


A Study of the Reflection of Qur'anic Verses in Mihrab Carpets of the Safavid Period

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Introduction

Inscriptions on carpets are among the most significant spiritual and artistic features of Safavid carpet weaving. These inscriptions, often composed of Qur'anic verses or supplications, are written in calligraphic styles such as nasta'liq, thuluth, or naskh, and are typically placed in the borders or around the mihrab design of the carpet. Beyond their decorative function, these inscriptions serve as a medium for expressing Islamic and spiritual concepts. Visual forms in these carpets, such as the mihrab layout and arabesque motifs, reinforce the spiritual atmosphere evoked by the inscriptions. This study explores the relationship between Islamic themes, the textual presence of Qur'anic verses, and the use of inscriptions in selected Safavid mihrab carpets, with a particular focus on their visual structure and design principles..

Methodology

This study focuses on two Safavid-period mihrab carpets that feature Qur'anic inscriptions as their central visual element. It offers a descriptive-analytical examination of the visual characteristics of these carpets, analyzing how Qur'anic texts-especially the Āyat al-Kursī (Q 2:255)-are integrated into the overall composition. The carpets are studied both in terms of visual placement of the inscriptions and their interaction with other decorative elements.

Due to limited access, the sample is purposively restricted to two documented carpets: one held in the Khalili Collection, and the other in the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The research emphasizes the role of Āyat al-Kursī, given its rich theological and mystical content, in shaping the conceptual and aesthetic dimensions of both carpets.

The study is qualitative in nature and uses a descriptive-analytical methodology. Historical background on Safavid-era carpet inscription practices, the text and meaning of Āyat al-Kursī, and visual analysis of the carpets were gathered through library-based sources.

Findings

In Safavid mihrab carpets, the presence of Qur'anic inscriptions-particularly Āyat al-Kursī-is prominently featured and reveals a deep integration of Islamic concepts within artistic production. These carpets, while serving a functional and decorative purpose, also become sites for reflection and spiritual engagement. The inclusion of Qur'anic inscriptions acts as a conduit for religious contemplation and reminds the viewer of divine teachings.

The frequent use of Āyat al-Kursī in carpet inscriptions reflects its significance in Islamic art, especially in objects used for prayer. The interplay between the calligraphic inscription and

arabesque motifs enhances this religious symbolism. The carpets' arabesque elements-designed with stylized natural patterns and intricate repetitions such as spirals and vines-add visual beauty while reinforcing the spiritual message conveyed through the inscription.

One of the clearest expressions of this Qur'an-art relationship is the repeated use of visual symbols connected to sacred space and worship, such as the mihrab-like structure of the prayer niche, forming the central composition of both carpets examined in this study. These elements make Qur'anic inscription on mihrab carpets an instrument for spreading Islamic teachings and creating a dialogue between religious doctrine and artistic form. The result is an artistic object that also serves as a space for spiritual contemplation.

Conclusion

The presence of Āyat al-Kursī within the architectural structure of the mihrab carpet creates a unity between meaning and form-between divine speech and human artistic expression. In the selected examples, the depiction of God's names and attributes, along with references to prostration and worship, is framed within a richly adorned mihrab space featuring arabesque decoration. All of these elements work together to reinforce the message of the verse.

The use of Āyat al-Kursī in such carpets serves as a spiritual reminder for worshippers, drawing attention to the grandeur and majesty of God during acts of prayer. Verses related to standing, bowing, and prostrating are placed alongside sacred architectural motifs and other religious symbols to help create a sanctified atmosphere-encouraging spiritual mindfulness and a sense of divine presence during worship.

Keywords

Safavid, Mihrab Carpet, Qur'anic Verses, Inscriptions, Motifs.

Ethical Considerations

Compliance with research ethics. The authors observed the ethical principles in conducting and publishing this scholarly research, and this is confirmed by all of them.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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