

Wood Ornamentation: Characteristics Of Yemeni Traditional Tower House Opening In Old City Sana'a, Yemen

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research study is about the identity of wood ornamentation on openings in the traditional Yemeni tower houses in Old City Sana'a Yemen. This study is to identify the origin of the wood ornamentation on the residential openings as an indication for the public as information sources regarding the identification of the wood ornamentation on openings are limited descending to unavailable. In this approach, the collecting data will establish the types of ornamentation on the residential openings and identify the ornaments motifs, style and origin. This research started with the literature review on the general information of ancient, location, and character of ornamentation types. The study will describes variation of types and characters of ornamentation in Yemeni tower house openings. This study has preparing some method such as observations, measurements and interviews to investigate and analyses the ornament types, style and origin in tower house openings. All the information accumulated from the survey is collected and analyzed based on responses by the respondents. This study was concluded with occurred result and data analysis and also finding on Yemeni tower house opening types, outer openings or the gate adopted by the motifs and shapes from the craftsmanship. Furthermore, these studies were improving by related purpose of traditional ornament and the Islamic identity in house facade design in Yemeni tower house Old City Sana'a.

Key Words: Ornamentation motif, Islamic architecture, Yemeni culture, Yemeni tower houses

INTRODUCTION

The Old City of Sana'a is considered by many chroniclers to be the oldest city in the world. On top of its architectural beauty, it is no wonder that its artistic beauty becomes a complement to the one which winds around the narrow alleyways of the city reflected the combination of the practical and the aesthetic elements. During the Islamic era, Sana'a took on a new role and entered another important historical phase, Islam brought with architectural inputs from other lands of the Islamic Empire (O'Neil B., 2004). The unique architecture of Sana'a has been the focus of international conservation efforts, which have stimulated local interest and contributed to the formation of a local discourse followed so quickly on the heels of modernization, Sana'a provides an opportunity to study the interplay of these two global ideologies in the context of a strong local tradition of building (Lamprakos M., 2005).

Photo 1.0 The View of Tower Houses At Old City of Sana'a, Yemen



The passerby in the Old City of Sana'a would rarely notice the beauty of wood ornamentation since the bright white carved gypsum ornaments as well as the richness of the decorations done by the red brick would take all the dazzling impression. The volume of wood ornaments is not as visible as the gypsum ornaments because the gypsums ornaments cover most of the facades buildings, unlike the wood ornaments that are limited to wooden doors and windows which usually located at the upper section and in the interior of the building. Therefore this art is not noticed by the passerby from the outside but noticed from the inside where its artistic value can be praised.

Predominate the wooden doors and windows get exposed to deterioration because of the climate alternation as well as the absence of the regular maintenance. But even though wood ornamentation still exists in large scale inside

the building. In architecture and decorative art, ornament is a decoration used to embellish parts of a building or object. Architectural ornament can be carved from stone, wood or precious metals, formed with plaster or clay, or impressed onto a surface as applied ornament. A wide variety of decorative styles and motifs has been developed for architecture and applied arts, including pottery, furniture, and metalwork.

Most of the opening systems in the tower houses are decorated with pre-Islamic design motifs and elements such as half circles and arches. Other elements found in the opening systems are rectangular and colour-glass windows, probably of foreign influence (Abu Bakar A.H, 2012).

Photo 2.0 The Ornament Design at Openings of Door and Window at Tower Houses



Wood ornamentation is an unknown and unique art in the architectural heritage of Sana'a. This obscure artistic wealth has started to fade. Since new technology has entered, the value of wood craft ornaments has decreased. The old high status owners would decline any offer to allow strangers to access their house and it's their buildings that hold the great creations of old ornaments, therefore its value is high. So keeping these traditional treasures away from the public will eventually lead this art to fade.

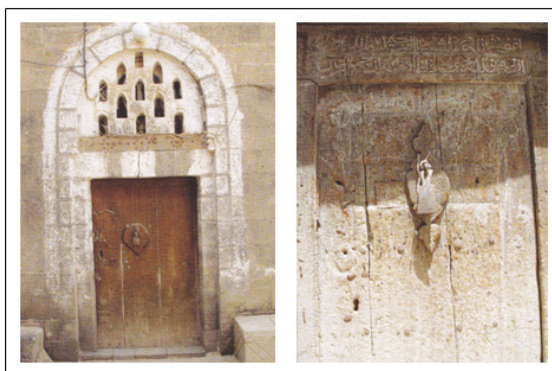
Many do have a basic form – an irregularly shaped tower structure, dun colour and elaborated with ornate white trim. Each house is its own of art: subtle, intricate, a reflection of the builder. The shape is slightly different, the pattern of the white trim makes each building its own unique gingerbread palace, and the beautiful stained-glass windows that every house in Yemen has are as varied as snowflakes (Fakhri H.A., 2004).

Photo 3.0 The Wood Windows Design With The Ornamentation Elements



The building technique of these gates and the way they had been decorated, represents a further attraction for the visitors and the city’s own inhabitants: in modern times their defensive purpose has in fact been substituted by a purely ornamental function, contributing to increase tourism and to the progress of the whole country (Ahmed M.Q., 2004).

Photo 4.0: The Wood Windows Design With The Ornamentation Elements






BACKGROUND OF STUDY

Wood ornamentation is an unknown and unique art in the architectural heritage and legacy. This legacy should be maintain and keep it as precious treasure. This research focuses on the wood ornaments residential traditional openings, to understand how the ornaments on each and openings represent a meaning and function such as the social status of the house and its welfare. This research is to simplify the types of ornament, motifs, styles and origin on the opening and the function.

ORNAMENTS FORMS AND ORIGINS

The Yemeni carpenters get the ideas from the inspiring vegetal, geometrical symbolic and calligraphically motifs wood and gypsum material ornaments related to wood but also from gypsum ornaments and other as well (Guillemette, Bonnenfant P., 1937). Basically, there are three types of motifs which is calligraphy, vegetal motifs and geometrical form.

Table 1 Type of Motifs

No.	Types of Motif	Description	Figure
1.	Calligraphy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Highly regarded and most fundamental Islamic art. - Significant with the al-Quran and Arabic script ornament forms. - As ornament with aesthetic elements. - Very dominant elements in the decoration. - Can be combination with the vegetal motifs. 	
2.	Vegetal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Employed alone or in combination with the other types of ornament. - Calligraphic, geometric pattern and figural representation. - Early ornament used with the represented a new development, vegetal patterns, and the motifs. - Vegetal motifs and patterns in Islamic art are largely devoid of symbolic meaning 	
3.	Geometrical form	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Function as the major decorative element on a vast array of objects of all types. - Greeks, Romans, and Sasanians in Iran influence. - Geometric patterns were combined, duplicated, interlaced, and arranged in intricate combinations. 	

The four basic shapes, or “repeat units,” from which the more complicated patterns are constructed are: circles and interlaced circles; squares or four-sided polygons; the ubiquitous star pattern ultimately derived from squares and triangles inscribed in a circle; and multisided polygons (Guillemette, Bonnenfant P., 1937).

DOOR ORNAMENTS DESIGN

Doors from one path to another emphasize the social status, fame and generosity of the owner’s house and that’s through the ornaments on the doors, although some ornaments impose itself depending on the location of the doors (Guillemette, Bonnenfant P., 1937). On this type of doors the façade is covered with ornaments, which faces the outside while on the rare side shows the wooden beams that support the door and the locking system. As for the inner door the ornaments cover both sides of the door.

Photo 5.0 The Ornament Design at Main Entrance Door



ORNAMENTATION STYLE

Ink & Colored Ornaments

There are ornaments with elegant lines that decorated mostly the doors and shutters borders with different shades that can be distinguished by its brightness. The unique type of pen (feather pen) with an ink that made up of the Arabian glue and other components which are make it inerasable. Different colours also applied to the ornaments that decorate the doors and walls of some special places such as the *mafraj* (Guillemette, Bonnenfant P., 1937).

Carved Wood

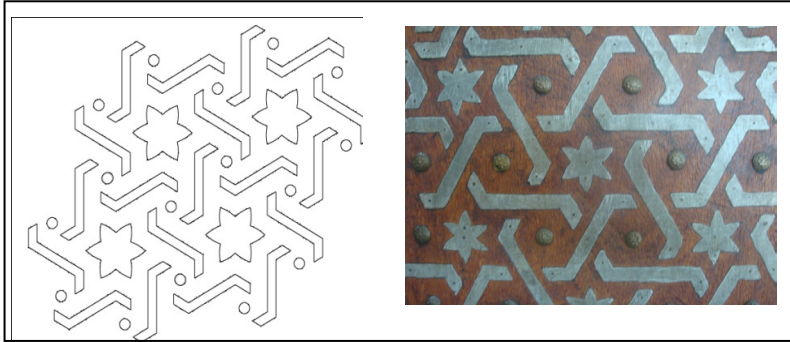
The art of wood ornamentation in Sana'a introduce a group of rich carved ornaments that gradate from simple notches ornaments to accurate forms of piercing shapes. And it consists of three types:

- i. Notch ornaments
- ii. carving ornaments
- iii. piercing works

Inlay Ornaments

This type of ornaments originated from India where it the base of wood is craved and then filled with ivory or seashells or other materials with the same depth.

Photo 6.0 The Repetition Of The Shape On *Mafraj* Door



CONCLUSION

This study was found that the exact history of these doors and the ornaments on it but it these ornaments records the period of the time, shrink it was influenced by Indian or Turkish art. The carpenters in Sana'a adopted the motifs and shapes from the craftsmanship of gypsum and jewellery since they are interested in organizing the subject of the geometrical or vegetal shapes to control the motif shape. The ornaments of the door are selected in regarding to the function of the space, outer doors or the gate do not have the same ornamentation of the interior doors specially the *Diwan* and *Mafraj*, these area have the most mass volume of ornaments with different types and styles .

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