

Study of Motifs of Roshan in Makkah

Nawal ALGhamdi, Arba'iyah Ab. Aziz, Muliyadi Mahamood

Faculty of Art & Design, Universiti Teknologi MARA, 40450, Shah Alam, Selangor Darul Ehsan, Malaysia
*Corresponding Authors Email Address: N_320@hotmail.com

Received: 1 June 2019 / Accepted: 15 October 2019 / Published online: 30 December 2020

Abstract

This paper is an investigation into the motifs found on Roshan in Makkah. Furthermore, it aims at describing and analyzing those motifs. It uses qualitative method by incorporating Edmund Feldman's theory of Art Criticism into Lamia's tawhidic worldview of Islamic Art to show how Muslim artists rendered roshan non-individual and abstract using basic yet sophisticated techniques: stylization, non-individuation, repetition and arabesque. This paper is an introduction to a few others that will include other cities in Saudi Arabia such as Jeddah, Madinah, and Yanbu'. In addition, it represents a call to more researches on motifs. It hopes if the idea is crytalized in a very detailed and conscious manner that it is made a nation-wide curriculum at high schools and universities so as to become a guide for architects and a point of raising awareness about the significance of our national heritage. This paper again serves as a thought-provoking, inviting more comments, inputs and even creativities and expertise that can help bridge the gap between traditional and modern architectures— between traditional and modern houses. It invites Islamic institutes specialized in researches pertaining to Art for more efforts that can bring about new genuine creative ideas that can help modern architecture survive and overcome the materialistic aspect it suffers from.

Keywords- Roshan, motifs in Roshan

1. Introduction

The Roshan is a projected wooden balcony that covers the front façade of a building. It is characterized by the beauty and uniqueness of its decorative elements. A traditional window made of wood, the Roshan is an extension of the building, designated to increase the size of the rooms and to beautify the building at the same time. It represents a milestone in the success of Islamic architecture in achieving a balance between aesthetics, religious values and social traditions. While providing privacy from those outside the building, Roshan allows its inhabitants to see the outside environment without being seen by the public (Abkar, 2009).

In addition, the Rawāshīn (the plural of Roshan) are true examples of Islamic art and the local heritage. They served, in the past, as a means of ornament on the facades of the houses in Makkah, one of their main features and functions. According to (A'nqawi, 2010) Rawāshīn are characterized by the beauty and coherence of their elements, having interfaces, which are embossed with floral and geometric decorations in front, both on the sides and at the base. In fact, the Rawāshīn were regarded as the pillars of the construction in Makkah and so gave the houses of Makkah an Islamic identity and aesthetic values, which explicitly expresses formidable craftsmanship in decorative art, and architecture. The value of Rawāshīn in terms of their practical, artistic and historic significance is clear to some but has gone unrealized by others. Hence, modernization, urbanization and technological revolutions which have invaded our world, the rapid growth of the population, the increasing number of pilgrims every year and the dire need for expansion of the sacred mosque were the main reasons behind the removal of entire regions, thus discarding their distinguished features, without planning or consideration for the preservation of the historical features that represent them. In Makkah, modern architecture

touch and design that can well represent the aesthetic value of the architectural heritage in Makkah. All these changes took place in the name of modernization without any concerns about the Islamic architectural and aesthetic heritage left in Makkah. The modern trend in design and architecture, however, did not retain the historical and Islamic aesthetic features that once represented a civilizational identity for the people in Makkah, it rather almost did away with it—all in the name of progress and development; which sometimes does not go in line with social, cultural and religious principles and practices of the people of Makkah. A very small number of buildings that contain some Rawāshīn remained and a very few attempts were made to restore them. Some concerned intellectuals, in their writings, have strongly called for the maintenance and preservation of the Islamic architectural heritage but opposed by a very strong modern trend and practices on the ground. The Modern trend in building and construction continues to back up the expansion projects aimed at extending areas surrounding the Holy Mosque in Makkah. The expansion and rebuilding projects that have been put in place to modernize the surroundings of the Holy Mosque, and also the Holy Mosques itself, failed to document the Historical decorative architectural designs in Makkah according to Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia (2020, April 29).

Hence, this research, considering this precious heritage as a sign of civilizational, cultural and religious achievements, aims at preserving it by way of documentation, and also by way of critically analyzing the aesthetic values of the decorative motifs found on Roshan. The decorative motifs found on roshan means a group of elements such as botanic, geometric for aesthetic and ornamental purposes (Al Faruqi, L. L, 1986). They are made in such a way that they comply with the principles of tawhid as emphasized by (Al-Faruqi, 1986). Doing so, will allow the new generation to appreciate the brilliant craftsmanship by their predecessors and most importantly take practical steps towards an architectural awareness and revival. In addition, the research can serve as an inspiration for young generation of architects and fine artists to try to accommodate and incorporate into modern Islamic architecture the innovative and aesthetic achievements by their predecessors.

1. Literature Review

According to Nasr (Al-Harithi, 1986) describing decorative elements found on some houses of Makkah and some Roshan, categorizes these decorative elements into geometrical and botanical. The geometrical decorative elements are: a hexagonal-shaped ring, Solomon ring, navel shape, hexagonal star, military-double-badged shape, hexagonal-lined shape, hexagonal and stars, As for the botanical ones, a fan-shaped palm, flower shapes such as: flowers, pentagonal-shaped, hexagonal-shaped flowers. And a sun-ray-shaped flowers this categorization is relevant and helpful since it will provide the thesis at hand with analytical tool and help identify the names of different decorative elements or motifs that are continuously repeated on the Roshan of Makkah. According to Farida (Al-Murahem, 2000) that deals with the historical background of roshan as well as the etymological development of the term. Most importantly it examines closely the accounts and experiences of those who wrote on the subject at hand, native-indigenous on one hand, and non-native-orientalists; those from within and those from without. Furthermore, it is a critical-analysis-based that investigates Roshan from two different angles: first, from the framework of orientalists, those who lived in Makkah and took note of their observations from their own perspective. That is to say, using their own outlook and perspective to visualize and analyze what they have observed and experienced.

In fact, this is an attempt by Faridah to deeply study roshan in a holistic cultural context of the nineteenth century. She also goes beyond trying to grasp the direct relationship, for instance, between Hijab and architecture. Hence, this study represents a significant source of documentation of visual art. This study, however, differs from the current study in that it focuses on the physical and concrete or visual aspects of Roshān while the current study puts emphasis on non-visuals and resolves rather to abstract meanings latent in the motifs found on Roshan.. Second, from the framework and perspective of the indigenous and those from within Makkah. According to (Niki, 2010) this article there are three categories of non-figural ornamentation in Islamic art – geometric, calligraphic and floral. As far as the Grand Architect of the Universe is concerned, geometric decoration has gain currency in Islamic art. Forms and shapes like hexagons, octagons, dodecagons, squares, stars and rosettes are all incorporated to make fantastic geometric designs that are part and parcel of Islamic art and architecture. Muslims have resort to adopting non-figural ornamentation due the prohibition by Muhammad (the prophet). Also due to the tawhidic element that is embedded in Muslims' doctrine. Moreover. It highlights the importance of geometric designs in Islamic art. Research is inclusive in a sense that it comprehends the three types of non-figural ornamentation, in Roshan Makkah nevertheless it will elaborate more on the subject matter with more details.

2. Methodology

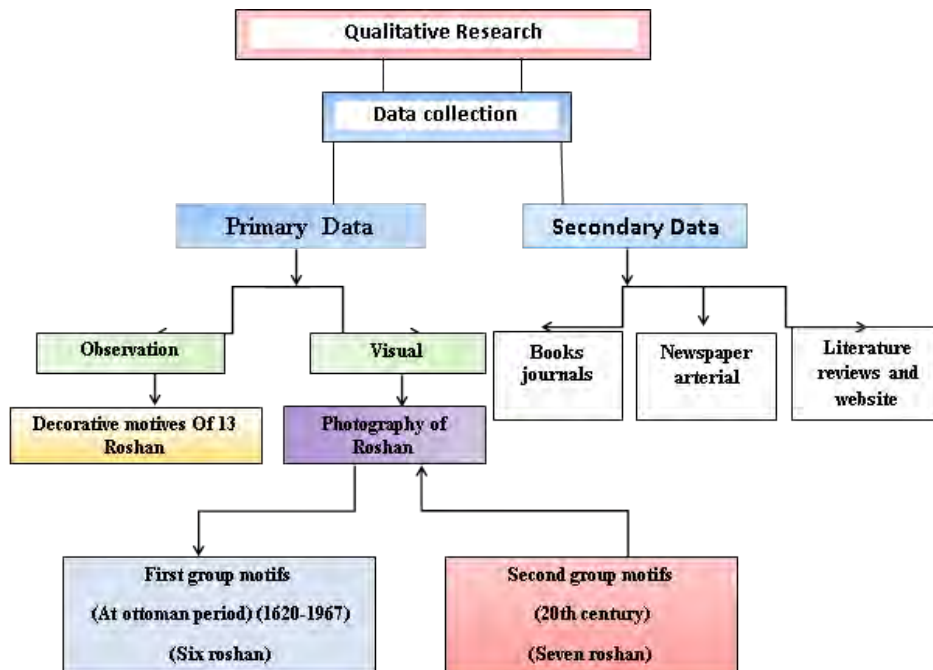


Figure 1. Summary of mothed (Nawal ALGhamdi) 2018

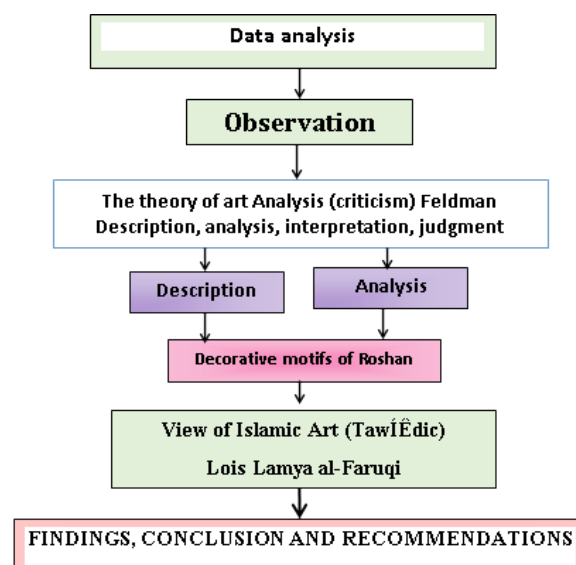


Figure 1. Summary of the data analysis. (Nawal ALGhamdi) 2018

3. Data Collection

This paper contains two houses of roshan: the first one goes back to the Ottoman time and the second one is built in twentieth century. Moreover, the first one consists of three units of motifs, whereas the second roshan

contains four units of motifs. The paper uses two elements of Feldman's steps: description and analysis. Description is used as a tool to label the roshan, determine its parts, set its location, and describe its motifs, color, and the raw material it was made of. Analysis is meant to highlight and explain minute details unknown to many, then determine their natural elements and labels.

3.1 Heritage house of Makkah Roshan from ottoman period:

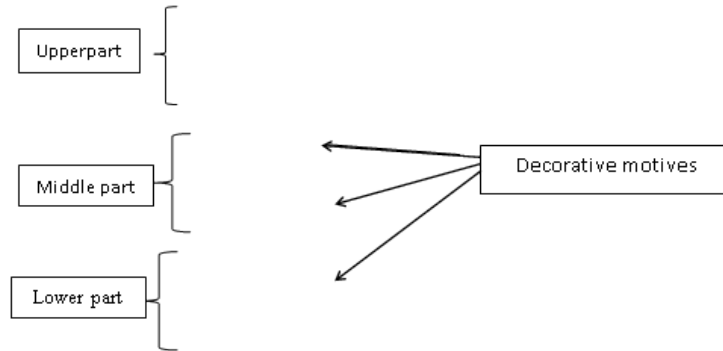









Figure 2. Roshan in Makkah during the Ottoman Period (1819)

Table 1. Description of three decorative elements

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Roshan	Description	
	<p>Location: Type: single Roshan. Material: wood Color: dark brown Motifs: botanic and geometric shapes Method of execution: tashiq, emptying, and drawing with colors.</p> <p>Drawing by Nawal Al Ghamdi 2015</p>	<p>This Roshan is King Faisal Palace located right in a neighborhood known as al-Ashamiyyah', in Makkah. It was built in 1816(. It is considered to be one of the most exquisite Roshan during the Ottoman era. The motifs on this Roshan were spread out in three parts, mostly in the middle. On the sides are two other ornaments.</p> <p>(Nasr Al-Harathi. 1986) Raw material: wood.</p>
<p>(A) Middle part</p> 		<p>It is an eight-petal flower lying in the middle and surrounded by a three-petal flower looking like the flowers of lotus that have plant leaves around it.</p>
<p>(B) Middle part</p> 		<p>This style of decoration is known as 'the ornament of Makkah'. It consists of a pine tree in circle shape topped by a palm tree with the fronds of dates. The pine tree has three plant leaves.</p>
<p>(C) Lower part</p> 		<p>It is a shape of palm tree with a plant leaf that looks like fronds of dates or a grape vine. This palm tree is of two leaves with an inscribed leaf in the middle. These two leaves stand on two sides: right and left. The leaves extend to the top ending with five-petal flowers.</p>

3.2 Heritage house of Makkah Roshan from 20th century:

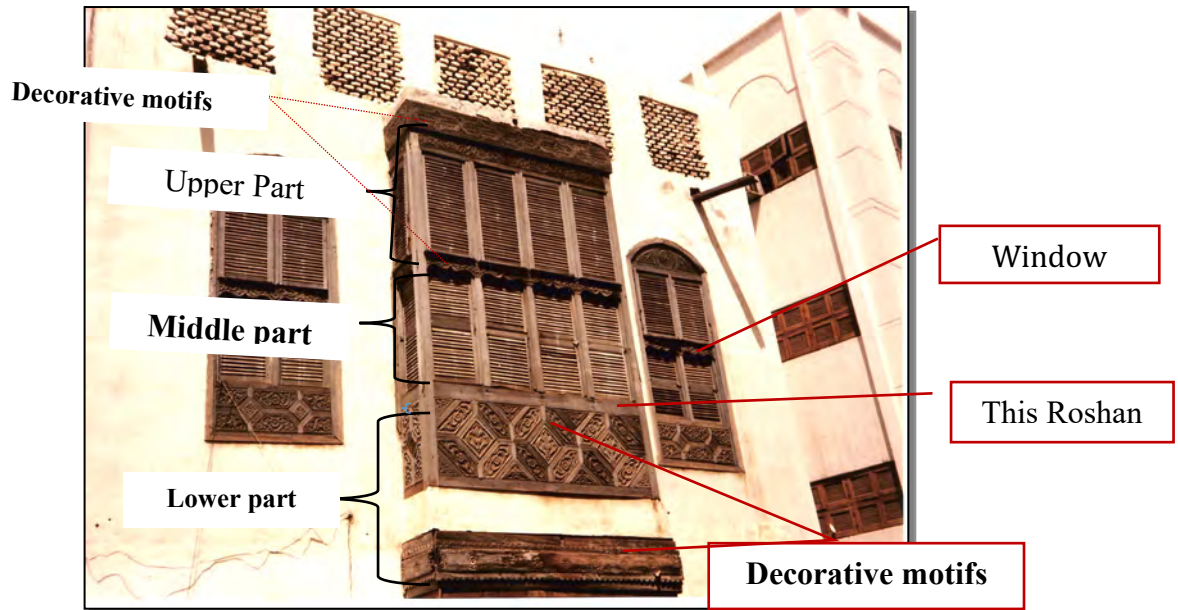


Figure 4. Roshan in Makkah during 20 century

Table 2a. Roshan in Makkah during 20 century

Roshan	Description
	<p>Location: This Single Roshan lies in Jabal Hindi (Indian Mount). It is a non-connected Roshan that does not cover the façade of a building. We can divide the decoration of this type of Roshan into three parts: the upper, the middle, and the bottom part.</p> <p>Type: single Roshan.</p> <p>Material: wood</p> <p>Colour: dark brown</p> <p>Motifs: leaves, botanic branches, geometric shapes</p> <p>Mod of execution: deep and apparent sculpture</p>
	<p>Pic (Khalid Qarut.2000) Drawing (Nawal AL Ghamdi.2014)</p>

Table 3b. Roshan in Makkah during 20 century


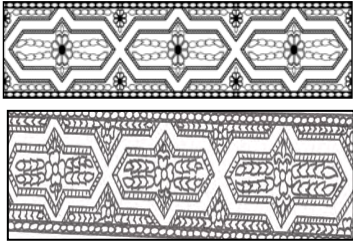

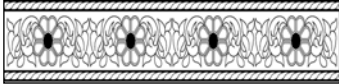

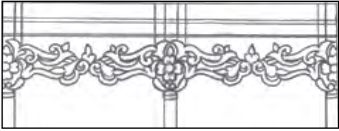

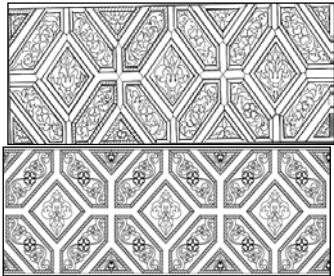
Roshan decorations	Original shape	Description
(A) Upper Part 		In the top of the Roshan lies a geometric shape with a four-leaved flower in the center. Out of which comes a botanic shape that looks like Sanibel around it there is a frame of well-compacted leaves intersected by a Jasmine and four-petal flowers. This is a style that belongs to the ottoman time
(B) Upper 		Multi-petal flowers disjointed by botanic branches.
(B) Middle 		This piece of decoration separates the upper window from the bottom one with multi-petal flowers in the middle.
(D) Lower part 		This part lies in the bottom of Roshan. It is a complex shape that has six sides in the center; in which there a shape that looks like a flower vase. Botanic leaves as well as Muayyanat (a shape that is rectangular and cubic at the same time) come out of it; with a flower surrounded by botanic leaves. This style is also said to have roots back to the Ottoman time.

Figure 4a. Description of three decorative elements

4. Conclusion

This paper has dealt with the definition of the Rawāshīn found in Makkah by highlighting its features and characteristics. It explained the dramatic changes that occurred in architecture and built environment in Makkah. These changes were seemingly prompted by the desire of the government in Saudi Arabia to expand the holy mosque known as ‘al-Masjid al-Haram’. This initiative was due to the urgent need for capacious area that can house the increasing number of pilgrims and visitors to the holy place. As a result, traditional houses with its aesthetic ornaments had to be done away with if this expansion were to take place. Consequently, the motifs and decorative elements, that inform the ancient, historical, cultural and religious heritage in Makkah, have all disappeared leaving no aesthetic trace of all these that represented the city one day. In fact, this acceleration in the development of the built environment in Makkah left no chance and room for the preservation, let alone, the study of these motifs. Moreover, it left no chance for any documentation as the traditional-urban features of the city had disappeared. This led to a difficulty in recovering some motifs or even in making Roshan with the same aesthetic standard. It also prompted, into the surface, some decorative patterns that were not visible lacking some details. In other words, the traditional-urban features of the city that were documented were dull and cloudy and therefore needed more details, which this research has answered by providing more sketches as to render them visible and explainable.

Acknowledgements

We would like to acknowledge the generous participation in the completion of this research. This study was conducted in the Faculty of Art & Design, Universiti Teknologi MARA. Fully appreciate for providing the facilities, equipment, and expertise to completing this research. Special thanks to the FSSR research initiative group for the assistance given for the research can be carried out successfully..

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