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The Architecture of the Four-*īwān* Building Tradition as a Representation of Paradise and Dynastic Power Aspirations

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1. The building itself is the key to architectural analysis. The religious and socio-cultural background are of secondary importance.
2. The essence of the architecture of the four-*īwān* compounds is hierophanic and analysing it only within the Islamic building tradition is a limitation.
3. The architecture of the four-*īwān* compounds has evolved as a hierophanic palimpsest based on the hierophany of the Cosmic Cross and the *Axis Mundi*.
4. The architecture of the four-*īwān* compounds can be also analysed as a representation of the hierophany of Paradise. Paradise is directly associated with Islamic prayer and it is in Paradise, where the human Muhammad reaches Allah. In a similar way, the human worshipper, who will never visit the real Paradise in his/her lifetime, can reach Allah only in prayer, in a setting, similar to the domain of Allah, e.g. Paradise. So, the four-*īwān* plan, based on the four rivers of Paradise, seems to be the most suitable setting for prayer that presupposes and allows for direct contact with Allah.
5. The four-*īwān* compounds should not be analysed only within the Islamic architectural tradition but should be compared to architecturally similar cross-axial compounds such as the Buddhist stupa and the Hindu temple, based on a mandala.
6. The four-*īwān* kosh ensembles are an architectural representation of the dynastic power aspirations of the emperor and the local elite. The majority of the kosh ensembles evolved as an architectural palimpsest, occupying a significant building site, used formally by a renowned ruler or dynasty.
7. In particular, the kosh of a madrasa versus a *khānaqāh* reflects the increasing economic and political power of the Sufi shaykhs. It is important to note that the most significant examples are the Ulugh Beg Madrasa and *Khānaqāh* on Rīgistān Square, both commissioned by Ulugh Beg, the supreme ruler of Samarqand in the 15th century. The kosh *khānaqāhs* were used for lodgings and education of the royal family and elite. Tīmūr himself resided in *khānaqāhs* as well.
8. Sufism can be analysed as a system of hierophanic beliefs with roots in Manichaeism and Hellenistic mysticism.
9. The *qiblas* of the four-*īwān* compounds in Samarqand and Bukhārā from the 15th to the 17th century are not oriented towards Mecca.
10. The *qiblas* of the Bībī Khānum Mosque and Ulugh Beg Madrasa in Samarqand are most likely oriented towards Baghdad.
11. The innovation of the late 14th century of situating the main mosque sanctuary along the main longitudinal axis of the four-*īwān* madrasas and mosques in Transoxania can be explained with the attempt to rotate the whole building similar to the orientation of the Ka'ba. The *qibla* in the southwest is thus situated "as closest" to Mecca and is parallel to the respective eastern wall of the Ka'ba.
12. By copying the orientation of the Ka'ba, the Bībī Khānum Mosque and the Ulugh Beg Madrasa in Samarqand acquire the status of *Axis Mundi*, i.e. a cosmic centre of the Tīmūrid empire. The empire, in turn, gains the status of the most prominent Islamic empire with the capital Samarqand, surrounded by villages carrying the names of the former glorious Islamic capitals: Damascus, Baghdad, Cairo, Sultaniya.