

The Effect of Sufi and Mystic Thoughts on Islamic Architectural Heritage

Mahdi Suhail Mahdi Alkilidar¹, Prof. Dr. Saba Jabbar NeamaAlKhafaji^{2,*}

¹College of Engineering - University of Baghdad, Department of Architecture, Baghdad, Iraq,

²College of Engineering - University of Baghdad, Department of Architecture, Baghdad, Iraq, Alkilidar2020@gmail.com¹,
dr.saba_alkhafaji@yahoo.com²

Article Info

Volume 83

Page Number: 14823 – 14835

Publication Issue:

March - April 2020

Article History

Article Received: 24 July 2019

Revised: 12 September 2019

Accepted: 15 February 2020

Publication: 22 April 2020

Abstract:

The Islamic architectural heritage is a rich heritage with multiple sources and resources both intellectually and materially. The intellectual aspect has contributed to supplying the Islamic architectural heritage with the unity factor despite the diversity of spatial and temporal data. Unification of God Almighty and the relationship of the servants in terms of submission to him and comply with his orders such as the most important intellectual source that contributed to the formation of Islamic architecture and arts. Mystic Thought is one of the most important intellectual resources in the Islamic heritage and the most influential on the artistic and architectural output in Islamic countries. The research attempts to investigate the impact of Mystic Thought on Islamic architectural output in Iraq in particular. This is done by studying the holy Kadhimiya threshold and analyzing it according to Sufi architectural concepts.

Keywords: Islamic architecture, Mystic and Sufi thoughts, Architectural Heritage.

I INTRODUCTION TO MYSTIC THOUGHT

Islamic Mystic Thought originated during the second century AH. Its spread has influenced all aspects of intellectual life, including the arts and architecture. It served as a major force for the dissemination of the teachings of Islam, integrating the doctrinal dimension with philosophy and reason, and these ideas had the "greatest role in providing stability within Muslim societies that have suffered successive invasions". (Salvatore, 2016, p. 116)

The term mystic "Sufi in Arabic" is explained to wool (al-souf in Arabic), it is an expression of coarse clothing. The term Sufi means too serenity, cleanliness, and purity of the soul. (Saliba, The Philosophical Dictionary, 1985, pp. 1, p. 747).

The definition of Ibn Khaldun (dead- 1402) to the Sufism "is to worship God and renounce the pleasures of life and asceticism, and refuse

pleasures and isolated from people, to reach the right". (Ibn Khaldun, 1978, p. 467).

According to Roger Garaudy (famous French philosopher, 1913-2012), Sufism is a form of Islamic spiritual thought. "It represents the balance between resisting the desires of the soul, and the struggle against the desires that may distract man from his position, and work for the unity and harmony of the Muslim nation against all manifestations and forms of pagan powers or wealth and delusions that may move away by God Almighty". (Garaudy, 1985, p. 53)

II ARCHITECTURAL STUDIES DEALING WITH THE IMPACT OF MYSTIC "SUFU" THOUGHT IN THE ISLAMIC ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE

Titus Burckhardt's study entitled "Art of Islam language and meaning". Burckhardt emphasizes the symbolic value of Islamic art and architecture

as one of the arts directly related to the sanctity of Islam. In his view of the architectural and decorative elements of Islam is based on the view that there is a material and meaning in all the details of Islamic art and architecture, as it negates the idea of the arbitrary or meaningless form of Islamic art.

Seyyed Hossein Nasr's study entitled "Islamic art and spirituality". The study of the origins of Islamic art, according to the researcher, cannot be done in isolation from the study of spiritual matters. Nor can it be considered a mere material product and a follower of historical and civilizational factors and circumstances that contributed to its production and crystallization, because these studies do not take a noteworthy fact: this art has taken the sources of its formation, the first Quran as a divine revelation and the second is the Holy Prophet. In the legislation in addition to his moral presence (and the presence of his family, peace be upon them) by the so-called (Baraka Muhammad, in Arabic term) the Muhammadian grace "البركة المحمدية". Continuous flow. (Nasr, 1987)

Nader Ardalan and Laleh Bakhtiar's study entitled "The Sense of Unity: The Sufi Tradition in Persian Architecture". Researchers refer to that the interpretation of traditional Islamic architecture and its implications in its forms can only be made from a Mystic perspective. Exploring the idea of unity in traditional architecture and distinguishing how unity has been achieved during that architecture is understood by the idea that it is more spiritual architecture than anything else.

Samar Akhach's study entitled "Cosmology and architecture in premodern Islam". The author deals with the impact of Mystic ideas and Islamic Sufism movements on consolidating aspects of

aesthetic symbolism in the architecture that give the forms and elements meanings and content complementary to the apparent material body. Islamic Sufism, through the ideas of its pioneers as (Ibn Arabi and Abu Hamed al-Ghazali) contributed to the preparation of this aspect, i.e., the linking of form in the sense and content.

These studies dealt with the idea of the link between the spiritual meanings and the material from which the artist and Muslim architecture makes its architecture and its formation according to those meanings.

Most of these studies focused on three basic concepts in Mystic thought that influenced the Islamic artistic and architectural heritage:

First: beauty: It is an attribute of God Almighty, so it is according to the view of Sufism absolute and objective reality, it does not invent but discover and reproduce copies of it trying to reach, and absolute beauty is God Almighty. In architecture, beauty appears in several aspects in the use of arches and surface decorations and the quality of materials used and structural details.

Second: Sublime: It is a recipe for God is the Almighty (Zul Jalal Wal Ikram- in Arabic). It carries the meanings of dignity and dignity and finds a reflection in architecture through the organization of mathematical and engineering, symmetry and balanced relations and the ratio between the elements and what most expresses the form of majesty and magnitude and space organization.

Third: Perfection: Although the characteristic of perfection is God alone, but the Muslim architect and by Geometry and mathematics tried to reach perfection. These sciences played an integral role not only in terms of organization and in terms of proportion between the architectural plans and

elevations, but extends to decorative forms and Linear curves. Islamic art and architecture were not the result of abstract mechanical movements, but related to metaphysical meanings and Quran (Islam holy book) science.

Centralization and the existence of the origin point of the forms to which they belong, all of these principles integrated with symbolic ideas carried meanings of significance derived from their physical appearance and integrated with the worldview and its creator in the Islamic thought.

It is clear from the previous studies that they as a whole emphasize the role played by Sufism informing the meaning of architecture and Islamic art. Sufism has contributed to the unity of Islamic art over the centuries through its entrenchment of forms that may be the origin of the interaction of spatial or temporal conditions, but their continuity was a direct product of Islamic thought.

III MANIFESTATIONS OF MYSTIC THOUGHTS IN ISLAMIC ART AND ARCHITECTURE

3-1 Abstraction in Islamic Mystic thought and Islamic Architectural Heritage

The view of abstraction in Islamic art has acquired a spiritual and mystical dimension, in an attempt to reach the highest level of reflection on God. The Muslim artist refused to associate with the material and direct physical phenomena, considering it as a barrier to thinking to reach the knowledge of the absolute truth and to link to it. Therefore, the Muslim artist turned towards abstraction and linked his thought to mental sciences such as geometry and mathematics.

Ikhwan alSafa (Brethren of Purity) considered abstraction from the aspects that call for clarity of mind and rethink the absolute truth. (Ikhwān Al-Ṣafā, page 537)

In describing the Sufi view of beauty, Abi Hamid al-Ghazali says: "Beauty is divided into the beauty of the perceived image of the eye and the beauty of the picture perceived by the heart. Everything is beautiful, it is loved by the realizer of beauty, if it is aware of the heart is loved by the heart. "(Al-Ghazali, IheUllumaldeen "The Revival of the Religious Sciences", 2010, pp. 4-p. 303). Therefore, the beauty of the Sufi does not correspond to the direct sensory beauty necessarily but rise to the top of that to remove the absolute beauty of the limitations of the material and the concrete form of direct.

The Effect of Mystical Abstraction on Islamic Art.

1-Depart from the determinants of direct sense and look at the essence of things:

Muslim artists and architects at the level of decoration or architecture always search for the essence of things and away from direct senses. Although they did not care about things in concrete, they sometimes employed simplified forms of birds or animals to complete the idea and communicate it to the recipient. They realized that understanding and reception are at multiple levels and not everyone can have a high level of perception. {Figure 1} The pictures show that the Muslim artist used the birds' shapes abstractly in the inscriptions and decorations in the walls of the theRadhwia threshold in Mashhad in Iran.



Fig.1. An example of the use of bird shape in the decorations that adorn the walls of one of the corridors of the threshold of Radhwia in Mashhad, Iran.

Source: (Photo by researcher)

2-Infinity and the search for the Absolute

Hence the link between Islamic mystic thought between beauty and abstraction considering that the search for the Absolute requires to get rid of the limitations of matter and go towards God Almighty where the boundless of time, place and matter, the divine things occur I and directly without time and place unlike the natural things that It is bounded by space and time. Infinity appears in the levels of decorations and form of architectural elements through continuous repetition with the filling of spaces and the pivot towards the "Qibla" (in Makkah) or to the sky

through the minaret and domes. {Figure 2}

3-Geometric regularity

Muslims were very interested in the study of geometry and its sciences, which related with it. They considered it the way to understand the regularity in the movement of universes and planets. Since the third century AH, the study of (Euclidean geometry), and Ptolemaic astronomy (based on the ideas of the Greek philosopher Ptolemy) (Ptolemaic astronomy) is widespread throughout the world Islamic. (Akkach, 2005, p. 159)



Fig.2.Models of Islamic motifs in the Holy Kadhimiya shrine building.

Source: (Photo by researcher)

Attention to geometry and mathematics is not the goal itself, but the goal is to try to reach the true faith in God and knowledge of the abstract truth about the limitations of matter. This science helps to strengthen the potential of the mind by tracking the system and mathematical patterns, which helps to strengthen the "imagination" and visualize things with their inherent essence within them, which leads to the release of the limitations of the body and matter.

4-Circle

The circular shape played an important expressive role in Islamic art and architecture, and this role included the inherent aspects and characteristics of the shape geometrically and associated intellectual features directly reflected on Islamic architectural and decorative forms. The shape of the circle expresses "unity and centrality and inspires sacredness and eternity concept". (Sarand, M. Pakdel, & A. Taraf, 2013) The circle in its form, which unites the relationship between the center and all its surroundings at equal distances, is a source of inspiration for thinkers and meditators.

The circular shape simulates the movement in life, the universe, and the succession of night and day and in the movement of Muslims in circling the Kaaba and in the form in which Muslims stand in their prayers around the holy Kaaba.

5-Centralization in geometrical organization

The influence of Sufi thought of loneliness in existence and the absolute centrality of God Almighty extended to influence the Islamic architectural organization.

SammerAkkash states that the spatial pattern in all buildings in Islamic architecture is based on centralization. This centralization has two classes either centered on a closed centralized enclosed space. Like the Dome of Islamic shrines buildings, this model is frequently employed, characterized by regularity, symmetry and focus on the vertical axis. {figure 3} The figure shows the general plan of the Kadhimiya threshold with the longitudinal section, where the clear presence of the planning based on the engineering principles is shown in proportion, proportionality, axially, and directivity.

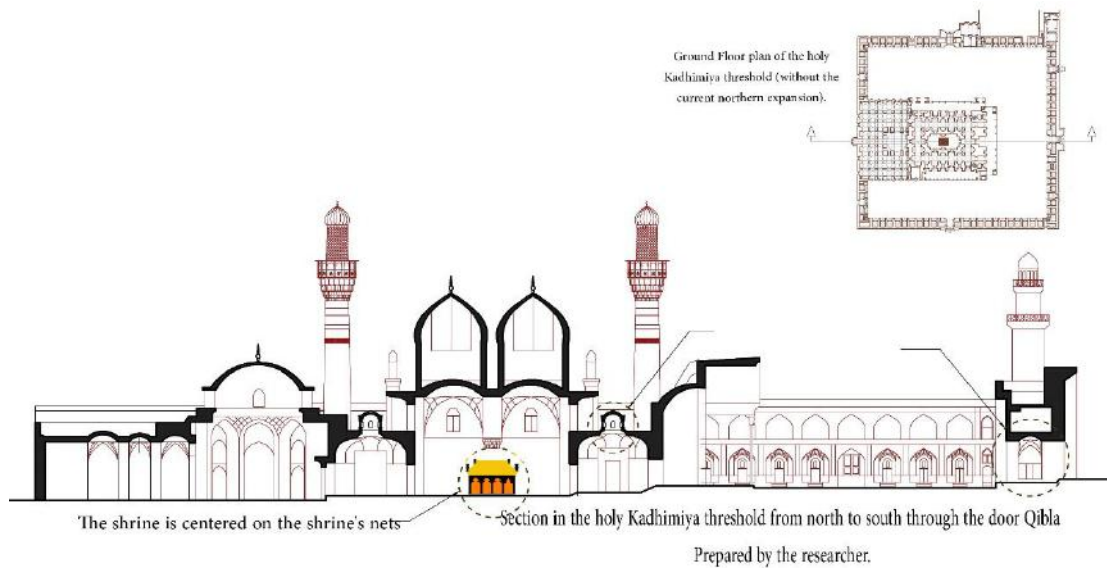


Fig.3. Ground floor plan of the holy Kadhimiya sill with a longitudinal section in the Holy Kadhimiya shrine building.

Source: (Alkilidar, 2014, p.314)

The use of linear organization based on the repetition of similar architectural units in the corridors surrounding the dishes, or in the markets (bazaars) in traditional Islamic cities. This emphasis on centralization stems from the idea that "unity exists and that the world has a center and everything that is around it. (Akkach, 2005, p. 180) {Figure 4} represents the patterns of space organization in Islamic architecture.

6. The relationship between the circle and the square

In Sufi Islamic thought represented a cosmic relationship between heaven and earth, or between the circular motion of the sky and the polarization of the square with its four pillars. Muqarnas

(Islamic architectural element- Squinch in English) {Figure 5} represents the transition state between the spherical and the square. This relationship between the cube and the circle derived the idea of domes based on a square scheme and was employed in the buildings of mosques and Islamic shrines. The design is simple in the form of a cube located at the top of a dome and connected with it through a smooth relationship with curves to represent the transition to the sky. (Burckhardt, 2009, p. 101) The dome bears spiritual concepts representing compliance with God's will and submission to His will.

The Muqarnas, as the link between the circle and the square, have gained great

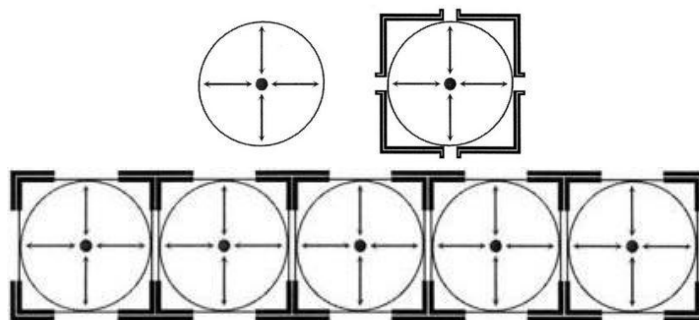


Fig. 4.Space organization models in Islamic architecture.
Closed central model, open central model and linear model.
Source: (Akkach, 2005, p. 70)

Importance in the expression of spiritual meanings. It represents one of the most important Islamic architectural elements, being employed in many places to solve the problem of communication between the vertical and

horizontal elements in the corners at the entrance arches and as a joint between the dome and its mostly square base. Muqarnas is based on a harmonious and integrated three-dimension

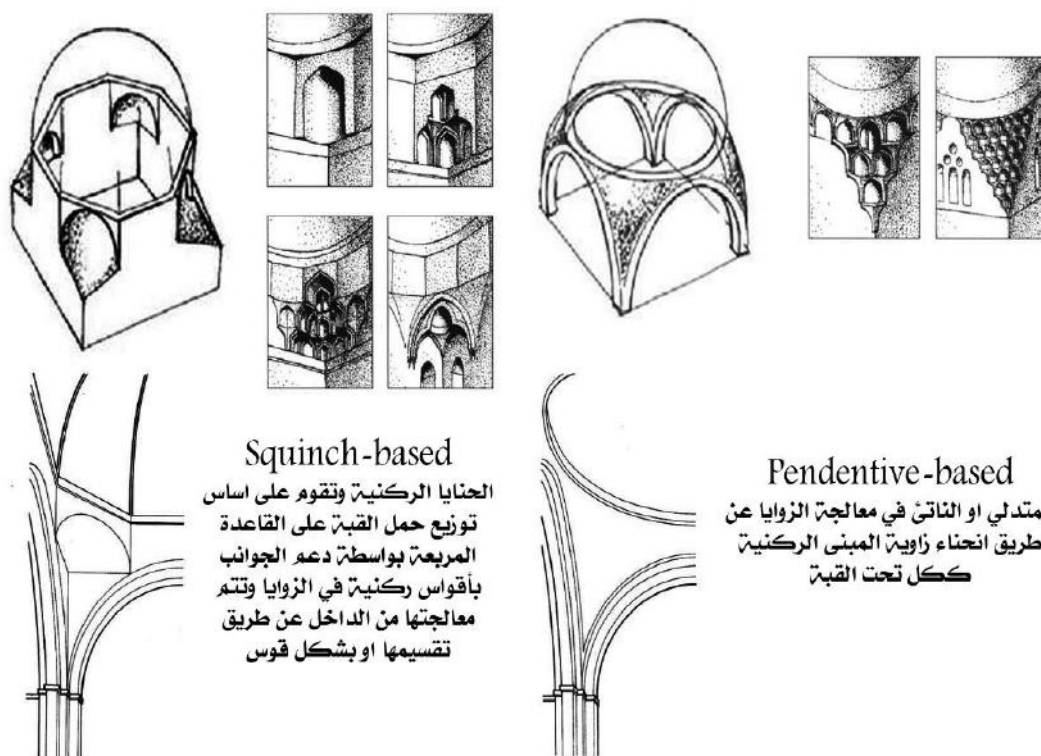


Fig. 5.Muqarnas in the Islamic architecture, used with domes, gates, nutchs...etc, as aesthetic treatment.

Source: (al-Kilidar, 2014, p.45)

Geometrical system. The square base symbolizes the earth and matter, belonging to the earth and its people and stillness, while the semi-spherical shape topped by the square base symbolizes the dome of the sky symbolizes mercy, and its height indicates the ascension, elevation, and separation from the earth and its interruption to God. (Mumtaz, 2018)

In the holy Kadhimiya threshold, the intensity of dealing with the Muqarnas element is observed in the corners of the building and its various sectors. This constructed element was enriched by the spiritual meanings of continuity, flow and the relationship between earth and sky. {Figure 6} shows some details of Muqarnas treatments at the corners of the holy Kadhimiya threshold.

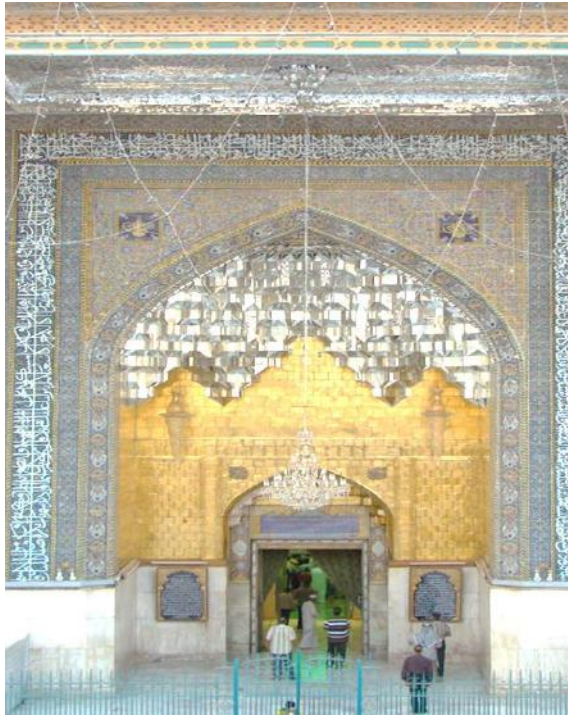


Fig. 6. Details of the Kadhimiya threshold, the eastern door of the threshold, and the details of the northern minaret. The intensity of employing the Muqarnas element in the transition processing. (Source: Researcher photo).

In the project of the mosque of the University of Marmara in the Republic of Turkey, by (Hassa Architecture Engineering Co) {Figure 7}. It was completed in 2018. The mosque derives its idea from two sources: the first, the Seljuk Islamic architectural heritage, in addition to the Ottoman architectural heritage in terms of the overall layout of the site and the location of the main elements.

The other source is the Sufi tradition, by emphasizing by The spiral rotating motion originating from the center of the dome and continuing indefinitely in a continuous rotation around the center. In this simulation of the movement of objects in the universe, small and large around the center of the universe.

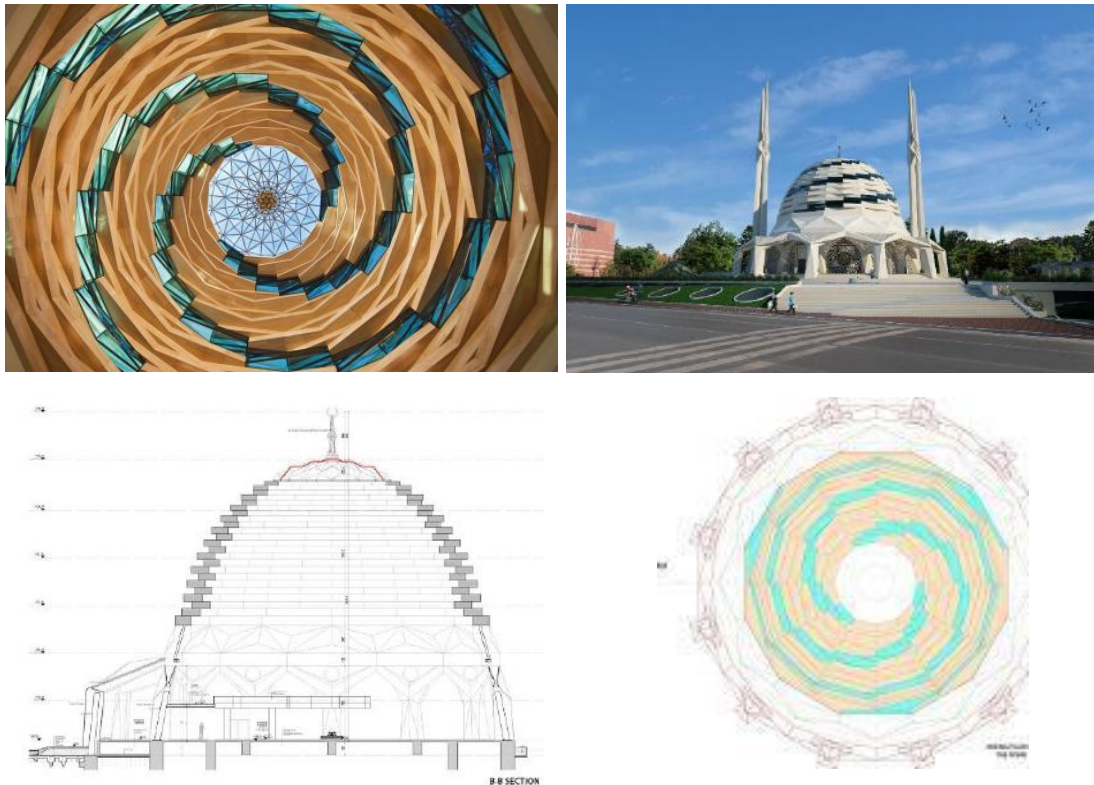


Fig. 7. Marmara University Mosque in Istanbul. The rotational movement of the dome was confirmed by treatments on the materials in the dome. This is a clear and direct reflection of the spiritual aspects of Islam in the desire to rise to heaven and the integration of matter with the soul through the continuous circular motion.

Source: <http://www.hassa.com/en/project/marmara-university-theology-faculty-mosque>
<https://www.turkey-post.net/p-98157>

3-2 Arabic calligraphy

A look of reverence and sanctification to the language in which the Holy Quran came down, prompted the calligrapher Arab and Muslim, to master the writing of his verses, and decorated with geometric and vegetal decoration, and a constant passion to improve his lines, to the perfection that brings him closer to the Creator. Gradually, with the development of the Arab-Islamic civilization, Arabic calligraphy gained an important place in the Islamic artistic heritage left by this civilization, not only in the Arab countries But in Asia, Africa, Europe and all the countries that Islam has reached until this pure Arab art have become a hallmark of the Arab-Islamic

civilization.

Sufis viewed the Arabic calligraphy with many interpretations of the meanings that hide behind its phenomena. According to the Sufis, the movement of writing Arabic calligraphy contained many contents. (Burckhardt, 2009, p. 52)

Types of Arabic calligraphy in its formations bear different content such as intensity and kindness. The Kufic calligraphy characterized by stability and stillness. It is the closest to be employed in friezes that are built of wage so that it can be formed due to its geometric nature. It was also the preferred calligraphy in Moroccan Islamic art, especially in stucco decoration.

The calligraphy characterized by its flexibility

and fluidity, as well as "every type of Arabic calligraphy has its plastic features that carry its esoteric meanings". (Ali & Ahmed Sansi Hassan, 2017, p. 46)

Seyyed Hossein Nasr points out that Arabic calligraphy is the basis of unity in Islamic arts.

•The emphasis of the Koran on writing and the role of the pen and calligraphy in the transfer of knowledge.

(الْقَلَمِ، ۲) وَالْقَلَمُ وَمَا يَسْطُرُونَ (2 al-Qalam, 2). "Swear by the pen and what they write"

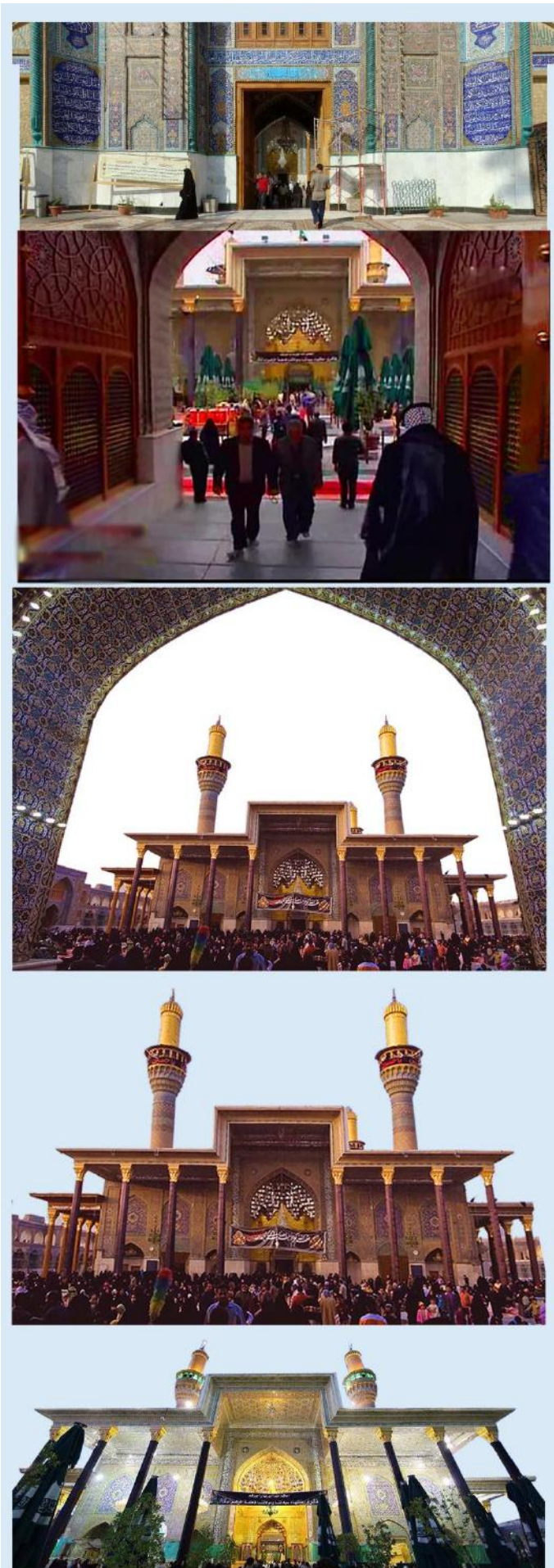
(الْعَلَقِ، ۴) الَّذِي عَلَّمَ بِالْقَلَمِ (4 al-Alaq, 4). "God, who taught the pen"

•The hand that is written represents the embodiment of the words and pronunciation of God, the movement of the hand and writing gain sanctity and respect. The line is written by hand is a simulation of the act of the divine. (Nasr, 1987, p. 45)



Fig. 8. The letter N نون in the Arabic calligraphy has Sufis great connotations. In the Qur'anic verse (كُنْ فَيَكُونُ) or (creativity of God with one word of two letters), which represents God's order of creation in a word, the letter N represents the symbolism of creation and creativity of the Creator.

(Source: Quranfestivaliran.com).



1

Before you enter the Qibla gate, you will find something of a gold-plated iwan.

2

The moment you enter the door where the primer space. The image of the shrine gradually begins to grow.

3

After reaching the inner edge of the door, you see a complete picture of the shrine, framed by a pointed arch that gives a space border.

4

Standing in the inner courtyard gives an indication of the integration between the mass and space and the vertical and horizontal sense of prestige and homage, directed towards the sky by vertical elements.

5

Access to the front and before entering. The sense of majesty and respect is enhanced when you look at the towering columns to reach the maximum feeling of the event.

The images show the progression of the visual scene with the interior of the Qibla Gate of the Kadhimiya Holy Threshold. It is noticeable that the visual scene is accompanied by the impact of the frame of the entrance. The integration of the event at the level of vision and impact is not achieved by the presence and harmony of the architectural components according to its formative structure. The loss of any of these elements of their planning features leads to the loss of the hierarchy of their composition within the context of the architectural structure.

{Figure 9}
(Source: researcher in study of al-Kadhumain shrine)

3-3 The sequence in the events to achieve psychological and spiritual upgrading

It is noted in Islamic architecture that it possesses in addition to the physical entity and beauty in the organization and geometry coordination, it is noted that it has a sequence of events at the design level. Those who enter the Islamic building go through several stages to ensure that they reach the highest degree of sense of existence within a place bearing the hallmarks of sanctity. {Figure 9} The images show the progressive stages of the cognitive experience when entering the holy Kadhimiya threshold. Every stage has a way of dealing with the sense that generated through architecture.

IV CONCLUSIONS

After the research and study in Mystic "Sufi" Islamic thought, and dealing with conditions of the impact of that thought on the artistic and architectural products of Islam, it is possible to reach several conclusions:

1. It is not possible to separate thought from matter when studying Islamic architectural heritage.
2. The Islamic intellectual heritage contributed to enriching the heritage of Islamic architecture through its influence on two aspects: The first was its influence on the artistic side through formative relations, organization, proportionality, and rhythm. The second was its impact on the architectural and urban context through spatial and space relations and the sequence in receiving architectural events. All this contributed to the formation of the spiritual aspect of Islamic architecture.
3. The study of Islamic architectural heritage and the attempt to make use of it in contemporary Islamic architecture can only be achieved through knowledge of Islamic intellectual heritage. Islamic architecture as a material

formed according to the intellectual and cultural surroundings.

4. Trying to make use of heritage and make it suitable for the present time requires knowledge of contemporary needs and trying to adapt the architecture with it, emphasizing the element of stability represented by the unity of Islamic faith.
5. After all the above it can be concluded that: The study of the Islamic architectural heritage and the surrounding intellectual and material aspects are important at present. After the need emerged and grew in the realization of privacy and identity, which determines to belong to civilization and place, with the disappearance of privacy and loss due to globalization and commodification of culture, which led to the loss of identity for many Arab and Islamic cities, especially that must Calls for a return to heritage have been limited to the formal aspects of heritage without entering into its essence.

V REFERENCES

The Holy Quran

- [1]. L. B. N. Ardalan, The Sense of Unity : The Sufi Tradition in Persian Architecture, Chicago: University of Chicago, 1973.
- [2]. S. Akkach, Cosmology and architecture in premodern Islam, New york: State university, 2005.
- [3]. K. K. Mumtaz, "Form and meaning in Sufi shrines of Pakistan," 2018.
- [4]. S. H. Nasr, Islamic art and spirituality, New York: State university of New York press, 1987.
- [5]. T. Burckhardt, Art of Islam Language and Meaning, World Wisdom, 2009.
- [6]. J. Saliba, The dectionary of philosophy, Beirut: Dar Al Fikr Al Lubnani, 1994. "in Arabic"

- [7]. A. Salvatore, *Sociology of Islam: Knowledge, Power and Civility*, John Wiley & Sons Ltd, 2016.
- [8]. I. Khaldun, *The Introduction*, 1989. "in Arabic"
- [9]. R. Garaudy, *Promises of Islam*, 1985. "in Arabic"
- [10]. A. H. al-Gazali, *The Revival of the Religious Sciences*, 2010. "in Arabic"
- [11]. H. Sarand, M. Pakdel and A. Taraf, *The secret of circle in Islamic architecture*, london, 2013.
- [12]. A. Ali and Ahmed Sansi Hassan, "Arabic calligraphy on Munghalmomuments of north India," *Journal of architectural planning and construction management*, pp. 39-47, 7 1 2017.
- [13]. M. S. M. Alkilidar and Saba J. Neamah Al-Khafaji, "Civilizations and Environmental Particulars of Place in Islamic Holy Thresholds in Iraq (Alkadhmain Holy Threshold as a case study)," *Journal of Engineering*, 2015.