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Original Research Article

A Study of the Approach of Architects in Contemporary Mosques Design

(A Case Study of the Jundishapur Mosque in Ahvaz, the Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque in Abu Dhabi, the Marashi Mosque in Egypt, the Cologne Central Mosque, the Valiasr Mosque in Tehran)

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Abstract

This article studies the approach applied by the architects of the contemporary Islamic world to design and build mosques in different parts of the world. In this research, five contemporary mosques, built from 1968 to 2019, were selected and analyzed to figure out to what extent contemporary architects have used traditional architectural styles, their creativity or contemporary art forms to design mosques, and in case of putting aside traditional practices, what new ideas they applied to maintain the social and spiritual functions of mosques. In this research, the design method of the Jundishapur Mosque in Ahvaz, the Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque in Abu Dhabi, the Marashi Mosque in Egypt, the Cologne Central Mosque, the Valiasr Mosque in Tehran was studied. The architect's approach and the designer's suggestions to replace old methods with new ones and whether it succeeded to fulfill the visual and spiritual functions of the mosque based on the requirements of Islamic mosque design were investigated for each of the case studies. The research data was collected through bibliographical and field studies and was examined using a descriptive-analytical method.

Keywords: *Contemporary Mosque Architecture, Modern Mosques, Design Method, Architectural Studies.*

Introduction

For many Iranians, the very first image associated with the word "mosque" is a

building with a turquoise dome and two minarets. However, the mosques all around the Islamic world do not conform to the

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same design method and are a mixture of Islamic teachings and local culture which over centuries have been combined, and can be recognized as a mosque with only a glimpse at the texture of each city where they are located. A mosque is the oldest and the main symbol of Islamic beliefs of people in a region, and since early Islam, building a mosque has been one of the first measures of Muslims after spreading Islam in a city. In fact, in addition to the function of a mosque as a place of worship, rituals, and gathering location for Muslims and their leaders, it also has spiritual functions that are among the most important functions of mosques. An exterior elevation of mosques in a city has always been an indicator of people's belief in Islam. Therefore, conforming to an identifiable visual form has been essential to the design and construction of Islamic mosques so that they can be easily recognized without explanation in the texture of the city. Also, when it comes to spiritual function, according to Islamic thoughts, it is of significant importance that mosques help provoke the feeling of unity with God, attention to God, sincerity, humility in front of the Adorable, and abandonment of everything except God. If a mosque is taken as a holy place for worship, a simple roofed space in which the direction of Kiblah is shown, even without special design and just with a simple arrow, can serve as a mosque; and many of this kind of prayer room is built in the contemporary era. However, what is important in designing and constructing a perfect mosque is its spiritual function. If a mosque is to be truly a place that helps believers focus inside and withdraw their mind and heart from the pluralism of the world and its function goes beyond a prayer room, some elements must be considered in its design. In the current study, first, components of mosques in common traditional methods in the history of Islam along with their definition, usage, and history have been briefly analyzed. Second, the juridical and social requirements of mosque design that must be taken into account by architects have been discussed.

Finally, some contemporary mosques have been compared with those requirements and conventional methods. The results of this research demonstrate how conforming or not conforming to the essential elements impacts social acceptance and the spiritual feeling provoked by a mosque building, which could consequently help the designers take initiative in contemporary mosque design. The research data were collected through bibliographical and field studies and were examined using a descriptive-analytical method.

Research questions

As mentioned earlier, architects have never been required to conform to the same method to design mosques in different Islamic regions' historical eras, and they have designed mosques by combining Islamic teachings and their local culture. However, despite differences, almost all of them have more or less followed the same visual form using several special elements, leading to distinguishing a mosque from other buildings in the texture of the cities¹. Similarly, in the contemporary era, architects are open to being innovative; however, to know what the outcomes and consequences of using creativity are is of great importance. The aim of this question is not to support the idea that contemporary mosque designers are required to merely conform to traditional mosque forms and build mosques similar to the past without any change and creativity, but this study aims to analyze what measures have been taken by contemporary architects to provoke spiritual function of contemporary mosques, without which the building of the mosque could belong to any other places with a variety of functions. Besides, when it comes to the visual function of the building of a mosque in urban space, it must be noted that how in modern design, contemporary architects create a building, through their creativity and artistic paradigms of the contemporary world, that can be still recognized as a mosque and a symbol of Islam

in the urban space. Therefore, two main approaches are followed in this research: First, the study and analysis of the contemporary mosques selected as case studies in terms of their visual function; second, the study and analysis of those mosques in terms of their spiritual function.

Literature Review

The previous studies on the architecture of contemporary mosques are mainly limited to the contemporary mosques located in Iran, and the focus of studies has not been on the contemporary mosques outside Iran. Also, the mosques outside Iran have not been compared with the ones inside Iran. Most studies have focused on the drawbacks of the design of modern mosques in Iran, but the advantages of modern designs have not been fully studied. Therefore, the originality of this study lies in investigating the approach of architects in the design of contemporary mosques inside and outside Iran and comparing them with the traditional architectural methods and the requirements of visual and spiritual functions according to Islamic thoughts as well as the principles of mosque designs.

Theoretical Foundations

• Traditional Approaches to Architecture of Mosques

The rules and regulations of how to build a mosque are not specified in the Quran and sayings of Imams and the elders of Islam. And, Muslims came up with a form to build mosques based on the narrations and avoidance of what was considered inappropriate (Bolkhari, 2009, 59). In other words, since Muslims did not have any regulations to guide them on how to build a mosque, they gradually removed what was against Islamic thoughts from the sacred architecture in their local culture and came up with a method to design mosques.

The first mosque established in Islam was the Medina Mosque that was built by Prophet Muhammad in 622.

This mosque did not have any decorative elements, and its roof consisted of palm tree branches. The simple and unpretentious form of this mosque was a guide for architects to build the first Islamic mosques (Papadopolo, 1989, 9 & 10). Therefore, the elements such as dome, minaret, facade, ornaments, and motifs were essential to making the first mosque in Islam be considered as a mosque. However, as they did not have conflicts with Islam, the elements of pre-Islamic sacred architecture were gradually accepted as the essential architectural elements of mosques and based on the local culture and art of each region, different methods and practices for the architecture of mosques were developed that were unified by the spirit of Islam and Quran (Ettinghausen & Grabar, 2017) and categorized into the four main styles as follows:

1. Egyptian style: this method is rooted in the ancient architecture of Egypt and has been common in Islamic countries of East Africa including Egypt and Sudan and areas up to the Hejaz. The Mosque of Amr ibn al-As and the Congregational Mosque of Ahmad Ibn Tulun are among the mosques built based on this architectural style. Stone was mainly used in the architecture of the mosques of this style, which is due to the Egyptians' historical interest in showing greatness and power in the architecture as well as the availability of stone as the construction material in this region (Pirnia, 2008, 20).

2. Shami style: This style is rooted in Byzantine architecture and has common features with the Egyptian style. It was common in Syria, Palestine, Lebanon, Jordan, and part of Turkey. The Umayyad Mosque (the Great Mosque of Damascus) was built based on this architectural style. In Saudi Arabia, this style was mixed with the Egyptian style, and buildings such as Masjid al-Haram (the Great Mosque of Mecca) and Masjid al-Nabawi (the mosque of the prophet) are of this style. The main construction material used in this architectural style is stone which is due to several facts including the abundance of

this material in that region, being near the Byzantine Emperor, which made them try to display their power through the construction of buildings similar to their buildings, and the stone resistance to fires of wars (*ibid.*).

3. Maghribi style (Moroccan style): This is a very impressive and advanced method with a lot of ornaments that were used in Morocco, Algeria, and southern Spain. The Mosque-Cathedral of Cordoba was built based on this architectural style (*ibid.*).

4. Iranian style: The architectural achievements of this style are richer and more magnificent than other styles, and was common in Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, India, and Indonesia. This style itself includes Khorasani Razi, Azeri, and Isfahani styles. The main feature of the Iranian style in mosque architecture is that, compared to other styles, it has paid more attention to the spiritual function of mosques. Unlike Egyptian, Shami, and Maghribi styles that often intend to demonstrate their power and greatness, the Iranian style emphasizes the detachment of the soul from the world outside the mosque, and it is about focusing inside. It intends to provoke spirituality rather than intimidating people when confronted with the mosque (*ibid.*).

• Common Architectural Elements of Mosques

Lack of specific guidelines about the architecture of mosques in Islamic teachings caused that, in different regions, Muslims designed and established mosques based on the architectural styles of their religious buildings and by taking into account Islamic thoughts. As a result, some elements were added to the architecture of mosques that did not exist in the first mosque built in Medina. Since the first regions accepted Islam was in the southwest of Asia, the first approach to build mosques was to apply the architectural style of Mithraea (Mithraic temples), Zoroastrian temples, and churches. However, the primary architectural style of many churches in this region was somehow based on Mithraea (*Javadi, 2014*). These methods were reformed and adapted

by inspiring from Islamic teachings; the elements conflicting with the principles of Islam were removed, and the ones following monotheism were preserved (*Javadi, 2018*). The following components are among the ones that were gradually appeared in the mosque architecture:

1. Dome: it is a hemisphere-shaped structure whose date of origin is not exactly known. According to Arthur Pope, Bazeh Hoor fire temple (Robat Sefid fire temple) has the oldest dome in the world, which dates back to 229 to 249 BCE in Parthian (*Pope, 1987, 62*). “Mithraists would make a four-sided space structure with a dome called Mehrabeh (the well of the sun), and consider the dome as a symbol of the heavenly spheres and the blue sky”² (*Moghaddam, 1964, 57*). The practice of building domes by ancient Iranians was a heritage that was extensively and consistently applied in Islamic mosque architecture, and almost since the very beginning of the emergence of Islam, domes have been considered as the main component of a mosque building (*Azhand, 2018, 47 & 59*).
2. Musalla (prayer hall): it is a space used for prayer, which is considered the most important part of the mosque building. In most mosques, the dome is constructed to cover this part of the mosque.
3. Minaret: it is an elevated structure whose origin dates back to the time when ziggurats were built in Iran and Mesopotamia. Minaret was later used in church architecture as a bell tower (belfry). In the early rise of Islam, Minaret was not an essential component of a mosque, and since the Seljuk era, based on the Razi style of Iranian architecture, it has been one of the main elements of a mosque (*Pirnia, 2008, 162*).
4. Mihrab (Niche): It is a part of a mosque built on the Kiblah wall of Musalla and is a place where the Imam of the congregation prays there. “Theoretically, Mihrab is the heart of the mosque and is set in the Kiblah wall. However, it has been attributed to special qualities such as the door of the paradise and the place of descending divine illumination”

(Hillenbrand, 2001, 18). Mihrab was not a key component of the mosques at early Islam, and since temples and Mehrabeh converted into the mosques in Iran and the regions having the same religion as ancient Iranians, Mihrab has been maintained as an indicator of the direction of Kiblah and has gradually become one of the essential elements of mosques with this difference that Mehrabeh in Mithraism and Mihrab in Christian churches were built along the east-west direction, but in Islamic mosques, they have been built toward Mecca (Cumont, 2004, 200).

5. Porch: It is one of the innovations of the Iranian in the Parthian architectural style that was transferred to Islamic architects and used in mosques as well. "Porch is a space with an elongated vault, relatively wide but not deep, enclosed from three sides, and open at the front side to the yard. It lies along the main axis of the building, and it is column-less" (Godard, 1987, 112).

6. Yard: throughout the world, mosques often have a courtyard (Sahn) or central yard that is used to accommodate a larger number of worshippers and features a howz (ritual cleansing pool) and ablution area. Making the mosque space introverted, it separates the mosque from the hustle and bustle of the life outside.

Features of the Mosque

What is of importance in the design of a mosque includes visual aspect (appearance) and spiritual aspect. In terms of appearance, first, the building of a mosque needs to be identifiable. By which I mean, without any signs or explanations, people can distinguish it from other urban structures. It is also required to communicate key Islamic concepts clearly, the most important of which is monotheism. The second important feature in mosque architecture is to consider enough space and convenience of access and finding direction, which means that to find different parts of the mosque including the main entrance, Musalla, Kiblah direction, ablution

area, etc., there should be no need to a guide. The third important feature is the hierarchy that helps people attending the mosque to gradually become detached and separated from the space outside the mosque rather than suddenly entering into Musalla, which helps their concentration and attention to God. Forth, different elements of the mosque should serve a purpose and provoke a specific concept; therefore, impracticality and pointlessness should be avoided. Removing what is useless prevents anxiety, distraction, and loss of concentration. In terms of the spiritual aspect, it is required that different key parts of the mosque provoke the feeling of unity with God, attention to God, sincerity, humility in front of the Adorable, and abandonment of everything except God. Although architects have never been obliged to conform to a specific form when designing a mosque, their creativity has never been irregular. "Creativity and innovation are among the essential principles of Islamic architecture and mosque design. Therefore, although spiritual concepts of mosque architecture do not change over time, the appearance and form of the mosque can be influenced by social changes, scientific and technological advancements, and changes in human needs should be updated. However, it should not be forgotten that the new form should reflect the deep meaning of mosque and worship, and the transformation in the form of the mosque is allowed as long as these concepts are maintained" (Nasr, 2010, 31). Therefore, although it is not required to limit designers to traditional styles of mosque architecture, when creativity is applied, the new form replacing the old one should preserve the function of the mosque. In another word, if those elements of traditional mosques that play a role in producing tranquility and transcended thoughts, and abandoning pluralism are put aside, there should be an alternative to provoke the same spiritual feelings in people who attend mosques because one of the most important functions of the mosques is to provoke spiritual feeling, and it is only a part of the mosque

function to be a place for prayer and performing religious duties. Therefore, the success of the mosque architecture depends on both physical and spiritual functions. There should be a clear reason behind the architect's creative ideas leading to a certain achievement. The designers of historical buildings have never stood beside their buildings to explain about their design. However, with their success in using order, geometry, light, color, and form, they have created a permanent mutual feeling in their audiences. Therefore, if a contemporary design needs an explanation and guide to clarify its purpose and function, it is imperfect and has deficiencies.

Contemporary architecture practices throughout the world

Nowadays, architects apply a variety of practices to design and build mosques that can be categorized into four main groups:

1. Popular approach: in this approach, mosques are designed and built based on the local architecture of each region, which can be easily identified and accepted by local people as a mosque. In this approach, architects often consider people's tastes in their design (Falahat, 2005, 22).
2. Traditional approach: this approach is mainly used by the architects who have great knowledge and understanding of traditional principles, techniques, and motifs of mosque architecture, and use the rich and great achievements of historical architecture in their design. One of the objectives of this approach is to revive and maintain the achievements of traditional architecture (ibid.).
3. The modern approach: in this approach, architects revolutionize the elements or forms of traditional mosques considering the demands and architectural facilities of the modern world and create a new design, which means they neither completely depend on traditional approaches, nor depart from them and put them aside. For example, although they use new construction materials such as concrete, iron, or glass,

they apply a derivative approach in which while they consider the foundation of traditional architecture, they create a new design (ibid.).

4. Postmodern approach: this approach has been formed by being influenced by the currents in architecture after the 1960s, in which the designers intend to make fundamental changes and completely depart from old forms. Complexity, diversity, conflict, and humanization of social environments are of the main features of this approach (Bani Masoud, 2009, 45). The mentioned approaches have been mainly used to design contemporary mosques in different countries. The case studies of this research will be analyzed based on these approaches and requirements of mosque architecture.

Discussion

• **The mosque of Jundishapur University, designed** by Kamran Ziba, was established in an area of 3750 square meters in the years 1968 to 1974. Bricks were used to build this mosque, which has made a harmony between the khaki color of the mosque elevation and the surrounding environment; therefore, it has been linked to the principle of self-sufficiency in Iranian architecture³. This mosque is one of the modern mosques of Iran. Although the architect applied a traditional method, which is the Khorasani architectural style⁴, instead of mere imitation, he applied a derivative approach to creating a modern building that is identifiable enough to be recognized as a mosque. The principle of hierarchy has been observed as the interior of the yard and turquoise dome gradually appear through cavities of the wall. Using curved lines in the design contributes to the softness and tranquility of the atmosphere and keeps the beholder's look in motion. The Musalla of this mosque, despite being similar to Fahraj Mosque, provokes less spiritual feeling because it is small and simple. In this regard, it is more similar to the common simple prayer rooms in urban buildings (Fig. 1).



Fig. 1. The Mosque of Jundishapur University, Iran.
Source: Archive of author.

•The Marashi Mosque, Egypt

The Marashi Mosque, with an area of 3500 square meters, has been designed by Mostafa Amer. Being influenced by Egyptian architecture of both Islamic and ancient periods, this design is another example of contemporary modern mosques. The design of

the facade of the mosque reminds the viewer of the pyramids of Egypt, making a combination of triangles pointing upward, which is a symbol of the concept of monotheism in the symbolism of the sacred architecture. The entrance is along Kiblah's direction; however, the principle of hierarchy has not been observed and as a person steps through the main entrance, enters the Musalla. It is straightforward to find direction in this building. The interior space of Musalla is filled with golden sunrays shining through reticular windows of the dome, which helps provoke a spiritual feeling. The reticular windows are decorated with geometric ornaments that were very common in the decoration of Islamic buildings in the northern part of Africa, particularly during the Mamluk Dynasty in Egypt; they are also a reminder of the ancient background of Egypt in the science of geometry. By applying this approach, the designer has referred to both Islamic beliefs and being Egyptian. This mosque has a unique reticular dome designed like a ten-pointed star. The repetition of this geometric form in other parts of the mosque has created the concept of unity in pluralism. This mosque has three tall prismatic minarets with pentagon cross-section referring to obelisks of ancient Egypt. The entire reticular walls of minarets are decorated with geometric motifs that look shining by golden and what lights (Fig. 2). The architect has applied a modern approach to design this mosque, and by considering the background of ancient Egypt in geometry and architecture, and combining it with his creativity and principles of mosque architecture, he has created a design that is identifiable as a mosque and fulfills the requirements of the spiritual function of a mosque up to an acceptable extent because the barriers to concentration, presence, and humility are limited in this design, and by using light and geometry, it has addressed the principles of unity and beauty.

•The Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque, Abu Dhabi

The Sheikh Zayed Mosque is the third-largest

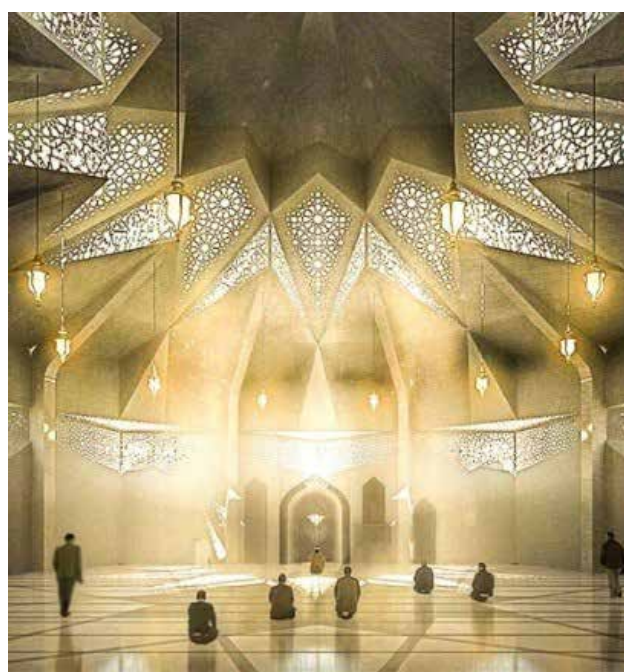
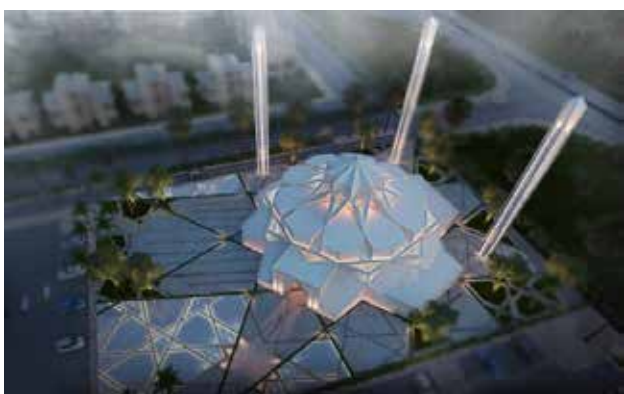
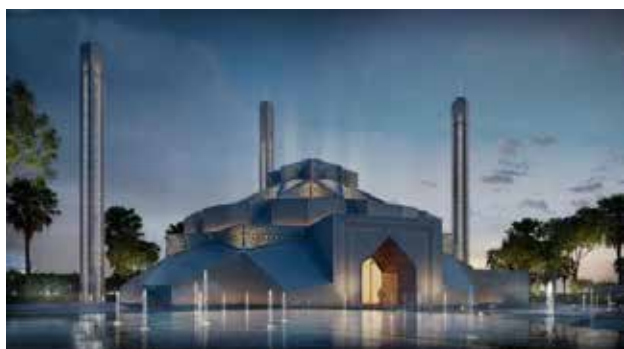


Fig. 2. The Marashi Mosque, Egypt. Source: Imanova, 2019.

mosque in the world after Masjid al-Haram (the Great Mosque of Mecca) in Mecca and Masjid al-Nabawi (the mosque of the prophet) in Medina. This mosque

was commissioned by Sheikh Zayed ibn Sultan and started operating in 2007. The construction cost of this mosque has been two billion and one hundred sixty-five million dollars. This mosque has the largest dome in the world with a height of 83 meters and an inner diameter of 32.8 meters. The arcades (riwaq) of this mosque are roofed with smaller domes, and it has 57 domes in total. All parts of the mosque have been made from marble, and gold, mosaic work, and plasterwork were used for the decoration of the mosque. The white facade of this mosque features three main domes. The horseshoe-shaped vault of the arcades reminds a person of the Sami architectural style particularly the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus. The base of the columns and the cupola of the domes are made of gold. This mosque is an example of a contemporary mosque designed using the Shami architectural style. The huge volumes and excessive use of gold do not refer to any of the Islamic concepts such as monotheism, equality, and brotherhood, and viewers feel dominated and attracted by the magnificence of the building. This building mostly represents wealth, which makes it difficult for the viewer to focus inside. This mosque has not been designed with much creativity to replace the traditional elements of the mosque, and the only contemporary aspect of this building is to apply modern technical facilities to build such a large building that is considered as a popular mosque (Fig. 3).

• The Cologne Central Mosque, Germany

This mosque, with an area of 48000 square meters, was designed by Gottfried Bohm under the supervision of the Turkish-Islamic Union of Germany in 2017 and is an example of using a modern approach in mosque architecture as well as a derivative approach to consider the traditional architectural style of Ottoman mosques. It has been common to include a central dome with many small hierarchical domes in the traditional architectural style of Ottoman mosques in Turkey. In the Cologne Central Mosque, this kind of design has been transformed into curved



Fig. 3. The Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque, Abu Dhabi.
Source: Sheikhzayed_grandmosque.the.national.ae.

layers around the central dome, which helps make it identifiable by Muslim Turkish people. The only color used in the elevation of this mosque is light gray and blue, which not only refers to Ottoman mosques in Turkey (for example, the Blue Mosque in Istanbul) but also meets the requirements of building mosques in the European Union and harmonizes with other buildings with the adjacent buildings in the urban texture. In November 2009, the European

Union passed a law that prohibited Muslims from constructing any Islamic elements and structures dominating its surrounding area. Therefore, it is required that architects refine the magnificence and impressiveness of the mosque building and avoid great heights, cornice, elevated minarets, etc. when they design a mosque (Bokhan, 2009). According to this law, to minimize the dominance and influence of the mosque on the view of the cities in the European Union, Muslims are required to use construction materials compatible with adjacent buildings for the elevation of the mosque. The geometric ornaments under the dome are along with a golden cornice including Quranic verses, the name of Allah, Mohamad, and Rashidun Caliphs. The colors used inside the mosque are white, blue, and golden. Finding directions in this mosque is straightforward; however, the principle of hierarchy has not been observed. This mosque has been designed with glass walls to allow pedestrians outside the mosque to observe Muslims while praying so that the negative impression they have about Muslims' religious rituals is removed and they realize that Muslims pray and worship in silence and peace without any violence or strange activities. People inside the mosque can see outside and be seen on four sides. However, this feature has reduced the concentration of people who worship and the introversion of the mosque, which is essential to its atmosphere (Fig. 4).

• The Valiasr Mosque, Iran

The construction of this mosque had not been completed when this article was written. The design and construction of this mosque started in 2012 provided that it does not overshadow the City Theater Complex and damage its uniqueness, and also, be seen from Enghelab Street. Due to these conditions, a curved design was finally selected from all the designs proposed by the architects. It is an example of a postmodern mosque. This designer of this mosque, Reza Daneshmir, has eliminated its dome, minaret, and any elevated features and ignored the traditional



Fig. 4. The Cologne Central Mosque, Germany. Source: Hoteit, 2015.

styles of mosque architecture completely. To design this mosque, he has merely depended on his creativity, whose outcome has received many reviews. “The Valiasr Mosque has a different shape compared to the familiar mosques of the past. It is clear that this design has failed to include the deep concept of worship in Islam and Iranian-Islamic identity, and no difference can be seen between this mosque and other buildings in terms of the atmosphere and the feeling provoked by a mosque. This mosque architecture has gone beyond the accepted boundary of innovation and creativity because the attempt to create a new form compatible with the surrounding has caused the concept and identity of Islam and worship to be less visible in both the outer body and inner atmosphere

of the mosque, making it impossible to be identifiable as a mosque. This transformation and sudden change in the form of a mosque causes ordinary people to refuse to accept it as a place of worship. Also, instead of fulfilling its functions, the mosque will be converted to a museum for architects to visit” (Hamzenejad, 2015). This building can be used for any other activities and uses, and even it seems that if this building were a place to hold art exhibitions or to perform theatre and music, or if it were a movie theatre, it would be more successful. This mosque is not in line with the design requirements of a mosque, and if we try to find a sign of Islam, monotheism, and prophethood in this building, based on the creativity of the architect and without considering the conventional form of a mosque, we will be empty-handed (Fig. 5).

Conclusion

According to the data obtained from this study, it can be concluded that (Table 1) in the Mosque of Jundishapur University that was built using the modern approach, a combination of Iranian traditional architecture and the creativity of the architect has resulted in a mosque that is following conventional and juridical requirements and is identifiable as a mosque. However, in terms of spiritual function, this mosque is less successful. Although the architect has been faithful to Khorasani architectural style, he has changed the common form of a dome, which lacks spiritual function even though it can be recognized as a dome. The Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque of Abu Dhabi, which is an example of a popular mosque, is identifiable as a mosque; however, it has been less successful in creating a spiritual feeling and meeting the design requirements of a mosque. In other words, the spiritual function of the mosque was sacrificed to the show-off of greatness and wealth of those who commissioned this building. In the Marashi Mosque of Egypt, the designer has successfully combined both traditional architecture and creativity



Fig. 5. The Valiasr Mosque, Iran. Source: Archline ir.

Table 1. A comparison and analysis of five contemporary mosques as case studies. Source: author.

Mosque	Jundishapur	Marashi	Sheikh Zayed	Cologne	Valiasr
Having an identifiable form	*	*	*	*	
Using common elements of traditional mosques without changing their forms			*		
Adapting the elements of traditional mosques to present a new form	*	*		*	
Using only the architect's creativity to design a new visual form (without referring to traditional style)					*
Proposing a new form towards the visual function	*	*		*	
Proposing a new form towards the spiritual function		*			
Being successful in meeting the visual requirements of the mosque	*	*	*	*	
Being successful in meeting the spiritual requirements of the mosque		*			
Architectural approach	Modern	modern	popular	modern	postmodern

because the building is identifiable as a mosque, and it can provoke the spiritual feeling in people who attend the mosque. Also, the building meets the design requirements of a mosque. The designer has presented a new form for the dome, minarets, and entrance portal of the mosque, which despite being innovative, is in line with the visual and spiritual functions of the mosque. The architect of the Cologne Central Mosque has been relatively successful in combining tradition and creativity to make an identifiable building as a mosque using the modern approach. However, due to the use of glass in most

parts of the mosque elevation, this building has been less successful in meeting the design requirements of mosques and provoking a spiritual feeling. Using the postmodern approach, the designer of the Valiasr Mosque of Tehran intends to completely depart from all traditional and familiar architectural forms and merely rely on his creativity. However, the designer of this building has used his creativity in a way that by not conforming to the requirements of mosque architecture, he created a building that can hardly be distinguished as a mosque and provoke a spiritual feeling. The designer has failed to present successful

alternatives for the traditional elements of a mosque because the building is not identifiable as a mosque, and finding directions is not straightforward. Also, the principles of attention to God and the feeling of oneness with God were not addressed.

Endnote

1. There are some exceptions that do not conform to this familiar style such as the special architectural style for mosques in China.
2. A Altar was called Abe or Aveh in Farsi.
3. Iran's art and architecture have long had these five essential principles of approachability, avoid uselessness, knowledge of materials, self-sufficiency, and introversion (Pirnia, 1973, 26).
- 4 Iranian architecture is categorized into seven styles including Parsi, Parti, Khorasani, Razi, Azari, and Isfahani practices (ibid.,38).

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