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# The emanation of consolidated secrets in Islamic architecture

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**Abstract**

Islamic architecture has a fundamental dignity and tries to preserve the spiritual and immortal elements. The most sensible characteristic of this type of art is the compatibility with the nature of Islam; monotheism, which the mosque architecture provides the best bed for such purpose. The main model for constructing mosques, from both outward and internal spiritual truths point of view, is the Kaaba. It is considered as a religious and holly symbol in Muslims' all issues. Since the Islamic artist in Islamic architecture seeks the means through forms, therefore, in addition to engineering appearance of Kaaba, which is the model of Islamic mosques' architecture, its innate mysteries are also emanated in this type of art. Quiddity of these mysteries and their advent quality in the architecture of the mosques is the main issue we are confronting with. This research tries to uncover the coded forms of Kaaba and come out of the attaining unique secrets of these forms in the rational and material world and the way of their emanation in the Islamic architecture, which is the main purpose here. Achieving this purpose is due to benefiting from theological sciences, studying Islamic narratives and verses, and also philosophical, theosophical and knowledge studies which are in descriptive and library types. It is possible to reach the depth of existential philosophy of Kaaba under the shadow of these investigations and the basics of the Islamic architecture would be considering in the next phase and that information in literature review, which features the mysteries of Kaaba would be interpreted in this sacred art. These studies clarify that Kaaba is a secret of unique being of God and it is the emanation of his terrestrial form in divine heaven. Thus, mosques' architecture is an appearance of the divine house trying to create sacred atmosphere, to indicate this eternal truth and capable the human being to connect to his idol and reach to the final destination of the creation, which is knowing the single God.

**Key words:** *Islamic art, Islamic architecture, Kaaba, geometrical figures, mystery*

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## Introduction

Islamic architecture is one of the most important divisions of the Islamic art, which is based on the holly geometry. The sanctity of such geometry is taken of the Qibla of all Muslims around the world, which is Kaaba. Baitullah (holly God's house), which has a specific status in believes and actions of Muslims, and is considered as their unity center, is emanated in form of geometrical figures in this material world. These figures, like all universal creatures, have a supernatural truth in sublime worlds and what we see from Kaaba is the material and outward appearance of a truth, which exists in the rational world and divine heaven. Thus, this sanctity and its geometrical forms depend on the sanctity of supernatural truths. Discovering these truths, cryptically hidden at heart of this divine creature, requires the access to a special knowledge and you can achieve to understanding the depth and the truth of the creation philosophy by gloss and interpretation . The problematic of this research is that, sacred geometry in Islamic architecture is capable of explaining the sublime truths of Kaaba in rational world, that how it can explain them, that how a Muslim artist can benefit such truth and prepare his own and his audiences' excellence medium, in the form and definition of whatever he creates. The importance of above-mentioned topics indicates the necessity of this research; to enable the Muslim artist to deliver what is the target of the God behind creation of Kaaba in the Islamic architecture and guide the human being toward his understanding and reaching at the final destination and his inherent perfection.

To reach this purpose, firstly the research tries to know the real position of the Kaaba and then investigate the way of its advent and emanation in the Islamic architecture.

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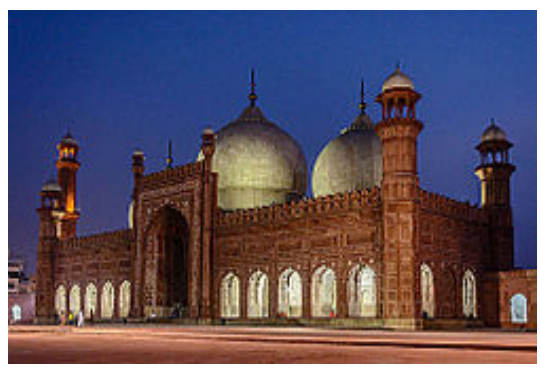
Pic 1. The interior side view of the main dome of Selimiye Mosque in Edirne, Turkey.



Pic 2. A view of intricate tile-work on the Mir-i-Arab Madrasa in Bukhara, Uzbekistan.



Pic 3. The large Hypostyle prayer hall in the Great Mosque of Kairouan, dating in its present form from the 9th century, in Kairouan, Tunisia.



Pic 4. A view of the Badshahi Mosque in Lahore, Pakistan which was commissioned by the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb in 1671.

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**Real position of Kaaba**

Mystics consider four levels for the whole universe: God's world, ration's world, sample world and the nature world. However, any being has a form in the nature world and a truth in the sublime worlds (Darvish, 2008: 92). According to Quran verses, the natural appearances are declinable, but as though whatever which is near the God is stable and current, then whatever destroys in the material world is preserved originally in the sublime world. What we observe in this world is emanating from the God, which indicates him and is a means of approaching and sublimation to the God.

Then, according to Islamic narratives Kaaba in front of Beyt-ol-Ma'moor and Beyt-ol-Ma'moor in front of heaven are based on for pillars. So, Kaaba is made in square form too (Javadi Amoli, 2002:202). According to Imam Sadigh the secret of heaven's being in square form is because of its being constructed based on quadruplet glories , which the existence and Islam are also founded on it (Nilforooshan, 2008: 83). Moreover, angels repeat these glories while spinning around the heaven (Darvish, 2008, 95). "This material heaven is in front of the unity heaven, and the base of that real unity is on a triple monotheisms: it means verbal monotheism that is the content of praising , attributive monotheism, that is the content of glorification , and intrinsic monotheism, that is the content of transcendentalism , and then purifying him of all these monotheisms. It is the content of praying the glory," says Saeid Ghomi, the judge (Ghomi, 1999: 8 &8).

These descriptions all explain the real place of Kaaba in the divine heaven and the possible impression of this divine house in the Islamic art is derived from its external and geometrical form and spiritual truth in the heaven. Thus, the left of discussion would be on the quiddity of the Islamic art and the way of advent of such truths.

Qur'an in Surah Baqara Verses 121 to 127 described it clearly that Allah had ordained his servant Ibrahim to build the Shrine there for worship of One God. During Kusayi's time it was rebuilt and fortified. During the early years of Prophet Muhammad (S) before he announced his ministry, the Ka'aba was damaged by floods and it was rebuilt again.

When the Black stone was to be put in its place the Makkans quarreled among themselves as to who should have the honor to place it there. They had just decided that the first comer to the quadrangle should be given the task of deciding as to who should have the honor. Muhammad (S) came in and was assigned this task. He advised them to place the stone in a cloak and ordered the heads of each Tribe each to take an end and bring the cloak nearer the corner on the eastern side. He himself then took out the stone and placed it in its position. It has been fixed there ever since.After the martyrdom of the family of the Prophet at Karbala in 61 Hijri (681 AD), the Ummayad Caliph Yazid Ibne Moawiya did not stop there in the pursuit of his destruction. He sent a large contingent under the command of Haseen Ibne Namir to Madina which destroyed the Mosque of the Prophet. They did not stop there but proceeded to Makka and demolished the four walls of the Ka'aba and killed thousands of Muslims who protested. Yazid died and Ibne Namir returned to Damascus, Ka'aba was rebuilt by Abdullah Ibne Zubayr and his associates. Umawi forces came back to Makka and killed Abdullah Ibne Zubayr, hung his body on the gates of the Ka'aba for three months for all to see the Umawi power. But eventually this arrogance of power brought its own consequences and Mukhtar became the ruler in Iraq. Under his guidance the Ka'aba was refurbished and pilgrims began to arrive in safety to perform Hajj.The Ka'aba successfully withstood the Karamatian invasion of 317/929, only the Blackstone was carried away which was returned some twenty years later. In the year 1981 the Wahhabis brought tanks inside the Ka'aba to crush the kahtani revolution



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against the Saudi regime and almost demolished the South Eastern Wall. This was later restored with the help of the Makkan people.
Every man living in Makka in the 6th and 7th century must out of necessity have had some relationship with the Ka'aba. On the Muhammad (S), the Prophet of Islam, the Qur'an is silent during the Makkans period in this respect. All that is known is that the Muslim community of the period turned towards Jerusalem in prayers. Subsequently about a year and a half after the Hijra the Muslims were ordered during prayers which were led by the Prophet of Islam himself to turn towards Makka. The particular mosque in Madina where this happened is called Masjid al-Qiblatain, meaning the mosque with two Qiblas. The Qur'an tells the Muslims,
"Turn then thy face towards the sacred mosque and wherever ye are turn your faces towards that part" (2: 139-144)
At this same period the Qur'an began to lay stress on the religion of Ibrahim, presenting Islam as a return to the purity of the religion of Ibrahim which, obscured by Judaism and Christianity, shone forth in its original brightness in the Qur'an. The pilgrimages to the Ka'aba and ritual progressions around the building were continued, but were now for the glorification of One God. The Abrahamic vision of the Ka'aba created a means of discerning an orthodox origin buried in the midst of pagan malpractices to which the first Muslims pointed the way. Every year after the Hajj ceremony the place is closed for one month and on the Day of Ashura the Ka'aba is washed from inside by the Water from the well of Zamzam and a new Kiswa is brought to cover the Ka'aba for the next year. This is the story of the Ka'aba and the persons who protected it and remained its custodians and protectors from the satanic and evil forces throughout history. Muhammad (S) and the people of his household (Ahlul Bayt) were the protectors of the Ka'aba, and currently the 12th Imam from the direct descent of the Prophet of Islam is the real protector, its custodian and guardian and shall remain as such while in concealment. In the following pages we shall unfold the lives and times of these 14 Ma'sumeen Alaihimussalam.

**The role of Kaaba in Islamic art and Architecture**

As already said, "All the univers is the symbol of God's qualifications and characteristics" (Firoozan, 2000: 192) and it is a mystery and a symbol of God's existence, which you can achieve the God's purpose behind their creation, by decoding. Kaaba itself is one of the clearest samples of achieving to this purpose, which the Islamic art and architecture have enormously benefited from it. "In Islamic art the being is unified and whatever exists must emanate its divine source," says Burkhart (Burkhart, 1991: 13&15). "In fact, Islamic art means the material crystallization of Islamic revelation nature and the reflection of heavenly truths in the world, such a reflection that the Islamic individual begins his demeanor in the world and progresses to the divine presence and a truth which is the source and target of this art" (Najib Oghloo, 1998: 112). Then, the target behind the Islamic art is to create an atmosphere, which aids the human being in knowing his divine dignity. Such atmosphere, by eliminating secular temptations, meanwhile makes human being a subordinator of intuition and contemplation and replace supersedes an order instead of these temptations, which explains the balance, peace, and please. Then, it is considerable that architectures in Islam hold a fundamental and important status and dignity, which tries to save some immortal elements. This is the reason behind the development of geometrical decorations in Islamic art and architecture (Bukhart, 1991: 16). Kaaba is spiritual appearance of the God the Excellence, which is emanated in form and framework of the architecture as codes. Perception of such significances is only possible through consideration of symbols and hidden mysteries in their consequences. The



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best example of Islamic architecture to study such significances is the mosques architecture. In fact, what beautifies the mosques architecture is "their dependency on the most centric canon of humane duties, which is joining the heaven and earth" (Bukhart, 1981: 174). Therefore, the mosques architecture is a reflection of existing world, which holds divine symbols. Thereafter, mosques must be looked at as divine crafts, which hint human about his creator (Nasr, 1991: 60 &61).

One of the unifying factors in the architecture of mosques is the existence of the central yards and open spaces in them and worshiping the God in open spaces had plenty of importance in Islam (Aminzadeh, 1999: 29); Kaaba is a clear apply. Regarding open spaces in mosques, it must be mentioned that "constructive foundation of mosques and their yards are displays of faithful mystics' conduct between inward and outward, plurality and unity, and privacy and display" (Memarzadeh, 2007: 216). Therefore, Islamic art and architecture generally means worship and slavery and expresses the conduct and moving from the outward to the conscience (Madadpoor, 1992: 197). In addition to the being of such spaces, there are other elements, which are visible both in Kaaba and in the architecture of mosques and include the water and light . They are symbols of the revelation in Islam and they are the most similar material beings to the perfect truth of the human and mosques (Ardalan & Bakhtiyar, 2001: 58). Mohammad, the massager, says; "Mosques are the lights of God." Therefore, mosques, like perfect humans, are the place of both light and the divine light itself. The construction of the mosque should place the material light it its heart, as a witness of spiritual light and luminous its heart as the heart of a perfect human. A heart like a luminous Kaaba that shines on its material body and hides the tiffs bad miffs of that material framework (Navaii, 1999: 668 & 669); then, when the faithful is being present in mosque, performs ablutions to remove the outward and accidental contaminations of him and recites Quran. Meanwhile, symbolically returns to the Adams' dignity, which is located in the center of the world, Kaaba. The Kaba is the sacred House of God situated in the middle of the Holy mosque in the city of Mecca, in Saudi Arabia. The black cube shaped box is familiar to people of all faiths due to the images that come out of Saudi Arabia every year at pilgrimage time. Usually when people see these images, their attention is focused on the black box being circled by hundreds if not thousands of worshippers. This box is the Kaba.

"God has made the Kaba, the Sacred House, an asylum of security, Hajj, and 'Umrah (pilgrimage) for mankind..." (Quran 5:97)

The Kaba is the holiest site in Islam, and it is the qibla, the direction Muslims face when praying. It is called the Kaba because of its shape; cube in the Arabic language is ka'b. Sometimes the Kaba is called Al Bait Al Atiq, or the emancipated house, Prophet Muhammad, may the mercy and blessings of God be upon him, said that this name was used due to the fact that God has protected the Kaba from coming under the control of tyrants.

The Kaba is made from granite taken from the hills near Mecca, and stands 15 meters (49 feet) high, the sides measure 10.5 m (34') by 12 m (39'). Today the Kaba is covered by a black silk cloth decorated with gold-embroidered calligraphy known as the kiswah.

On the southwest side of the Kaba is a semicircular wall, this represents the border, or al hatim. Entrance to the Kaba is gained through a door, 2.13 metres of the ground, on the north-eastern wall. Inside, the floor is made from marble and the walls are clad with marble up to the halfway point between the floor and the ceiling.

Amongst the traditions of Prophet Muhammad we learn that his beloved wife Aisha asked about the wall and the door. She says, "I asked the Messenger of God about the wall and whether it was part of the House [the Kaba]. He said, 'Yes.' I asked, 'So why it is not incor-



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porated into the House?' He said, 'Your people ran out of money.' I asked, 'What about the door? Why is it high up?' He said, 'Your people did that so they could let in whomever they wanted and keep out whomever they wanted. If it were not for the fact that your people are still new [in Islam] and too close to their time of ignorance, I would incorporate the wall into the House and bring the door down to ground level"'

Verses from the Quran are written on tablets inset in the marble and the upper part of the interior wall is clad with green cloth decorated with gold embroiled verses. Lamps hang from a cross beam; there is also a small table for incense burners. Caretakers perfume the marble cladding with scented oil, the same oil used to anoint the Black Stone outside.

The Black Stone, an ancient sacred stone, is embedded in the eastern corner of the Kaba, one and a half meters above the ground. Prophet Muhammad may the mercy and blessings of God be upon him, said, "The black stone came down from paradise and it was whiter than milk, but the sins of the sons of Adam turned it black". The scholars of Islam have differed on who built the Kaba. Some say that it was built by the angels. Others say the father of humankind, Adam built the Kaba but over many centuries it fell into disrepair and was lost in the mists of time, to be rebuilt by Prophet Abraham and his son Ishmael. All agree that the Kaba was either built or rebuilt by Prophet Abraham.

"And (remember) when Abraham and (his son) Ishmael were raising the foundations of the House (the Kaba at Mecca), (saying), 'Our Lord! Accept (this service) from us. Verily, you are the All-Hearer, the All-Knower"' (Quran 2:127)

Since then the kaba has been rebuilt several times. By the Amalekites, the tribe of Jurham, Qusayy ibn Kilaab, the tribe of Quraish and several times after the advent of Islam. Shortly before prophet Muhammad's mission began the Kaba was built from stones, without mortar and it was not much higher than the height of a man, people had stolen treasure from the Kaba so the Quraish decided to rebuild it and add a roof. Each tribe collected building materials and worked cooperatively until it came time to replace the black stone. Because of the prestige involved with placing the stone arguments broke out. Abu Umaiyah ibn al Mughirah one of the most senior men said, "O Quraish come to an agreement over that which you are disputing. Let the first man who enters through the gate decide the matter for you".

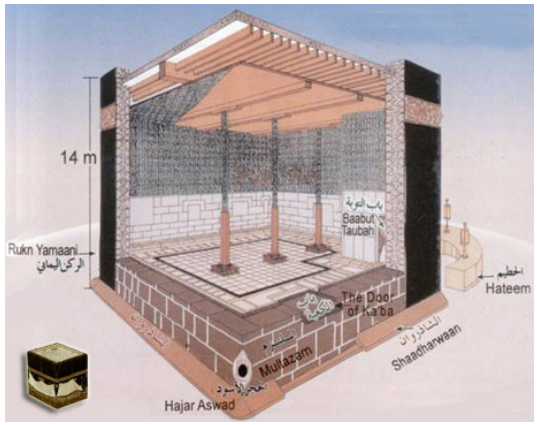
The first man, was Muhammad, at that time known as al amin (the trustworthy one). He suggested that they carry the black stone to its place in a cloak, each tribe holding an edge so that the prestige was distributed equally. The black stone reached the Kaba in this manner and Muhammad then placed the stone in its place The Kaba consists of four corners. Finally, it is important to understand that Muslims do not worship the kaba or its surroundings. It is simply the qibla, the direction in which Muslims face to pray, therefore it serves as a focal point.

Expression of geometrical secrets of Kaaba in a mosque's architecture

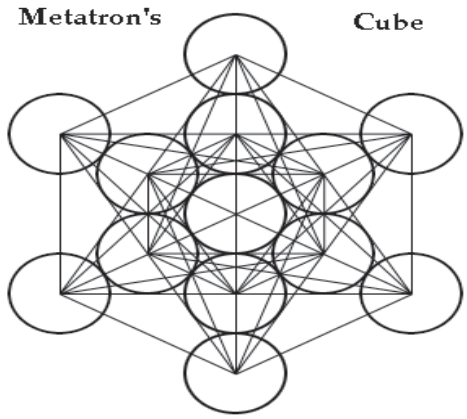
The truth behind Kaaba is united with the heart of human, because both are called "God's house." Therefore, to make the heart of the mosque more similar to perfect human, it must be similar to Kaaba. If Kaaba is based on quadruplet principles, dome room of the mosque, which is in fact the heart of the mosque, must be upon four principles that indicate the glory, praise, encomium, and greatness of God (Navaii, 1991: 668). The square form of Kaaab, whit its sounding circular form area, is a kind of space creation and in other words a kind of systematization to a structure which is visible in two geometrical forms of square (Kaaba itself) and circle (the area which creates the circular form of Tawaf . Therefore, the Islamic architect primarily is facing with two geometrical forms; square and



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Pic 5. Cross section of the Ka'aba (Wikipedia); Source: Wikipedia, 2015.




Pic 6. Metatron's Cube, as found in Sacred Geometry; Source: Wikipedia, 2015.

circle. Their selection from God's side, for space creation in Kaaba, certainly has some secrets that praising architects are looking for finding the proportions between these forms, decoding their aesthetical codes, and applying them in their designs and plans too.

Pic 7. In the center, Prophet Muhammad, with two long hair plaits, places the stone on a carpet held at the four corners by representatives of the four tribes, so that all have the honor of lifting it. The carpet is a kelim from Central Asia. Behind, two other men lift the black curtain which conceals the doors of the sanctuary. Source: Wikipedia, 2015.

Pic 8. Most of the year, the Kaaba is covered in black cloth. Beneath the black cloth is a stone building that may date back as far as 2030 B.C.E. Each side of the cube measures about 60 ft. across. There is a gold door in the southeast side. Inside, there is a polished marble floor and three pillars. Source: Wikipedia, 2015.

Application of such geometrical patterns in the design of mosques creates a good spacing for praying and praising God. Because geometry is not bound with this world and these figures clearly indicate the uniqueness, unification and divinity (Naghizadeh, 2004: 16). Therefore, the same geometrical patterns of Kaaba and heaven are followed in constructing a mosque, which is considered as a shadow and emanation of Kaaba. According to this, mosques have two existential areas; One physical area, which follows the geometry of the world and one spiritual area, which follows the geometry of immortal world (Beheshti, 1996: 19). Proportionality principles of geometry are concluded based on the division of the square into regular forms surrounded in it. That all proportions of the building are finally concluded from a circle, which is a crystal symbol of the unity and include all the forms available in univers. Majority of tombs, with polygon legs and the arch with its three reticular corners, indicate this symbolization (Bukhart, 1991: 22).

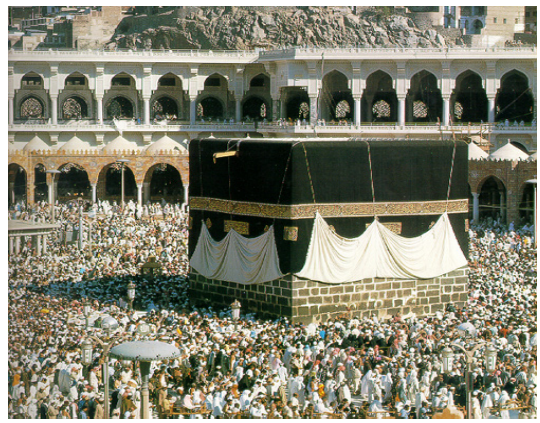
Regarding these descriptions, you can say that the general form of architecture and geometry of mosques have a cosmic meaning. As though that the base of these constructions is quadrangular, which guarantees the imagination of strength, establishment and stagnation and is a symbol of the earth and emanation of the quadrangle temple of the heaven, which Kaaba is its terrestrial visualization. At the top, with its spinning tomb shape, it ends in the form of an action like Tawaf, which is the symbol of time, tomb of heaven, the purity of above world and the infinite world of the sprite. "Depending on the levels of the faithful's heart, tomb is the heart of the mystic or the heaven," (Beheshti, 1996: 38). Moreover, "because of being the divine's spirit, which is shown surrounding the univers and seems



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Pic 7. In the center, Prophet Muhammad, with two long hair plaits, places the stone on a carpet held at the four corners by representatives of the four tribes, so that all have the honor of lifting it. The carpet is a kelim from Central Asia. Behind, two other men lift the black curtain which conceals the doors of the sanctuary. Source: Wikipedia, 2015.



Pic 8. Most of the year, the Kaaba is covered in black cloth. Beneath the black cloth is a stone building that may date back as far as 2030 B.C.E. Each side of the cube measures about 60 ft. across. There is a gold door in the southeast side. Inside, there is a polished marble floor and three pillars. Source: Wikipedia, 2015.

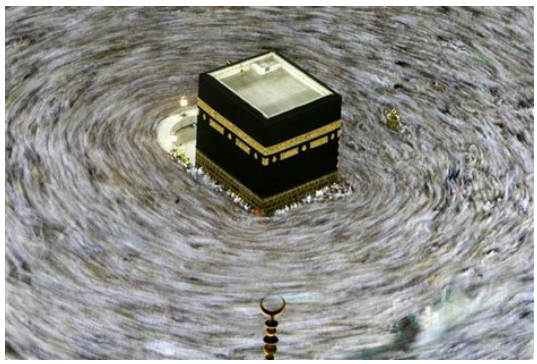
to move downward and toward development (of unity), or moving upward (toward unity)", (Me'marzadeh, 2007:223). These quadrangle and circle structures, at the end of their ascent and move of vision toward the summit of tomb, indicate the highness of thought and change of dignity. It means moving from earth to the heaven and reaching to perfection and from the finished to the infinite (Ahmad Maleki, 1991: 19). Mutual proportions between the spirituality of the above world, which is desirable for human beings, and the physical earth, which is his home, are explained as though.

In the architecture of mosques, modulation and conversion of the quadrangular base to the spherical form of the tomb, which indicates the greatness and heavenly dignity of God, and "tries to realize the heaven emanation and descending on earth" (Abaft Yegane & Ansari, 2008: 247), is well done. An octagonal is being used between the foundation of the cube and spinning tomb. This octagonal, both from geometrical and symbolic ontological points of view, is the bridge between the square and circle. From one side, like square, this shape is the symbol of stagnation and establishment in a place, and from the other side, for the multiplicity of the edges in comparison with a square, is in form of a circle. Actually, an octagonal displays a condition that it exits from the earth on its four solid edges and approaches to a circle. It is a geometrical form that helps the quadrature of the circle or so called Mandala (Genon, 2008: 17). Although, this shape ironically means the heaven, which according to narratives eight angles are carrying it (Ibn Arabi, 1998: 8).

This kind of geometrical form, a tomb that is based on a square shape leg, is called Chartagh . On the map, Chartagh is in form of a turban. The mass of basic cube, as a human, earth or paradise, is on the earth, which is the most visualized emanation and symbol of the unique creature. Chartagh, with its quadruplet columns, reminds the four elements (Water, Wind, Fire, and Soil), four directions, four winds, four seasons, and four colors (blue, red, yellow, and green). The above tomb symbolizes the general movement of the soul and supernatural world. The center of the circle, which is the only attention getting point, is the place of that spiritual axis, which joins it's below square axis. This makes the circle and square qualitatively unique and transformation of the circle in shape of a square shows a quantitative uniqueness. This point in the mosque is adytum. Here, in earthly forms of square and circle, traditional human finds his spacial capabilities again and Chrtagh gives a kind of shelter quality to this place, which is as



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Pic 9. Muslim pilgrims circle the Kaaba inside the grand mosque in Mecca.

an immaterial birth, life and death place (Ardalan & Bakhtiyar, 2001: 75).

According to what already mentioned, all geometrical forms of Kaaba in Islamic architecture, in addition to their outward function, hold a more important role. Their symbolic characteristics notify the spiritual principles, which each emanates in its specific existence level. Then, it is confirming the internal moods of the human (Nasr, 1991: 63&64); Circular and spinal figures of the construction, guide the human toward circulation and motivates him, makes him empty of himself and becomes the point of gravity. Here, the perfect human makes a journey in his self and around the God. He reaches to nothingness, until he drowns in the see, like other drops. This is symbolized in circulation around the Kaaba (Khosravi, 1995: 198). In such construction, eyes are moving around and thereby, innate vision goes from this world to another one. In fact, eyes are mediums, to reach the human to his originality, to the truth. Regarding what was stated, that what kind of geometrical plans and what elements are used in the design of mosques, all indicate the mysteriousness of Islam and expression of these mysteries by divine creatures, which Islamic art and architecture are of the best tools for expressing this divine truth.

**Conclusion**

Architecture in Islam has a great and important dignity and its purpose is the material crystallization of the revelation and reflexing



Pic 10. The Black Stone is a Muslim relic, which according to Islamic tradition dates back to the time of Adam and Eve. Historical research claims that the Black Stone marked the Kaaba as a place of worship during pre-Islamic pagan times.

the divine truths in the world, which Muslim person, by help of that, begin their conduct from the material world, goes until the presence of God, until the truth that is the source and target of this art. However, the Islamic architect tries to create an atmosphere, which aids the human in knowing his divine dignity. The pattern available to achieve this purpose is the Kaaba, which in addition to its geometrical appearance, is expressing divine truths in form of secrets and mysteries. Moreover, the Muslim artist, by decoding, can find the reason behind its creation in the material world (earth) and the rational world (heaven) and emanate these geometrical expressions in his design works. The best appearance of such architecture is that of mosques, which geometrical figures of Kaaba are used as their plan and internal decorations; these figures, in form of square plans that due to the form of the octagonal end in the circular tomb, are looking for the perfection and ultimate unifying point. This point, despite all existing distinctions, exists in all geometrical forms and indicates the divine point of creation and the unique being



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of God. All these geometrical expressions begin at this point and end at there too, which displays the unity in multiplicity and multiplicity in unity, a great representation in Kaaba and its surrounding rites and expresses the desire for truth and the unique essence of God, which abstracts all truths.

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