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FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF TRADITIONAL ARAB-MUSLIM AESTHETICS AND THE SYSTEM OF PREDOMINANT ARTS

Abstract

Arab-muslim aesthetics came into existence between the Western and Eastern worlds, reflecting its historical mission of connecting cultural, aesthetic and artistic traditions of different civilizational areas. It absorbed in itself aesthetic ideas typical of Hellenic world, the Hebrews, Egypt, Mesopotamia, Persia, India and various steppe peoples, and tied them with traditional aesthetic views of the semi-nomadic Arabs. Firstly, Arab-muslim aesthetics differed from the Indian, Chinese, Japanese, Antique and Western aesthetic traditions in its narrower reflection scope of the system of arts as well as in powerful penetration of fundamental Quranic ideological premises into the area of aesthetic consciousness. It conditioned specific hierarchy of arts in the Islāmic civilization, in which three great arts — poetry, calligraphy and architecture, — competed for primacy across different evolutionary periods and regions while the rest of the arts, despite some being important for separate regions and peoples, were largely sidelined.

Key words

Islāmic culture, Arab-muslim traditional aesthetics, beauty, harmony, Islāmic art, system of arts, architecture, calligraphy, miniature painting, poetry, music, applied decorative arts, ornamental structuralism.

THE FOUNDATIONAL PRINCIPLES OF ISLĀMIC AESTHETICS AND PHILOSOPHY OF ART

All students of Islāmic, or Arab-muslim, civilization are amazed by its incredibly rapid flowering and its important role in the history of the world's culture, philosophy, aesthetics, and art. Because of the expansion of Arab tribes, this civilization based on Muslim faith in Allāh spread through Eurasia and North Africa from Spain in the west to Indonesia in the east. It arose in the early 7th century and, in barely two hundred years,

began to dominate the cultural history of the world alongside India and China.

Unlike the Romans, who after conquering the Greeks had fallen under their prolonged cultural influence, the small Arab nation was not only able to impose its language on peoples with great cultural traditions but also, with incredible speed, absorbed these cultural traditions into Arabic, which had become a sacred and universal language and under the Caliphate played the same role as Greek under Hellenism or Latin in medieval Europe.

Under the first Islāmic dynasty in Medina, the Arabs already sought to consolidate their rule by actively suppressing local cultural tendencies. After their capital was moved to the important Near Eastern cultural center of Damascus, an intense interaction began between the cultural traditions of the Greeks, the Egyptians, the Jews, the Byzantines, and other peoples. This process grew perceptibly stronger when the capital of the Caliphate was transferred to Baghdad. After accepting Islām and the Qur'ān, whose sacred language had been adopted by the state, the people of many conquered nations with old cultural traditions began to energetically create the values of Arab-muslim civilization.

The aesthetics of the Arab-muslim world developed in two main directions: 1) philosophical aesthetics and 2) the problems of art history, usually poetics. Philosophical aesthetics is directly related to the development of philosophical thought. By the 8th century the problem of the relationship between knowledge and faith had already arisen, and even theologically oriented schools solved it by giving priority to knowledge. In general, the Arab Caliphate regarded the primacy of intellect much more liberally than medieval Europe did. The fanaticism of Arab theologians is rather exaggerated in Western literature.

In the 8th century, two basic tendencies emerged in Arab philosophical aesthetics: 1) a naturalistic one (falsafah «philosophy»), oriented toward the models of earlier philosophy

and toward the achievements of learning, and 2) a scholastic one (*kalām* «speech»), oriented toward speculative theology. The followers of this latter tendency relied on a symbolical-allegorical and a hermeneutic interpretation of religious texts. As these ideas spread, the influential school of the *mutakallimūn* (dialecticians) arose in the early 8th century, and from it there soon evolved the freethinking school of the **Mutazilites** (or *mu'tazilah* «separatists»). From the 10th century onward, the Asharite (Ash'ariyah) school gradually became established. It was named after its founder al-Ash'arī (d. 935), who maintained the primacy of reason («*aql*) over religious tradition (*naql*), and its most eminent follower was al Ghazālī. Characteristic of all these schools is a symbolical and allegorical interpretation of the basic teachings of the Qur'ān. In aesthetic conceptions of a theological bent, Almighty God (Allāh) is identified with existence and becomes the point of departure for all aesthetic judgments. Hence arise such important categories of Arab aesthetics as *jamāl* «perfect divine beauty» and *jalāl* «divine majesty.» Alongside these categories, harmony and perfection also become fundamental concepts of Arab aesthetics.

The point of departure for the Arabs was the aesthetic ideas of the Greeks, Syrians, Persians, Jews, Byzantines, Indians, and other peoples who lived under the Caliphate. Greek and Hellenistic ideas about aesthetics usually spread through intermediaries: the Syrians and the schools of Gondēshāpūr in Iran. While the ideologues of Christian orthodoxy were denying the principles of Greek philosophy, destroying pagan manuscripts, persecuting Greek thinkers, and closing down libraries as well as the centers of learning in Edessa (489) and Alexandria (529), Iran became the main place of refuge for many scholars, the place where the traditions of these schools were continued.

When the Arabs conquered Iran, the Persians had a sense of their own cultural superiority. Iranian academic centers

of learning and art were dominant during the early period of Arab civilization. By adopting Arabic, many of the most eminent members of the Persian intelligentsia — philosophers, poets, artists — gave a powerful impulse to the spread of Arab-Muslim civilization. The Islāmic world soon assimilated Persian culture, and from Samarkand to Gibraltar, Persian artists performed commissions for their conquerors.

To tell the truth, the creators of Arabic-Muslim philosophical aesthetics were charged with endless confidence in the power of their cultural aesthetic thought and art tradition, thus did not feel any psychological complexes in presence of neither antiquity, nor other aesthetic traditions. This is evident in analysing the critical arrows of al Fārābī, ibn Sīnā, ibn Ḥazm, ibn ‘Arabī, ibn Khaldūn, al Bīrūnī, ibn Rushd, pointed at the theories of their opponents. Rudaki (889—952) has even explicitly stated that the one who looks for truth will not be able to do so in the dried out springs of Hellas. (1) He is being by other encyclopaedist thinkers ibn Sīnā and al Bīrūnī, who, while admitting that the quest for truth was characteristic to the Greeks, simultaneously state that the Greeks were unable to free themselves from allegory, religion and shackles of already uncovered laws.

In the West we come across different views towards Arabic-Muslim world of aesthetics and philosophy of art. These attitudes significantly changed during the last thirty or forty years as base traditional texts were translated and analysed comparatively. Alongside academics who highly value the achievements of Arabic-Muslim aesthetics and philosophy of art, such as Louis Massignon, Gustave Edmund von Grünebaum, Francesco Gabrieli, Alexandre Papadopoulo, Richard. Ettinghausen, Oleg Grabar, Georges Marçais, Henri Stierlen, Arthur Sagadeev, Vicente Cantarino, Valérie Gonzalez, Šarif Šukurov and others (2), we also come across an academic like Grünebaum, who is more reserved in praising the achievements, while admitting that although Muslim world

thinkers deeply pondered the laws of specific arts, such as artistic laws of poetry and poet's creativity, they did not come up with neither a total aesthetic system, nor solid aesthetics of literature. They magnificently developed a plentitude of poetic techniques, tropes, poetic language images and gifted us with many accurate insights into specific verses, poetic motives, qualitative features of one or the other poet. However, these often exceptionally clearly and mostly always metaphorically articulated insights rarely make up a foundation for clear solution formulation. (3)

Behrens-Abouseif, the author of monograph *Beauty in Arabic Culture* expresses similar thoughts, except he accentuates slightly different aspects of the discussed issue. She states that Muslim world also ignores aesthetic theories and even if musical and poetry tractates are written, then scientists are barely interested in problems of the fine arts. (4)

Comparing the specific features of Arabic-Muslim world aesthetics and literary theory with traditions of Antiquity and Western aesthetics, Grünebaum explains main differences of Arabic aesthetic thought, highlights conflicts arising in polemics on various Arabic-Muslim world aesthetic questions and presents his critical conclusions on their objectives their practical achievements. On other note, Grünebaum pinpoints that the majority of aesthetic insights by Arabic-Muslim world thinkers are associated with instrumental didactic issues. Special attention here is given to young creators who are just embarking on their creative journeys, seeking to familiarize with the subtleties of chosen form of art and to become the masters of this sphere through recommendations; for example — how poets should research problems of grammar, syntax, prosody, rhythm, embellishments, mimicking; how to perfect individual style and create works of art that would stand the test of time.

In Arabic art critical tractates Grünebaum accurately notices the attention that is given to praising aesthetic canons of the

past, a specific intimacy of artists» self-expressivity, search for close associations with apprehenders, artist's delving into the stream of own tradition. Simultaneously, he also sees the dangers associated with it, as unconditional dedication to a canonical tradition often enchains the artist's aspirations, limits the dispersion of their originality and innovations. To tell the truth, the majority of Arabic-Muslim art critical aesthetic and especially literary aesthetic tractates possess a dialectic character: in them significant attention is given to discussion of elements of artist's creative potential, problems of technical mastery as the development of these skills is the most reliable way to excellence and recognition.

I hold Grünebaum's statements that the Arabic-Muslim world thinkers did not come close to creation of a total aesthetic system or literary aesthetics, but merely developed types of poetic technique, speech figure theories, in which they applied many of their critical remarks on specific verses, poetic motives, features of works by one or another poet, to be peremptory. He is throwing these accusations on all *in corpore* Arabic-Muslim world tradition of aesthetics and philosophy without any grounds. The majority of his insights are grounded only in reference to Arabic-Muslim art critical tradition of aesthetics, while simultaneously they are false as they do not take into account philosophical aesthetics and philosophy of art, which are based on completely different principles.

In his peremptory generalizations, Grünebaum seemingly forgets the concepts by most prominent proponents of philosophical aesthetics and philosophy of art — ibn Rushd, al Fārābī, ibn Sīnā, ibn Ḥazm, al Ghazālī, ibn'Arabī, ibn Khaldūn. Their concepts, in their total ideological scope, depth and multifacetedness of theoretical analysis were far superior to theories of philosophical aesthetics created in Antiquity and by contemporary Western thinkers. On other note, the one-sidedness and bias of Grünebaum's conclusions must have been influenced by the fact that as he formulated these far-reached

generalizations, the majority of main texts of Arabic-Muslim world philosophical aesthetics and philosophy of art had not quite yet been introduced into academic circulation, as there was no Western country, in which their translation and research programme had been systemically implemented. Also there was a lack of anthologies with abundant commentary and solid academic research, dedicated to these problems.

To tell the truth, opposing to in Arabic-Muslim art critical aesthetics, in which various empirical and didactic problems take the centre stage, philosophical aesthetics and philosophy of art reserve the forefront of its attention to fundamental questions of origin of aestheticism, beauty, harmony, perfection, the essence of art, artistic creation subject, his creative potential, artistic creation process and various influencing factors, art's relation to reality and other questions. Thinkers from different directions and schools differently interpreted the fundamental aesthetic category of beauty. Tolerance to differing aesthetic views and ideas of various directions is one of the most characteristic features of mature philosophical aesthetics and philosophy of art in the Muslim world. Aesthetic features and beauty here are envisaged in many different phenomena, which, according to al Fārābī, ibn Sīnā, ibn Ḥazm, ibn 'Arabī, ibn Khaldūn, provide a human being with a sense of inner aesthetic satisfaction and enables him to improve, while according to pan-aesthetic views of al Fārābī – beauty even «aids a human being by giving sense to his existence in the most profound way». (5)

Some thinkers of Arabic-Muslim world comprehended beauty as an objectively existing feature of according to principles of harmony functioning and human world surrounding cosmos; others associated it with categories of harmony or perfection, a third category of thinkers – with universally aesthetically interpreted sense of divine love, fourth category – with divine creative act and closeness of divine forms of beauty to harmonious human shapes, fifth category –

with objective laws of harmony, symmetry and proportionality. A prominent Arabic thinker ibn Khaldūn, a proponent of the last attitude, wrote: «if the apprehended object is harmonious in its shapes and features, which were provided to him by material from which it is created in such a way that it corresponds to the relations of perfect harmony and symmetry (and this is where the essence of beauty and prettiness lies whichever sensitively comprehended object we would talk about), thus this object harmoniously correlates with the apprehending spirit which feels pleasure while apprehending something pleasurable. This is why people, feeling love towards each other, express their ultimate admiration in telling that their spirit is interacting with the spirit of the loved one. (6)

The creators of mature classical Arabic-Muslim aesthetics possess subtle sense of harmony and beauty, expand the spheres of aesthetic and artistic existence, enthrone the rise of artistic, universally educated personality and intensification of anthropocentrism, individualism, critical thought and trust in scientific progress. In many of these features, these aesthetics are reminiscent of Renaissance-like movements of other nations. As Arab-muslim civilization goes through significant cultural rise, anthropology and strengthening of humanist and universalist tendencies gain an increasingly important role. These tendencies reflected intellectuals» and artist's attitudes towards human in cosmological, ontological, ethnic, aesthetic and other planes. The spread of «the good life» attest for the growth of aesthetic value influence vis-a-vis all other value systems. This cultural shifts, characteristic to Renaissance worldview, closely associated with the revival of aesthetic ideals of the past «Golden age» had been reflected in various arts.

THE ORIGINALITY OF ART CRITICAL AESTHETICS

In order to ground their ideals, the creators of Islam, just as of any other civilization striving for universality, widely utilised

the natural human attraction towards beauty, various forms of aesthetic expression, especially the possibilities of artistic expression, provided by different forms of art. Art critical aesthetics are substantially different from our discussed strikingly conceptual and sometimes even speculative philosophical aesthetics and philosophy of art. Its main generalizations and ideas flow from theoretical contemplations on specific art practices, laws of various forms of art, which artists come across in their daily creative practice.

Art critical aesthetics and kindred theory of art emerges, unfolds between Western and Eastern civilizational worlds reflecting its historical mission, connecting cultural, aesthetic and art traditions of different civilizational worlds. It seemingly absorbs within itself the aesthetic ideas characteristic to Helenism, Judaism, Zoroastrianism, Mazdaism, Manichaeism, nations of Egypt, Mesopotamia, Persia, India, semi-desert and steppes, and relates them to Arabic aesthetic attitudes. This genetic duality and obvious hybridity of Islāmic art critical aesthetic tradition did not fade away in subsequent history of Arabic-Muslim art critical aesthetics even though it was reinforced with fundamental postulates of Islāmic ideology.

Traditionalism is a defining feature of Arabic-Muslim art critical aesthetics, much stronger than in philosophical aesthetics and philosophy of art, and in culture in general, compared to other great Eastern and Western civilizations. It flows from sacral streams of creative forms, at the top of the hierarchy of arts. Besides the main in the beginning prevalent Arabic tradition, at least three traditions of art critical aesthetic thought eventually unfolded in Islāmic civilizational space: Persian, later replaced by Turkish (Osman) and, finally, Indo-Islāmic (Mogol), influenced by Persian cultural traditions. Each can be distinguished by a particular genesis, different tendencies influencing their development, styles of art, attention to specific forms of aesthetic expression.

Another important factor, determining the originality

of Arabic-Muslim art critical aesthetics is the hierarchy of arts, in which, during different evolutionary periods and in various regions, three major arts (poetry, calligraphy and architecture) are fighting for priority (in East Asia the reigning arts were calligraphy, painting and poetry), while other arts, even if significant for the lives of nations of different regions, were pushed to the background.

Here, we come back unavoidably to a question that is constantly left at the margins of discussions about originality of Arabic-Muslim traditions of art and aesthetics: What is the connecting link between a plentitude of specific traditions and forms of Islāmic aesthetic thought and art, that allows to classify them as an organic part of Muslim art critical aesthetics and practice of art? As we search for the answer to this problem we might remember French Islamist's L. Massignon statement, that «Arab-muslim world's art conceptions develop directly from foundational Muslim metaphysical statements about the illusion and transitionality of human surrounding world, and the thought that only God can be the creator of constant existence». (7)

Truly, we must admit that from the sacred book of Quran flowing Muslim philosophical religious concept of human and the surrounding world, significantly influencing aesthetic and artistic ideals developing in Islāmic civilization, becomes an important connecting and mostly stable link between different traditions of aesthetics and arts in Arabic-Muslim world and also the key to knowledge about Muslim philosophical and art critical aesthetics. From this text flow many foundational worldview convictions, influencing the originality of Islāmic aesthetic tradition. In this aspect, Quran truly is the foundational text for apprehending the majority of most important features of Arabic-Muslim civilization aesthetics; a sacred text, in its importance incomparable to any other, similarly as Tora is for Jews, or Bible for Christians.

But I would like to turn the readers' attention to another as

important aspect of the discussed problem — Quran in the Arabic-Muslim cultural tradition is understood as the ultimate word of God for the believers, thus it has nothing to do with poetry, which is the result of human imagination. Delivered in Arabic, for the creators of traditional Islāmic art critical aesthetics Quran embodies absolute and unique perfection in its composition, structure, language, image system and beauty, thus it cannot be translated to any other language as in the process the word of God can be misconstrued. Due to all aforementioned factors, already at the dawn of Arabic-Muslim civilization, a foundational conclusion is reached by Islāmic theological direction aestheticians: Quran is the embodiment of absolute truth, while poetry is the result of human imagination, which diverges from telling of the truth. Because of this, Quran — the sacred text of incomparable Divine beauty and aesthetic value — was clearly demarcated from poetry, despite it being held to be the highest of arts. Thus the aesthetic hierarchy, drawn in the world of art was understood as secondary vis-a-vis the highest divine hierarchy.

But despite the radical demarcation between divine and Earthly aesthetic value systems drawn by the religion of Islam, some Arabic aestheticians, seeking to defend art from the influence of religion, claimed that «religion and poetry are completely different things without no connection at all». (8) The autonomy of art (poetry — held to be the highest of arts) vis-a-vis philosophy and history was proclaimed by another coryphaei of Arabic aesthetics — ibn Rachiq. He writes: «philosophy and history are separate branches of science, foreign to poetry. If anything from them will attempt to penetrate into poetry, it has to be with good measure. We should not hold these sciences to be the pillars for poetry and we should not put our hopes into them. Poetry is what affects, tangles the spirit and shocks the heart. This is the field of poetry. It is created for that purpose and nothing else'. (9)

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THE COMPLEXITY OF THE CONCEPT OF «ART»

The majority of authors, writing on the art of Islāmic worlds (*fann*) use various terms, such as «art of Islam», «Muslim art», «art of Islāmic regions», «Arabic-Muslim art». Delving into the analysis of originality of Islāmic art critical aesthetics, the complexity of these concepts instantly arises. Firstly, these authors quite righteously seek to cover a wide civilizational space with different theories and traditions of art and creation, ranging from the Atlantic to Indonesia, inhabited by many nations with completely dissimilar development level and actual aesthetic needs but on other note, they unavoidably come across the fact, that in this civilizational space, alongside nations with gargantuan cultural and art traditions (Egyptian, Syrian, Greek, Persian, Hindu), this civilizational space was also inhabited by nomadic Arab Berber, Turk and other nations.

Having grasped this, Grabar, analysing the Arab-muslim art tradition genesis phenomena, is justified in talking about two essentially different paths of its knowledge, naming them vertical and horizontal. The first path, vertical, delves into old pre-Islāmic art traditions, existing, for example, in Spain before the emergence of Arab conquerors during the Visigoth kingdom rule (in Central Asia — Sogdian rule). But even though later, in the specific moment of historical development these territories were Islamized, the deep genetic layer under the superficial layer of Arabization can be identified and recognised by specific accurate formal features.

In the second, horizontal level of analysis, we can see the changes, which, for example, manifest in ninth century art of Cordoba, in its stylistic features more similar to the art of distant Samarkand than to that of nearby Compostela. The outcomes of this secondary level art development are truly unusual in their unpredictability. In the year 700, Cordoba and Samarkand must have never heard of each other, but at around year 800, they became parts of the same civilizational world.

These succinctly discussed examples of comparative

analysis suggestively show the complexity of traditional Islāmic art genesis and aesthetic composition. It was determined first by the multi-rootedness of the origins, complex amalgamation processes of different traditions and forms of art, determining an exceptionally fast becoming of Islāmic art towards an original artistic phenomena, significantly different from well-known different historical, for example Greek, Hindu, Chinese, Japanese forms of traditional art.

On other note, analysing the manifestations of this complex art and its forms, canons, codes, symbol aggregations in Arabian peninsula, Maghreb, Near East, Mesopotamia, Little Asia, Central Asia, Andalusia, Sicilia, Islamized India and other parts of the Caliphate we often come across dissimilar nourishing artistic expressivity forms, themes, repertoires, compositional, technical, constructive decisions and ways of art phenomena interpretation. And finally, whichever sphere of Arab-muslim world of art we select for our analysis, in all of them we will find striking variety of various historical and regional forms of art. Thus, such natural questions arise like: what do these different forms of art have in common? What is the main connecting link between these forms of art, different in their artistic level and aesthetic value? To what extent here we can talk about a unified «complex of Islāmic forms of art» representing a more or less undivided Arab-muslim tradition of art?

As we search for these answers, we must admit that it is most likely that this art form aggregate, characteristic to all regions and historical periods of Arab-muslim world had been dispersed throughout this civilizational space by Arabic military and Islāmic ideological cultural expansions, in the process synthesizing, unifying and bringing together a particular to this civilizational space system of formalized structures and compositional devices, influenced by indigenous traditions and demarcated from anthropomorphic structures,. A close two-way relationship between aesthetic thought and practice of art had settled in classical Arabic-Muslim civilization as the majority

of most prominent proponents of art critical aesthetics are also famous artists, great masters of most topical problems in specific art spheres and also the subtleties of their profession. This is why problems, arising in the plane of ideology and aesthetic thought, unfold in an equally complicated way in the forms of art, influenced by them.

The term «Islāmic art», according to Dominique Clevenot, «represents a creative production, that cannot be held to be merely an aggregate of random things. In this totality we can envisage unified antagonistic forces, seemingly coalescing in one singular central point and these various forces gravitate towards the central unifying pole». (10) This pole that Clevenot talks about is precisely the traditionalist Islāmic ideology, which in its historical development intertwines with foundational thoughts of Islāmic art critical thought.

THE ORIGINALITY OF ISLĀMIC TRADITION OF ART

Georges Marçais, the subtle French master of Islāmic tradition of art, in his book *L'art musulman*, (*The Muslim Art*, 1962) defines the art of Arabic-Muslim civilization as the last of the arts, born in the cradle of West Asian culture in our olden world. Here, Marçais firstly has in mind that the original Islāmic art tradition is a powerful tradition, formed by the latest in the third decade on the seventh century AD in the Western part of Asia, striking not only in its majesty and the grandeur of its expanse, but, akin to other great art traditions of the old world, is able to evolve, change, experience various complex historical shifts and leaves a deep imprint in the World's civilizational history.

This problem, originated by Marçais, was later further developed by another master of Arabic-Muslim world aesthetics and art — Oleg Grabar. For the analysis of Islāmic art genesis and originality problems he dedicated a volume, entitled *The Formation of Islāmic Art* (1973), in which he brought about two hypotheses: the first is that unified singular Arab-muslim art

exists. But instantly we are presented with questions like *what does the adjective «Muslim» mean in this two-word compound, doesn't it simply add in the concept of «art»? To which spectre of art works can we a priori attribute the features of this singularity? Can we compare these with different artistic entities?*

Firstly, it is clear that philosophical and art critical conceptions, emerging from the old civilizations in Caliphate's territory during pre-Islamic times, and the originality of specific art forms, thriving for centuries in various regions, held huge influence in the formation of Arabic-Muslim world tradition of art. In other words, Islamic art had assimilated pre-Islamic traditions of Near East and Mesopotamia regions, but it also annexed various forms of art of Ancient Greeks, Byzantine, Roman, Syrian, Persian, Ancient Hebrew, Copts, as well as in the periphery of Islam residing Skit, Mongolian, Middle Asian, Chinese, Western African, Berber, Hindu and others.

On other note, as we analyse forms of art, unfolding in Arabic-Muslim civilizational space, we must make sure not to forget that various art forms completely or mostly detached from Islamic faith and influenced by cultural and religious traditions of Judaism, various manifestations of Christianity, Armenian, Georgian, Zoroastrian, Manichaeism, Mazdaism, Buddhist, Hindu and others successfully thrived within that civilizational space for centuries. Finally, in the Islam-influenced civilizational space forms of art by Jews, Christian nations and sects: Armenian, Georgia, Copt, Brothers of Saint John, Nestorian and others, that have already been affected by the influence of Islam also unfolded. This is why it is especially important for researchers of Islamic art critical aesthetics to clearly comprehend that the concept of Islamic art is abundant with different semantic meanings to what we usually attribute to such concepts as «Christian art», «Buddhist art» or «Taoist art». But alongside the discussed interpretation of the adjective «Islamic», in the texts of Islamic art critical aesthetics there is a different, more widely familiar

interpretation, which is defined as «the culture, in which the majority of its inhabitants, or at least the ruling elite are practising Muslims. In this case, the concept Muslim art also differs in its definition from Chinese, Hispanic or steppe art, in a sense that it is not based in «Islāmic» territory or nation». (11)

The process of interaction between different local aesthetic traditions and amalgamation with the universal aesthetic convictions of Quran metaphysics during the Persian, Mongolian and overruling Turkish dynasty rule significantly alters the majority of contemporary stylistic features of Islāmic art as the revival of different nation aesthetic and art traditions in specific territories of the Caliphate leaves more or less deep imprints in process of amalgamation and nivelation of different local and universal art conceptions, flowing from Islāmic ideology.

Thus, according to an accurate remark by Alexander Papadoupoulos, one must merely take a deeper glance into the architecture, applied and fine arts, calligraphy, miniature, or listen to some music, influenced by Arabic-Muslim civilizational aesthetics to be able to see that despite a plentitude of streams nourishing the Islāmic tradition of art. These forms of art shape the originality of Arabic-Muslim aesthetic and artistic phenomenon, which is distinguished by only to Islāmic tradition of aesthetics and art characteristic strongly conveyed distinctive features. This is why it is no more a Sumerian, Assyrian, Persian, Hebrew, Mongolian, Copt, Byzantine, but precisely Arabic-Muslim art phenomena with its own typological features flowing from a plentitude of re-fused various ancient and contemporary traditions of art and simultaneously conserving the traces of the mentioned traditions. (12)

Analysing the originality of Arabic-Muslim art, we see a substantial demarcation between visual and verbal forms of art. Truly, the relations between VISUAL and WORD

in Islāmic and Christian traditions of art are substantially different in Christian artistic consciousness, the respect for the visual of Christ is evidently more important than the respectful obedience of with word. The aesthetic consciousness in Arabic-Muslim world is governed by opposite principles. Here, word is always of utmost importance, instead of a visual, this is why the visual is reduced to various abstract forms, ornamental structures and arabesque shapes. The majority seems to think that this attests for lower level of aesthetic consciousness and its artistic needs. However, in reality it is the complete opposite as the process of abstraction from straightforward mimicry of natural forms and moving towards a higher level of artistic generalization requires much higher level of intellect and universal education, essential for the ability to solve most complex abstract artistic composition problems, for example, the creation of complex arabesque fabrics and their integration into specific spaces. Here we come across a similar situation as when elementary mathematics interact with the high mathematics, which requires the employment of much more abstract thought and higher level of intellect.

The Islāmic concept of art, born during the process of artistic creation — in its most general form combined within itself firstly in seventh century Near and Middle East born and later in all of the Muslim civilizational space unfolded various forms of art by Islamized nations. The Islāmic civilizational space spread through massive territories from Atlantic Ocean to Southern Africa, it even reached Indonesian islands in the East. The originality of Islāmic art manifested itself in various shapes firstly in traditionalist and canonical convictions, the art interaction requirements based on strict hierarchical principles: in architecture, interior design, decorative arts, poetry, calligraphy, miniature, music, dance, textile, carpets, ceramics, mosaic, stained glass, glass and other creations of applied arts.

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THE SYSTEM, HIERARCHY AND INTERPLAY OF ARTS

As we analyse the system of arts, unfolding within the Arabic-Muslim world and compare it to the attitudes, prevalent in other civilizational worlds, we come to see the differences and similarities of the views on the interplay between arts, inherent to Muslims. Al Fārābī also turns his attention towards inner connection between different forms of artistic expression. He writes: «We propose that there is a certain filiation between poets and painters. We can agree that their art materials are different, but the forms, the effect, their goals are the same, or at least similar. The art of poetry operates through words, the art of painting — through colours, their effect unfolds in imitating and the goal of both is to conquer human imagination and feelings utilising the facility to imitate». (13)

The interplay between different arts is evident in various arts, highly regarded in Arab-muslim world, for example mosque architecture, which closely interacts with various applied arts and calligraphy. The soft and flexible lines of mosque's interior and exterior, dominating its central line seemingly integrate all three main parts of mosque architectural structure — square main facade, dome and drum — into one seamless system, symbolically mimicking the mythical world model. Calligraphic inscriptions, various elements of applied arts: faiences, mosaics, stained glass, glazed ceramics, abstract pottery, precious metal incrustations, ornaments, mauresques, arabesques, are mostly utilized in the middle part of this compositional structure — the drum — connect the dome, symbolising the heavenly world with the square facade below, symbolizing the earthly world. On other note, this harmonious interplay between different arts endows the mosque's architectural shapes with seamlessness and direction that is naturally taken by the consciousness of a believer, psychologically ready for religious meditation.

No less intimate interplay between means of artistic expression can be seen in Islāmic miniatures. Differently from

East Asia, where calligraphic inscriptions in works of great landscape painting were mostly connected to the spirit of painted artworks or emotional experiences of the creator, in Persian and especially later Turkish miniature, they were mostly a subsidiary mean for artistic expression, helping to balance the interplay between main compositional elements of the painting.

The original attitudes towards the system and hierarchy of arts in Islāmic civilization are shaped by many different factors, among which a significant one is Quran, in Islāmic aesthetic tradition understood as the verbal expression of God's will. WORD and IMAGE in Islāmic art system can be considered to be two polar opposites, in-between which hierarchical relations among arts take form. The sacred script and Arabic language are the main factors that shaped the hierarchical model of Arabic-Muslim cultural system of arts, or similar role to the poetic words in Hindu vedic culture, or a visual structure — the Chinese character — in China.

Another important criteria for the shaping of art system and hierarchy in the aesthetics of Arabic-Muslim world is the utilitarian purpose of the arts with the highest status — poetry, calligraphy and architecture, and their demarcation from the arts that resemble crafts, Architecture, although associated with the noble mission of building mosques — the home of God — lost out in the highest status competition between these three forms of art based precisely on this criteria. Thus, competing for the top spot in the hierarchy of arts we only see two great arts, directly associated with the spread of Divine word: poetry, which is connected to audible expression, and calligraphy, connected to visual expression. These are the dominating views in Arabic-Muslim world aesthetics, which are echoed in the majority of texts on aesthetics and art theory, often mentioning architecture as one of the highest arts as well. But, for example, Sufis, often polemising with the Orthodoxes, alongside poetry and calligraphy, in the art hierarchy gave exceptional value

to music and with it closely associated dance.

Thus, in the aesthetics of Arabic-Muslim world we come across a particular system of hierarchy of arts, which only resembles East Asian (China, Japan, Korea) attitudes in certain features, such as script culture and to it connected exceptional social status of calligraphy and poetry. Suggestive and emotionally charged poetic word, to it kindred poetic language, susceptible to external world effects, and flexible calligraphic script with its universal meditational essence, according to Islāmic thinkers, define all fundamental features of Islāmic world art world continuum and structural principles of other arts.

The mentioned peculiarities of giving prominence to the word and with it closely associated script explain why the written calligraphic text in Arabic-Muslim civilization performs similar functions to icons or sacral paintings in Byzantine, Western, Hindu, Chinese, Japanese and other civilizations. This fact explains another specific feature of Arabic-Muslim civilization's artistic culture development — the lack of sacral iconography in Islāmic artistic culture, which was most often compensated by calligraphic fragments of the sacred Quran text, met in many pictorial and applied art forms. This in a way also explains the exceptional role of calligraphic aesthetics, bearing the mark of sanctity, in shaping aesthetics of other great Islāmic world arts — architecture, applied arts, carpets and miniature.

In Arabic-Muslim world's hierarchy of arts, pictorial arts hold a much smaller role compared to pictorial art traditions in Antiquity, Western Christian medieval, Hindu, Chinese, Japanese traditions. Truly speaking, pictorial expression possibilities here are truly limited by the Islāmic ideology, while sculpture is practically eliminated from Muslim creators» creative expression field, as in different civilizational worlds highly prominent forms of visual art (painting, sculpture) in Arabic-Muslim world constantly struggle against limitations proclaimed by Islāmic religious ideologues. But the arts

of miniature painting and textile-carpeting unfold extensively, gaining exceptional social status in the spaces influenced by Persian culture, and later, its tradition assimilated Osman and Mongol cultures.

POETRY

The exceptional aesthetic status of poetry (*adīb*), its rise in the hierarchy of arts, was associated with the development of poetics and deeply respectful attitude towards language, poetic word, which was propagated by the poetic text of Quran. According to the authoritative expert of Arabic-Muslim civilization poetry and poetics Vicente Cantarino: «among humanity's cultural achievements there are few that can be compared to Arabic poetry in the clear sense of its own value exceptionality. (14) Many great thinkers and poets saw poetry as the highest of arts, the stream of Arabic knowledge clods, the book of wisdom, the source of reliable historical knowledge. Poetry, ruling the hierarchy of arts, ever since the beginning of its theoretical reflexivity, in Arabic aesthetic tradition was clearly demarcated from religion, philosophy, history, ethics and other spheres of scientific knowledge. From here flows the attitude towards Arabic poetics as an art of exceptional importance, engendered by powerful creative imagination.

The majority of most prominent poets in Arabic-Muslim world were also expressing themselves as representatives of poetics, writing theoretical treatises about the aesthetics of poetry. This amalgamation of theory and practice defined the high aesthetic level of poetry and poetics. Numerous Arabic-Muslim treatises on poetics most extensively address the problems inherent not only to the art of poetry, but other arts as well – the essence, origin and particularity of art, the creator and his creative potential, imagination, relation to nature and tradition, artistic creation process, artistic style, specifics of artistic creation, innovation, imitation, embellishments and other fundamental aesthetic problems. The mentioned

problems, arising from the meditations on the particularity of the art of poetry naturally grow into with it associated common problems of aesthetics, philosophy of art and theory of art. Thus, the science of poetics, analysing the aesthetic problems of poetry, for centuries was the most important sphere of Arabic-Muslim world aesthetic thought expression.

The Arabic-Muslim world poetics developed in two main directions: in the stream of abstract philosophical aesthetic thought (al Fārābī, ibn Sinā, ibn Rushd) and in the context of art critical and with it closely associated philological aesthetic problems (ibn al-Mu'tazz (861—908), ibn Qutayba (IXth. C.), Qudama *ibn* Ja'far (d. around 922), al Amidi (Xth. C.), ibn Rashiq (XIth. C.), ar Rāzī (XIIIth. C) and others.

In Arabic, just as in Hindu treatises, the mysterious power of the art of poetry is constantly highlighted, as well as its ability to affect the human spirit, human ethical ideals and life. Additionally, the importance of multifaceted poet's education and good internalisation of previous traditions, the necessity to constantly develop one's skills not only in one's sphere of choice but also those kindred to it are also highlighted. According to ar Rāzī, one line of real poetry often «achieved great things as it curbed the minds and transformed old loathing into friendship. And conversely, it often was the case that one distich could give rise to major crisis and shed rivers of blood». (15)

We need to look for the real reasons for poetry's rise into the crowning place of the hierarchy of arts in the Arabic language itself, as well as lyrically resounding throughout the desert exceptional respect to poetic word, songs, legends, transmitted throughout generations by mouth. Literature in Arabic-Muslim world was never awarded with such respect and social status as poetry. Slowly developing prosaic Arabic literature, according to the accurate note by Ch. Pellot, owed everything to Persia, not Greece. (16)

Poets, such as Bashār *ibn* Burd (714—783), ibn al-

Muqaffa' (721–757), Abū Nuwās (756–814), writing in Arabic, but originating from Iran territories, which possessed rich poetic art traditions, were especially active and amounted to great achievements in the early period of classical Arabic poetry dispersion. These poets cultivated a wide and open world-view, they did not shy away from hedonistic secular motives of saturnalia and enthroning the wine glass. Abū Nuwās» poetry had a strong influence on subsequent development of Persian poetic tradition and became an important stream of inspiration for Omar Khayam.

From many specific poetry forms, unfolded in Arabic-Muslim civilizational space, the *beit* — a poetic distich, the metric unit of Eastern nation (Arabic, Persian, Turkish, Hindu and other nations) poetry, meaning an emphatically concentrated metaphorical thought, is exceptional in its suggestibility and beauty. This specific ability in Arabic-Muslim tradition of poetics reflects the mastery, reached by a true artist, as this minimalist form of poetry expressed the orbicular and maximally condensed thought, serving as a separate poem. These poems can constitute rubaiyats, ghazals, qasids and other forms of Eastern verse.

Nostalgic leitmotifs of «returning to the old times» emerge with the start of a powerful Renaissance-like movement in Arabic culture in the 9th century, while poetry of pre-Islāmic times is claimed to be the embodiment of primal human surrounding harmony, the unattainable ideal of beauty, the inexhaustible stream of true creativity, exceptional in its extraordinary depth of emotional experiences and thought. Alongside the rise of the importance of poetic art and the deepening understanding of importance of preserving its traditions, the important period of gathering and systemising old poetry examples and compilation of poetic anthologies begins in the Caliphate culture.

In the 10th century, the new generation poets and theorists — ibn Qutaiba, ibn Rashīq, ibn al Asir (1160–1233)

rebel against the old tradition of poetry and seek to free poetry from convictions of classical aesthetics, old canonical convictions and imitation of means for artistic expression, characteristic to pre-Islamic poetic tradition. In their works we see the strengthening of humanist and universalist tendencies, an ardent quest for innovation and search for original means of artistic expression. Throughout Xth-XIIIth centuries, the mentioned two poetry (and corresponding poetics) traditions increasingly closer intertwine and a golden age of Arabic literature and poetry comes into light, when Arabic poetry, having synthesised ancient traditions and newest poetic quests, gives rise to a pleiad of great poets and theorists, out of which ibn al Ḥusayn (969–1016), ibn al Asir (1160–1233) and ar Rāzī (XIII a.) are exceptional in their talent. Simultaneously, we see the unfolding of mystically oriented Sufi poetry tradition, written in Arabic (ibn Arabī, al Farid) and Persian (Rūmī) languages.

As the Caliphate's political and cultural disintegration gained momentum, during Abbasid rule in specific territories there was a revival of competing national poetry traditions. All of them reflected local traditions, new topics, thus more prevalent was distancing from early desert poetry honesty, on other note, it reflected the road of poetry's interplay with poetics, which was differently associated with language and poetic traditions of each region, which is evident in the development of Persian, Turkish and Indo-Islamic poetic tradition.

Despite the Islamisation and Arabization of Iran, enforced by the Arabs for three centuries, as an opposition to this imperial Arabic ideology, a turn towards Firdousi (est. 932–1020) came into existence, influenced by neo-Persian poetic traditions (this poet ardently called his nationals to return to the origins of their national poetry), the proponents of which from Arabs assimilated poetry forms, models, themes, motives, images, genres, forms of stylistic expression, metres, even

a significant part of lexicon. Firdousi, Saadi, Hafiz, Rūmī, Nizami, Omar Khayam, Farid al Din Aṭar developed new motives of lyrical, intellectual, courtesan and erotic poetry, saturated with indigenous Persian folklore. This poetic tradition, saturated with motives of sensual love and eroticism, characterized by sensuality and larger freedom of various poetry theme interpretation, strongly influenced Western late medieval and Renaissance courtesan knight poetry.

Later, analogue processes developed as the rule of Turkish dynasties in Anatolia was entrenched, where from 11th-16th centuries, a refined kindred to Persian-spoken Turkish language poetic tradition became prominent. Its most famous proponents Yunus Emre, Nasīmī, Fuḏūlī, Rewani, Hayālī, Baki developed similar themes, inspired by Sufi aesthetics and poetry of love. In the 16th century, in both Persian and Turkish poetic traditions we see developing a ruling epoch of the so-called «Hindu style» in poetry.

VISUAL ARTS

Visual arts, held to such high regard in art hierarchies of many great civilizational worlds, illustrating religious ideals (in Egypt, Babylon, Assyria, pre-Islāmic Persia, India), in the Arab-muslim civilizational world, as we already mentioned, were less significant. Painting (taṣwīr) — a form of visual art, so prominent in the majority of other civilizational worlds, in Islāmic world was not developed as extensively, while sculpture, so important for other ancient Near, Middle and Far East and South Asia civilizations, seemingly does not have a place in Islāmic world. Thus, differently from proponents of Christianity, Manichaeism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Chan and Zen traditions, Islāmic adepts, not feeling the necessity to depict the earthly life of the founder of their religion, do not create iconography, depicting the earthly life of prophet Mohammed.

In this aspect, the Arabic visual art tradition is kindred

to another Semitic tradition — that of Ancient Jews. It is undoubtedly influenced by the avoidance of appropriating functions of God the creator and depicting live beings, assimilated from Ancient Jewish sacred texts. This significantly lowers the possibilities of fruitful development of monumental mural and easel painting and practically terminates the existence of the great sculptural traditions thriving in this region.

During the early period of Arabic-Muslim civilization development, in decorating palaces and temples in Far, Middle East and Middle Asia regions, a significant role was given to murals and mosaics, not many of which have survived until our day. The oldest currently known example of monumental Islāmic painting are murals in al-Aqsa Mosque or Dome of the Rock, built in year 691, during Calip ibn Marwān's rule (685—705).

When the Caliphate's centre moved to Iraq and Iran's territories after the decline of Umayyad dynasty, the relation with Hellenistic and Byzantine artistic creation legacy became weaker. From then on, in painting, just as in the majority of culture and art spheres, Persian art traditions became increasingly more influential. The role of murals in more liberal Iranian culture were incomparably stronger, thus during excavations of Baghdad, Samara, Samarkand, Bukhara and other cities, destroyed by Mongols, archaeologists uncovered many buildings, palaces, and social utility buildings, many mural examples with figurative images in them, dating to the times of the Caliphate's rule.

The subtle expert R. Ettinghausen, in his monograph, dedicated to Islāmic painting, explains that the term «painting» here is understood in its widest possible sense, including not only murals, painted on building walls and domes, in wood, parchment or paper, but also stone and glass mosaics, painted ceramic vessels. (17)

Archaeological research and traveller testimonies show that

mural painting was highly cultivated even after the destructive Mongol expansion in Middle Asia, as evident from many administrative buildings and palace decor from the Timurid dynasty. This was described in detail by the Spanish diplomat, traveller and historian Ruy González de Clavijo, who visited one of the main Old World cultural centres at that time – Tamerlan's capital Samarkand with a diplomatic mission in 1402–3. The majority of contemporary mural artworks did not survive due to various wars, crises and poor durability of used materials. Plots, depicting human figures, are rare in murals of that time due to the convictions of the Quran.

In the Persian painting tradition, enchanting with the variety of its forms, eventually we see unfolding various painting schools and styles, polemising among themselves about means for artistic expression. Here we can distinguish completely different tendencies, for example, expressiveness and graphicality of sometimes sensitive, other times emphatically thick drawing, marked by its closeness to graphics, the asceticism of means for artistic expression and humble decorativeness. Conversely, specific manuscript illustration painting directions and schools of miniature, gaining wide recognition throughout the world, are characterized by pure, bright and contrasting colours.

From the 16th century, in Persia and regions influenced by its tradition of art, in the Mogol and Osman Empires, painting ruler portraits, chronologically depicting historical events of various dynasties, wars, hunting, celebratory and mundane events became popular. These paintings, similar to landscape paintings, due to the influence of Chinese painting becoming almost a separate genre, are characterized by landscapes, emotionally affecting the apprehender with their bright playful and contrasting colours and diligence, often reminiscent of most popular Chinese landscape motives and details. But all of these forms of artistic expression are affected by universal aesthetic convictions, based on Islamic ideology requirements

which peculiarly intertwined in separate painting genres, regional forms and historical periods of painting's development. These universal tendencies provide us with the opportunity to speak about the originality of Islāmic painting phenomena, defining tendencies and its main distinguishing typological features.

Some authors, analysing the originality of Islāmic painting phenomena, underline the influence of Syrian, others — Mesopotamian region, third — Persian Sassanid and Achaemenid, other — Hellenist, Byzantine and other traditions. In our eyes, the development of Islāmic painting iconography was most significantly influenced by art traditions of nations of Syrian and Mesopotamia region. From these traditions, Arabic-Muslim painting assimilated the majority of main aesthetic convictions, artistic creation principles, tendency towards geometrization, ornamental structurality, arabesques and schematization. In the later period of Arabic-Muslim painting development other external influences can also be felt — firstly Persian, Byzantine, Armenian, Coptic, Mazdeist, Mitraist, Manichaeen, Mongol, Chinese, steppe nations, Turkish Seljuk, Osman and others.

From Near East and Mesopotamian art traditions, Islāmic painting assimilated and originally developed the aesthetic principles of geometrization and subtle ornamental structurality and connected them to original sense of decorativeness and rhythm. The arterial Arabic-Muslim painting defining tendency of ornamental structurality only got stronger with time. This process is especially evident after a forceful Mongol invasion, which shook the Islāmic civilization foundation to its core. The Mongol invasion brought suggestive tendencies of Chinese visual art, which to Arabs was associated to foreign aesthetics, dispersed by the conquerors. This is why in unconquered by Mongols, independent Mameluke-ruled part of Syria and Egypt we see the formation of, according to an accurate note by Ettinghausen: «the most structured and strict

art in the whole history of Islāmic culture». (18) But Mongol conquests, looking at them from the aspects of history of painting, and many other aspects of cultural history, were not purely negative phenomena, as they introduced the Muslim and Western world to the great Chinese tradition of painting, from which Islāmic painting assimilated elements of significantly more fluid drawing and painting style, it evoked attention to landscape motives.

CALLIGRAPHY

In Arabic-Muslim culture, calligraphy (ḥaṭṭ), alongside with poetry, kindred to the worshipped script, entrenched itself at the pinnacle of the hierarchy of arts. Calligraphy in Islāmic artistic culture was a certain alternative to in other civilizations celebrated painting iconography. The rise of original aesthetic phenomena of Islāmic calligraphy in the hierarchy of arts flowed from fundamental convictions of Islāmic religion, as the art of calligraphy was directly associated with the essential nobility of spreading the God's word, its penetration to various cultural spheres. Calligraphy eventually even became the sacred symbol of Islāmic civilization, thus not coincidentally Prophet Mohammed in Islāmic culture is depicted with a quill and sword in hand.

The coryphaeus of French Islamistics, Massignon, having given significant attention to relations of Islāmic script to aesthetic Arabic worldview, already noticed that out of all Semitic languages, Arabic alphabet is developed almost perfectly and due to its flexible linear structures is most suited to calligraphic expression. In texts of various spheres of humanities, especially in poetic texts, we will come across plenty of emotional evaluations, celebrating the aesthetic beauty of calligraphic script and elegance, as «incomparable» in its power of emotional effect, «the most noble of arts», «mirror of the soul», «voice of the heart», etc. Truly, the Arabic script, without mentioning to it attributed mystical powers,

possesses aesthetic beauty, plasticity of written signs, the ability to naturally burgeon and tighten, experiences stylistic transformations, all of which determined its natural transformation into a refined art of calligraphy.

The sense of sanctity, attributed to the art of calligraphy, encouraged not only increasing attention from intellectuals, people possessing writing skills and artists, but also the never-ending search for new means of aesthetic and artistic expression. Calligraphic text connected two different levels of expression: visual and communicative, as it simultaneously functioned as the transmitter or a specific visual system and the spreader of knowledge. Eventually, the visual function increasingly evidently began to overcome the communicative. And finally, calligraphy is distinguished from all other Islāmic visual art spheres by its exceptional multifunctionality, elegance, beauty, flexible stylistic transformations.

As the volumes of book culture grew, a separate strata of book clerks, draft scribes, and calligraphers came into being, increasing influential as the classical Arabic civilization continued to thrive. Calligraphers enjoyed a distinguished social status in Arabic-Muslim society, as they were able to masterfully write in God's script — God's words, transmitted to humans. Islāmic calligraphy expert Schimmel notes, that «love for calligraphy is so engrained in Islāmic culture that it would be weird if the majority of its rulers did not take the direction of cultivating this noble art». (19) The majority of Arabic-Muslim civilizational space various rank rulers and their family members have entered history as skilful masters of calligraphy.

The coryphaeus of Abbasid epoch calligraphy, the minister of Baghdad caliphate, Ibn Mugla (886–940), born in Baghdad but of Persian origin, had an exceptional impact on the development of aesthetics of classical Islāmic calligraphy in Arabic-Muslim world. With his multifaceted cultural and artistic activities he is merited for the rise of calligraphy within the hierarchy of arts. This intellectual, ascending from a dynasty

of calligraphers, took up many high administrative offices during his life, even acted as a vizier and indeed adored calligraphy. It is thought that it is precisely he who was the first to introduce the cursive calligraphy style of *thuluth* into the Arabic-Muslim civilizational space and develop the proportional system of classical Islāmic calligraphy, in which exceptional attention was given to strict proportions between different script elements.

Ibn Mugla's aesthetic principles were further developed and perfected by another great proponent of calligraphic aesthetics ibn al-Bawwāb (d. around 1022) in the XIth century. This ardent fan and collector of ibn Mugla's calligraphies established an influential school of calligraphy in Baghdad, which dominated until the Mongol conquests. In order to accurately measure the ratios of calligraphy elements he introduced a supporting system that allowed to measure and compare height and width of each letter. These systems of calligraphic aesthetics clearly influenced the development of popular naskh calligraphy style. Abbasid epoch calligraphy master Yaqut al-Musta'simi (d. 1298) served in the Baghdad palace of the last ruler of this dynasty, where he took a post or ruler's calligrapher and secretary up until the demise of the Abbasid dynasty. He standardized six main calligraphy styles, formed based on Arabic script (naskhi, thuluth, muhaqqaq, kayhani, riq'ah, tawqi).

In order to strengthen the spread and emotional effect on the believer of the Divine word, the script was adorned with various ornaments, arabesques, linear fabrics, abstract geometric structures. Ornamentally adorned Arabic script, saturated with various eye pleasing decorative elements is a usual decorative element in Islāmic art. Newly emerging art of calligraphy not only absorbed various previously in Arabic-Muslim civilizational space thriving traditions but also experienced significant changes in its functions.

In the development of Arabic script, writing styles split into two substantially different parts: the so-called geometrical

(hijazim kufic) and from the Xth century beginning to rapidly disperse cursive (naskh, thuluth, riqa, divani ir kt). Eventually, with the developing subtleties of the art of calligraphy, Arabic, Persian, Turkish style calligraphic script forms unfolded and spread in different regions, closely connected to various regional traditions.

From the Xth century, with the fast developing script culture, the previously dominating angular calligraphic script forms were gradually replaced by more dynamic writing process reflecting various round calligraphic styles: thuluth, nask, muhaqqaq, reyhaani, taigi, riqa and others. They endowed the calligrapher with the opportunity to unveil new features of spontaneous way of writing. These much more elegant and liberal styles of calligraphy settled during in Abbasid dynasty rule in the main contemporary cultural centres of Damascus, and especially Baghdad. The mentioned styles of calligraphy began to actively penetrate other forms of art, round and flexibly shaped calligraphy became their important decor element. Alongside the mentioned main six round calligraphy styles, other regional styles spread in Maghrib and Andalusia.

Arabic traditions of calligraphy were later assimilated and originally developed by the great Persian and Osman Empire calligraphers. Out of all in Persian cultural space formed styles, by its special aesthetic beauty of shape we can distinguish the ta'alliq style of calligraphy, in which the line of written letters fluidly moves downwards and looking from a horizontal line point of view, lands in the lower line. This writing style was widely used in decor and Persian art of miniatures. Al Tabrizi, a calligrapher and painter living at the dawn of XVth century, became the great master of this style. Eventually, another popular diivaani style developed out of ta'alliq style in XVth century. It is characterized by an elongated letter line ascending upwards. This style was well-liked by clerks, it was also used in Osman empire Sultan signature stamps, so-called tughras, the aesthetic appearance of which was of high importance. Each

sultan had a completely original stamp with calligraphic inscription, thoroughly prepared by greatest masters of their times.

Many exceptional examples of calligraphy can be seen not only on paper, but also on ceilings and walls of secular and sacred buildings. Mosque, mausoleum exteriors and interiors, carpets, decorative elements are abundantly adorned with calligraphically written Quran excerpts. Arabesque — a linear drawing, twisting and turning between various vegetal structures, palmettes, floral arrangements — often becomes the main Islāmic art motive in decor.

In Muslim architecture, interior, works of applied decorative art, calligraphic inscriptions in Arabic, Persian, Turkish or other style perform not only the aesthetic function of connecting a plentitude of different architectural, interior elements, different forms of artistic expression into a unified compositional system, but also unveil the specifically Islāmic essence of a particular artwork, which is most often inseparable from its utilitarian essence. The flexibility of Arabic script and its noble artistry are especially favourable for the realization of latter universal and simultaneously distinguishing functions. Script, unlike any other form of Islāmic art, due to its sacred and symbolic essence, was able to introduce, and later single-handedly step-by-step guide the apprehender to such a world of art, in which objects of religious significance firstly highlight their aesthetic aspects and are apprehended precisely as creations of Islāmic tradition of art.

MINIATURE

New panes of aesthetic phenomena unfold in miniatures, which are drawn or painted illustrations of abundantly published manuscripts. Because miniatures were understood as a subsidiary art of book narrative plot illustration, without a third dimension, it was less burdened by the limitations of Islāmic ideology, applied to monumental and easel painting

of the classical period. Miniatures, created by painters most often illustrated classic works of literature, poems and through visual language conveyed the most important episodes from various nation history and their rulers» life, quests and leisure.

The art of miniature intercepts certain aesthetic functions characteristic to mural and easel painting, the development of which was stunned because Islāmic ideological convictions. With rapid development of «the good lifestyle», emergence of book culture cult, trend of collecting expensive manuscript books, the art of book illustration gains momentum, the creators of which intercept and further develop already thriving sacral manuscript book traditions. To Western painting characteristic interplay between light and shadow, complex decisions of perspective are foreign to newly emerging Islāmic world miniature painting, instead it develops specific means for artistic expression. The art of miniature most explicitly unfolded in Persian cultural space and Osman and Mongol Empires, marked by the influence of Persian cultural tradition.

The most authoritative expert of Islāmic miniature phenomena, the author of five tome volume dedicated to Islāmic miniature *Esthétique de l'art musulman – la peinture* (The Aesthetics of Muslim Art- Painting, 1974) A. Papadopoulo has given significant attention to researching this phenomena. He distinguished two periods in the history of miniature's development: the first is when the prohibition to depict live beings applies to miniature, i.e. orthodox religious prescriptions are adhered to and painters are not successful in finding means to go around these prohibitions. The second period is characterized by an emerging aesthetic revolution, which augments Muslim art with the event of exceptional importance – the emergence of qualitatively new, from sphere of religious influence relatively liberated art, autonomous in its composition. (20)

Oldest surviving known examples of book miniature had been found in territory of Syria which has barely seen the

influence of Islamization. It is possible that earlier origins of miniature painting should be pursued in territories of Persian and Turkish nations, residing in Iran and Central Asia.

In XIIth century Persia, a new coloured miniature tradition develops after poetry collections, saturated with Persian lyricism and Sufi mysticism, illustrated with brightly coloured miniatures are published in succession, many of which were created during XIIIth century Mongol occupation of Iran. At that time, encyclopaedist historian Rashid al-Din (1247–1318), factually acting as a vizier, established a scriptorium in Tebriz, where 220 calligraphers, painter-illustrators, text transcribers, gold embellishment, binding and leather specialists worked in publishing uniquely beautiful books using high quality paper.

Persian colourful miniature was influenced by Byzantine and Armenian miniature painting traditions. Persian painters are kindred to those of Byzantine miniature tradition in their attraction towards bright emotional colours and soft outline. In specific Persian miniatures we can see traces of in Armenian Evangelic illustration dispersed human figure composition, bright colour decisions. But later Persians sought inspiration in Chinese book illustration traditions as well and intercepted specific aesthetic principles and motives.

The period of experimenting and searching for new forms of artistic expression for miniature masters of Persian and Turkish origin, competing for leadership, ended at the middle of XIVth century, and at the beginning of the XVth century in Shiraz, Tebriz, Baghdad and Samarkand schools we see final formation of new mature Islamic miniature painting canon, in which the main compositional schemes of depicting legends, rulers, battle and hunting scenes, celebrations, leisure and other most popular plots, the aesthetic principles of depicting rulers, less significant figures and animals barely changed in the future.

The value of the manuscript depended directly from the number of miniatures, the quality of their execution, lavishness, value of used materials. Eventually, the level, demand, number

and size of miniatures in the manuscripts grew exponentially. The previously ordered structure of many traditional manuscripts significantly changed; texts became less important and shorter, whereas illustrations, becoming much more important than the text, shaped a completely different appearance of books. Here, visuality dominated, as illustration became an important mean for conveying information. Discussed shift in relations between text and the visual in the history of art influenced the rapid growth of the social status of miniature creating painter and the value of his artworks, thus from 16th century, miniature painters began to sign their works.

Different painters created original visions of the same illustrated works. For example, there are over 250 known subsequent illustration variants of Nizami's book *Chamsa (Five Poems)* alone, the oldest edition of which was published around 1318. These editions are adorned with high artistic level miniature painting illustrations. But most frequently in Islāmic world circulated Persian poem, dedicated to the history of Iran *Sachnami (The Book of Kings)*, in which the history of Ancient Persia before the emergence of Islam in it during the VIIth century is sketched, has garnered an incomparably higher number of versions. The majority of it consists of Persian poet Firdousi's verses. The first editions of *Sachmani*, illustrated with miniatures, emerge in 13–14th centuries and were ordered by the most powerful rulers of Islāmic world. The illustrations were painted by many different miniature masters. Specific editions had magnificent examples of Persian miniature, some editions had over 300 illustrations.

A certain ebb of the art of miniature began in the second half of the 14th century, when simple copying of previous works was most prevalent. After some time, the main centres of Persian miniature painting became active again, Baghdad and Shiraz rose alongside Tebriz, a bit later — Samarkand and Qazvin. During this period a new, Persian, in 15–16th centuries entrenched classical miniature painting style develops, which

becomes one of the most important phenomenon of Islāmic art due to its canonized stylistic aesthetic requirements. Even though compared to previously dominating traditions, the painter appears to be much more liberated in choosing themes and motives, the standards are still upheld when depicting people of different ranks and traditional scenes, similar compositional and aesthetic principles are applied: stylisation, detail realism and symbolism, saturated with various metaphors.

During the Timurid rule, in a century between 1400 and 1500, the Persian art of miniature reaches its apogee. Tebriz, Herat and Shiraz become the main epoch style forming centres. Miniatures most often depict massive figures with oval faces all turned to one side in a landscape background. XVIth and XVIIth century miniature is enchanting with the variety of its themes and motives, regional styles intertwine, in Iran we feel a recurrent influence of Hindu Mongol miniature painting.

Masters of Tebriz enchant with the variety of their themes and motives, sophisticated lines and colours. Alongside the depiction of the usual noblemen, poets, Sufi life scenes, here we see many landscapes, animal and aviary images. Miniatures are distinguished by their lavish decor, whimsical precisely executed ornamental structures. Shiraz miniature school, which became the main contemporary miniature creation and export centre, is characterized by natural motives (same as Chinese painting tradition): high horizon with prominent cliffs and a gold-embellished sky. Here, prominent are images of nature, whereas human figures are much rarer, elongated, tall and graceful. The discussed classical Persian miniature is enchanting in its colour harmony and unified style.

Turkish and Mongol miniature painting traditions, entering new period of development, intercept Persian miniature traditions. At the beginning of the 15th century, Turkish masters formulate fundamental compositional painting construction principles. We can witness those in illustrations

of various romantic poems and historical stories, the main protagonists of which are legendary heroes, rulers, valiants, the scenes of various battles and palace life are often depicted. According to Daldash, in Turkish miniature, differently from European painting, «the painting did not depict the action of the plot, but the essence of the idea behind it. It was executed using the depicted idea, time of depicted idea and location of action, which had become the three main painting construction principles». (21) Turkish miniature tradition is closely associated with Persian, only more attention is given to the outline and brightness of colours. From Persian tradition flowing Mongol tradition took the road of higher colour variety and intensity.

MUSIC

Music (*musiqah*), widely analysed in theoretic treatises, played an important role in the development of Arabic-Muslim tradition of aesthetics. Massignon gave music significant attention in his research on artistic expression means of Muslim nations. It is precisely in the extensive analysis of music, alongside poetic culture and forms, that he envisaged the possibility of distancing from the majority of stereotypes about the supposed denial of art's meaningfulness inherent to Islāmic culture. Massignon writes: «the first rebuttal of this opinion is already the fact that art exists in Muslim countries. Firstly — music. Alongside with Quran reading tradition in all Muslim countries, despite the variety of its nations, we see dispersing a unified, unique conception of music. Being an immaterial art, music was able to avoid prohibitions of form.» (22)

The origins of Arabic music date to around IInd century BC. This tradition of music took shape in the environment of in Arabic peninsula dwelling nomadic tribes and their trade centres. At the beginning these were simple rhythmic Bedouin melodies, which absorbed within themselves the elements of Syrian, Mesopotamian and Iranian musical culture. The

musical aesthetics, reflecting an original development of Arabic music formed in VIIth-Xth centuries under the influence of old civilization cosmogonic theories. Umayyad dynasty ruling period is also important, but the true rise is seen during Abbasid epoch, when musical theory and traditional instrumental abundantly ornamented music of both symmetrical and non-symmetrical character flourished. The spread of «the good lifestyle» aesthetic principles during the thriving of Arabic-Muslim civilization gave a significant push for the development of secular musical aesthetics and music playing culture. At that time, musical theory knowledge, playing music with various instruments became an inseparable part of artistic and multifacetedly educated personality's life.

The Brethren of Purity, the association of intellectual encyclopaedists, including al Fārābī, ibn Sīnā, al Shirazi, al Amuli, ibn Khaldūn, Safi al Din, Abd al Kadir, emerging in Basra in Xth century were the most prominent representatives of Arabic-Muslim world musical aesthetics. These broadly educated intellectuals and subtle masters of fundamental musical aesthetic principles truly comprehended the power of music to affect the apprehender's spiritual development. From here flows their attention to problems of musical aesthetics and theory.

The Brethren of Purity produced an extensive treatise dedicated to musical theory, in which we can feel the influence of ancient Babylonian astrological theories, Pythagorean, Persian, Hindu and Ancient Jewish musical theories. Their cosmological theory of music connected within itself teaching about the harmony of Heavenly spheres, the origin, composition, tones, intervals, rhythms, adornments and other components of music. These discussions constantly underline music's relation to principles of mathematics, so prevalent in later Arabic aesthetics. High musical tones here are held to be hot, while low – cold, a theory on their harmonious relations is developed. Not coincidentally, harmony is the fundamental

category of The Brethren of Purity's musical aesthetics, the main aesthetic criteria for evaluating the value and longevity of music.

A contemporary of The Brethren of Purity — the magnificent musical theorist and musician al Fārābī wrote a unique in its multifacetedness and depth volume on music aesthetics called *The Great Book of Music*, seeking to generalize already familiar Greek, Persian and other musical aesthetic theories in a qualitatively new level of theoretical synthesis. Two other great Arab thinkers and humanists Ibn Sinā and ibn Khaldūn are also distinguished by their original attitude towards musical aesthetic problems. Underlining the exceptional place of music in the hierarchy of arts, ibn Khaldūn held music to be not only an art, ascribable to the group of highest arts, but, going along with Confucius, as the most sensitive seismograph of culture. The decline in music, according to him, reflects a diseased society and in its crisis conditions signals about the negative manifestations in public life and culture.

The Arabic theory of music was closely associated with the theoretical reception of music playing traditions. In the early period of musical culture development, unison vocal music, with melodies based on seven tunes, was prominent. In these melodies, between main measures, half a tone and lower intervals are used, giving Arabic music a shade of monotony. Later, with the strengthening influence of other musical traditions, the importance of instrumental music grew in the Arabic-Muslim world space. Various musical instruments are used in Arabic traditional music, out of which we can firstly distinguish string instruments: rebab, kemancha, qanun, oud; and wind instruments: duff, tabla.

The music of Arabic-Muslim world is significantly different from usual to us Western music that gives significant attention to the clear rhythm, melody and play with various especially intricately structured tones. The constant use of rhythmic

structures gains an especially important role in organising the musical structure fabric in Arabic music, which, utilising a small drum-type instrument, underlining the systemically organizing order of rhythmic structures, seemingly regulates the shifts between main musical beats and melodies. On the other hand, later in Western culture unfolding polyphony is foreign to Arabic music. Music of Arabic-Muslim world, just as miniature painting, unfolds in the planes, drawn by planar ornamental and masterfully organized micro-interval structures.

The refined Arabic musical culture influenced the development of Western musical culture, especially that of nations that have directly experienced the impact of Arabization — Spanish, Portuguese, and later, through Provence — other Western nations. I would like to remind that it is precisely from the Muslim world, especially from Arabized south of Spain, Andalusia, Sicily and Provence, that many of our currently widely used instruments, held to be European, such as lute, violin, guitar, various percussive instruments, flute, travel to the Western world's civilizational space. It is considered, that sol-fa gamut is of Arabic origin as well.

ARCHITECTURE

Architecture (*'imārah*), striking in its expressive styles and regional form variety, became the pride of Arabic-Muslim world. Having reached the high artistic level, it is characterized by the maturity of compositional decision, unexpected flights of engineering thought, original constructive decisions, flexible design schemes, ingenious use of many artistic expression elements, masterful decorations and variety of decor. The majority of Islāmic world rulers were great builders, who sought to eternalize their dedication to Islāmic religion and leave their trace in history through building majestic architectural buildings from rigid stone and beautifully decorating the interiors.

The most solid achievements of Islāmic world architecture aesthetics and art are firstly associated with the architecture of mosques, more rarely – with the architecture of madrasas, minarets, mausoleums, palaces, defensive walls, fortresses, castles, caravanserais, baths, covered markets. Islāmic architecture aesthetics developed under influence of opulent Near East and Mesopotamia civilizations, Assyrian, Babylonian, Persian, ancient Jewish, Byzantine, Roman and other nations. However, the religion of Islam and to it directly associated Islāmic aesthetics introduced new normative and canonical functional and symbolic requirements for interplay between arts that were later adhered to, even though specific regional sacred and secular architecture styles remained influenced by local architecture traditions.

There are only a few specialised treatises, dedicated to architectural aesthetics in Arabic-Muslim world that are more technical, generalizing the knowledge about rulers, mercenaries, architects during the time of building. These treatises are closely associated to Hindu architecture dedicated *vastu shastras*. Their evident similarities enable a guess that, for example, architect, encyclopaedist and erudite al Amid (940–971) probably based his work on treatises of Hindu architectural aesthetics – Agnipurami and Manasara shilpa shastra.

The dominant form of sacral architecture in Arabic-Muslim civilizational space was the mosque – intended for Islam's religious purposes, firstly for prayer. Depending on their purpose, mosques were of different types, size and lavishness: main city mosque, block mosque, community mosque, Ramadan mosque, the main accent of which was mihrab and a reveted space which would contain a planned number of ritual performing Islam adepts.

Eventually, three main regional types of mosque architectural composition emerge: Arabic, Iranian or Persian, and Turkish. The earliest mosque composition style is the Arabic style, or hypostyle, with its characteristic palace

columns. It unfolds during the first centuries of Islāmic ideology entrenchment. Umayyad Mosque in Damascus, Mosque of Ibn Tulum in Cairo, the main Mosque (*Sidi Ukba*) of Maghrib's capital Kairouan, the Great Mosque of Cordoba (*Mezquita*), built in the capital of Andalusia, which for a long time was one of the largest mosques in the world, become the most prominent examples of Arabic type of architecture.

From the XIIth century, in Iran's theory and Central Asia, due to the influence of Persian architectural traditions, the most popular type of mosques, the so-called four iwan (high niches under four arches) architectural style – large dome niches in each inner wall of mosque's inner courtyard – becomes popular. Its characteristic distinguishing point is the small hall of prayers and above it rising dome without supporting columns, with four iwans and two minarets in the main facade. Shah Mosque in Isfahan, Blue Mosque in Tabriz and Friday Mosque in Natanz become the most famous examples of this architectural type.

The third, latest unfolded Turkish architectural mosque style was directly associated with the rise of Osman empire architectural traditions in the XVth century. As soon as the Osmans settled in Constantinople, new mosques of architectural style, similar to the local Sofia cathedral began to be built, the prayer halls of which were not hypostyle, but an open space, covered with a huge dome. The most famous examples of Turkish style are Suleyman I and Achmed Mosques in Istanbul and Mosque of Sellim II in Edirne.

An intensive period of Arabic-Muslim architecture aesthetics development began during the rule of new Umayyad dynasty, when the centre of civilization moved to one of the main Near East cultural centres – Damascus. During the rule of Caliph al Walid I (705–717), in the three of the most important Caliphate's cultural centres, majestic ensembles of sacred architecture were built: Prophet's Mosque in Medina, Aksa, or Rock dome Mosque in Jerusalem and the Grand Mosque

in Damascus. Later, during the rule of this dynasty, the majestic Ibn Tulun Mosque in Cairo, Kairouan Mosque in North Africa and the Grand Cordoba Mosque in Andalusia emerged.

The representatives of various Abbasid dynasty branches in various regions of the Caliphate who defeated the Umayyads erected many architectural monuments of different purpose and styles, only fragments and traces of which remain. The important Abbasid architectural centres were the former capitals of the dynasty — Baghdad, Samara, Raqqa and Cairo, in which there are only a few surviving exceptional ensembles of this epoch. In them we see the monumentality, characteristic to the Persian Sassanid epoch architecture. All of the mentioned cities, except for Cairo, were destroyed during Mongol conquests, thus only fragments of specific buildings, mostly built from encaustic bricks, have survived to this day.

The Great Mosque of Samarra is distinguished from a plentitude of Abbasid epoch architectural masterpieces with its 52 meter height spiral Malvian minaret, with the width of its lower part reaching 33 meters. Malvian minaret in its form resembled already in ancient Sumerian, Acadian and Assyrian civilizations built temples — ziggurats. With its architectural style, The Great Mosque of Samara is kindred to smaller sized hypostyle style Great Ceremonial Mosque in Cairo. Talking about the main developmental branches of Abbasid epoch Islāmic world architecture, one must mention the Samanid dynasty mausoleum in Bucchara, built at around 900 AC.

As the Abbasid dynasty declined, in the year 969, the Fatimid reign began. They decided on Egypt as their capital, near to where Cairo is now. Many various architectural buildings were erected in the city: one of the most impressive of which a small Al-Aqmar (Moonlight) Mosque, built in 1125AD from light grey stone. It is one of the first chamber city mosques that was harmoniously incorporated into already developed city street network in a way that the central axis of the mosque would be turned towards Mecca. Inside the mosque there is

a chamber-like 10x10 m inner courtyard, surrounded by arcade galleries. This mosque is distinguished by its low dome, and most importantly, majestic decor of the front part of external facade with masterfully incorporated porticoes and niches. In its face from both sides one can see the intertwined, seemingly small niche carved in stone, decorations called *muqarna*, which became one of the defining features of Islāmic architecture.

The farthest in the Western part of the Caliphate existing important Islāmic architecture hearth was in Andalusia's (Al-Andalus) territory in Pyrenean peninsula. Cordoba, Seville and Granada became the main centres of Islāmic architecture in Andalusia. In Cordoba, already during the Umayyad rule, the Great Mosque of Cordoba was erected, while in Seville we can see a tall monolithic square strict-lined minaret Giralda, which has survived ruthless religious wars as a part of former mosque ensemble and is one of the great masterpieces of Islāmic architecture. It is distinguished from the other two in Maghrib previously situated similar Almohad style buildings by its perfect shape and masterfully executed decor elements and details of external exterior. Despite the subsequent disfigurement of the top part by Christian architects, the main part of the minaret continues to astonish with its stylistic nobility, refusal of all less important decor details. In this aspect, Giralda had undoubtable influence on Western late medieval Gothic style, which intercepted its beauty of shape and decor.

Another unique masterpiece of Arabic Andalusian architecture was created in the last Muslim culture centre in Spain — Granada. It is Alhambra — a consolidated ruler palace ensemble with gardens and many other buildings. This architectural ensemble consisted of a fortress with defence towers, surrounded by strong defence walls, halls for receiving messengers, corridors with arcs of various types, gardens, ponds, cascades, fountains, inner courtyards, alleys, parterres. The exceptionally beautiful Alhambra ensemble is characterized

not only by the principles of its ingenious asymmetric compounds part composition principles, organic amalgamation of defence function and palace lifestyle, but also a masterful use of natural building materials, colours, the use of their textures and materiality in solving aesthetic decor problems. This geometrical simplicity and organicness of exterior and interior shapes in ensemble interiors was compensated by lavish embellishments, utilizing plenty of calligraphic structures, lace resembling ornamental and arabesque structures. All of this adorns the walls of halls and other surfaces and in specific rooms helps create the desired atmosphere. Exceptional attention here is given to especially intricate and ornate building adornment and decor: walls are embellished with embossed stucco. Faiences, mosaics, stained glass, incrustations of precious stones, also marble and precious metals, stucco models, carvings, ceramics, glazed variously shaped and coloured tiles, decorated with different patterns and other elements make up complex geometric patterns.

Alongside the already discussed styles of Andalusian architecture and decor, when analysing in Pyrenean peninsula unfolded forms influenced by Islâmic architecture, one must mention the unique so-called *mudejares* architecture style, in which elements of the conqueror Arab and Berber style amalgamated with Goth, Greek and Roman architecture traditions. Mudejares are Muslims, who did not return to the Islâmic civilizational space after the Reconquista campaign and remained in territories, reclaimed by Christians, utilising their talent in creating Christian architecture and art. The Royal Palace of Alcazar in Seville is the best surviving example of *mudejares* style palace architecture. It is a slightly smaller architectural building and garden ensemble that our discussed Alhambra ensemble in Granada. The ensemble enchants with the harmonious interplay of galleries, arcs of various shapes, towers, friezes, all of different architectural styles, with compact courtyards and gardens, rich interior decor and many stucco

modelled details. Many examples of this art can be seen in Teruel, Saragossa and Toledo palace and Christian church architecture in the territory of the Kingdom of Aragon.

Another important centre of architecture developed in Central Asia after Mongol conquests, where Timur, the founder of a powerful Timurean Empire, and his successors, gave significant attention to the restoration of destroyed cities. As seen from the restoration plans of Samarkand, Merv, Bukhara and other cities, the city centre was firstly oriented around the city fortress, which was also the ruler's place of residency. There was a national administrative building complex nearby, as well as the main mosques. There also were grand market squares, water reservoirs and water supply systems. The representational part of the city was often orderly designed and demarcated by a system of strong defence walls with gates. Outside this city wall, spontaneously forming suburbs would emerge, settlements with nobility's summer residences, noblemen palaces, mosques of more modest size, sites for celebration and small buildings of poorer settlers and artisans.

The Osman empire, growing in Little Asia in the 14th century, conquering Constantinople in 1453AD, soon intercepted the cultural heritage and architectural traditions of Byzantium. Alongside clear to Islāmic architecture characteristic geometric building shapes, 16th century Osman Empire city silhouettes were dominated by arcs and domes of impressive size. Here, Mimar Sinan — a genius, creating exceptional architectural masterpieces needs to be merited. He constantly experimented, sought new constructive principles of solving complex architectural problems. He became famous with his majestic mosque ensembles in which, further refining the Byzantine architecture principle, he was able to introduce new constructive design principles of dome and half-dome architecture and create aesthetically appealing inner spaces of erected buildings. In the unified architecture and decor

compositional system they functioned alongside various minarets, well-formed longitudinal courtyards, pavilions, water reservoirs and garden fragments.

The Sehzade Mosque, Suleyman I Mosque in Istanbul and Selim II Mosque in Erdine became Sinan's architectural masterpieces. He held the latter to be the most perfect of his buildings. It is truly a unique creation of this architect due to its compactness, interplay between composite parts of composition and ensemble. The design of Selimiye Mosque, constructed based on principles of perfect proportions, with inner courtyard, surrounded by arcades and a fountain in its centre, reminds of the Arabic hypostyle mosque. Four 70-meter high elegant thin minarets create an impression of lightness of the mosque and its architectural constructions, almost as if it floats in the air. Sinan had a huge influence on subsequent development of aesthetics of Islāmic architecture, as his most famous buildings appear to solidify the fundamental principles of Osman architectural aesthetics, with a sizeable dome, crowning the building and a vast space beneath it in the hall of prayers becoming its most defining features.

EPILOGUE AND FINAL COMMENTS

Thus, it is precisely the ideology of Islam that was incomparably more tolerant and liberal than in Latin Western or Byzantine Christianity, that became the main ideological and in other words, the ordering axis for Islāmic art critical aesthetics and practice of art, merging the regional art traditions of Arabian peninsula, Maghreb, Egypt, Levant, Mesopotamia, Iran, Central Asia, Islamized Pyrenean peninsula, Islamized India, Turkish, black sub-Saharan Africa into a more or less unified system of aesthetic and artistic attitudes. But, different from the Christian, Buddhist, Hindu and Tantric arts, the classical period Arab-muslim world art, influenced by Islāmic ideology was substantially more liberal in its main convictions and, most importantly, often foreign to strict

requirements of religious cult and canons. This was hugely influenced by the absence of influential churchman stratum, which could otherwise have controlled these processes. This is because under the influence of Quran metaphysics, every adept of Islam firstly sought to approach the vital streams of his belief without any mediators.

The rise of art critical aesthetics and with it closely connected theory of art in Islāmic world is directly associated with the heyday of fine and applied arts, architecture and other forms of art. Thus, we can become acquainted with the majority of foundational ideas and principles of Arab-muslim world art critical aesthetics by moving «from below», i.e. from the specifics of art practice. The main stream of art critical aesthetic thought was more connected to research of poetic, literary and philological direction, which, akin to Hindu tradition of art critical aesthetics, most often took shape within poetics during theoretical contemplations of laws of the art of poetry, less frequent, during contemplations of theoretical problems of architecture, calligraphy, literature, music and other arts.

Analysing art critical aesthetics, unfolding in Arabic-Muslim civilizational space, or attempting to implicitly single it out from the specific world of art, we instantly come across complex obstacles. Firstly, since Antiquity, in the majority of countries and regions, belonging to Arabic-Muslim Caliphate (Egypt, Syria, Palestine, Persia, Armenia, Georgia, Iraq, India, Arabized Spain, Sicilia, India, etc.) rich indigenous, sometimes dissimilar aesthetic traditions and theories existed.

On other note, Arabic-Muslim art critical aesthetics differed from Hindu, Chinese, Antique and Western aesthetic traditions firstly by a narrower field of art system reflexivity and stronger penetration of some foundational Islāmic religious and ideological convictions into the sphere of aesthetic consciousness. In art critical aesthetics, forms of art, firstly associated with the dispersion of Divine word — poetry (and much less significantly — literature and calligraphy) became the

main object of theoretical contemplation of aesthetic phenomena, processes and products of aesthetic creativity. This is in contrast to philosophical aesthetics and philosophy of art, in which the creators' attention was centered upon broadest philosophical problems of a spectre of forms of art.

The most significant influences determining the originality of Islāmic art phenomena during the course of history were changing periodically, same as its most vital nourishing streams. In the early formation process of Arabic-Muslim art critical aesthetics, the pivotal role was played by Syrian, Mesopotamian, Hebrew, Byzantine, Brothers of Saint John and Nestorian (Christian) and Hellenist traditions that provided Arabic aesthetics with the majority of foundational aesthetic convictions, visually perceived structures, poetic symbols, metaphors. From here flows characteristic to art critical aesthetics high estimation of importance of ornamental structurality, geometrization of visual forms, arabesque, real floral and zoomorphic image schemes.

Later, the becoming of tradition of Islāmic art critical aesthetics was strongly influenced by aesthetic traditions and styles, formed during the rule of Persian Sasanian, Achaemenid dynasties. Finally, after the Mongolian conquests, Mongolian, Chinese, Hindu, Turkish, Copts, steppe and other nations (especially Skit) influences become extremely forceful. During the process of historical dispersion of Islāmic aesthetic thought, all of them amalgamated and, depending on many specific political and cultural factors, differently unfolded in various regions of Arab-muslim civilization, which saw continuously growing influence of art forms by nations and regions that succeeded to preserve their national traditions.

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