic objectives.

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