

Istanbul & Herat: A Comparison Study of Blue Mosque & the Great Mosque of Herat

İstanbul ve Herat: Sultanahmet Camii ve Herat Ulu Camii'nin Bir Karşılaştırmalı Değerlendirmesi

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Abstract

The view of Herat and Istanbul cities is acquainted with minarets of mosques on the horizon. Mosques in these two cities have a crucial role in the aesthetical view of the cities. The architecture of the majority of mosques in both cities are influenced by the style of the Great Mosque of Herat in Herat and Sultan Ahmed Mosque in Istanbul, which are known as two different symbols for the architecture of great Turkish empires, namely the Timurid Empire and the Ottoman Empire. This article compares the cities of Herat and Istanbul throughout their historical characters and their cultural values as two Islamic cities. The main focus of this paper is on a comparison study of two mosques of the cities as Islamic identity and artistic values. Furthermore, this research intends to explore the Islamic artistic skills, cultural and historical values used in two great mosques as two examples of peace in modern and complex cities. The author begins by discussing the role of mosques in Islamic Aesthetics within the first section of this paper. Next, the author introduces each city by giving general and historical information on each city and explains the main feature of the cities. Finally, the author through the separated parts of the paper compares two cities and two mosques with each other in detail to elaborate on the significance of the architecture style used in both mosques.

Keywords: Mosques, Istanbul, Herat, Sultan Ahmet Mosque, the Great Mosque of Herat.

Öz

Herat ve İstanbul şehirlerinin manzarası ufuktaki cami minareleri ile bilinir. Her iki şehirdeki camiler, bu şehirlerin estetik görünümünde çok önemli bir role sahiptir. Her iki şehirdeki camilerin çoğunun mimarisi, büyük Türk imparatorluklarının, yani Timur Devleti'nin ve Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun mimarisinin iki farklı sembolü olarak bilinen Herat'taki Ulu Camii ve İstanbul'daki Sultan Ahmet Camii'nin mimari tarzından etkilenmiştir. Bu makale, Herat ve İstanbul şehirlerini tarihî karakterleri ve kültürel değerleri açısından iki İslam kenti olarak karşılaştırmaktadır. Bu makalenin ana odak noktası, bu şehirlerin iki camisinin İslami kimlik ve sanatsal değerler açısından karşılaştırma çalışmasıdır.

Ayrıca, bu araştırma modern ve karmaşık şehirlerde iki barış örneği olarak bu iki büyük camide kullanılan İslami sanat becerilerini, kültürel ve tarihi değerleri incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Yazar, bu makalenin ilk bölümünde camilerin İslami estetikteki rolünü tartışarak başlamaktadır. Ardından yazar, her şehir üzerine genel ve tarihî bilgiler vererek bu şehirleri tanıtmakta ve temel özelliklerini açıklamaktadır. Son olarak, yazar her iki camide kullanılan mimari tarzın önemini detaylandırmak için makalenin ayrı bölümlerinde bu iki şehir ve iki camiye birbiriyle ayrıntılı olarak karşılaştırmaktadır. Makale, bu karşılaştırmalı çalışmanın bir sonucu ve araştırma bulguları ile sona ermektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Camiler, İstanbul, Herat, Sultan Ahmet Camii, Herat Ulu Camii.

Introduction

Although the first mosque that was built by Prophet Mohammad (PBH) was very simple and was made of simple materials such as soil, stone, and plants, the architecture of the major mosques articulates Islamic aesthetics and beauty as they were built when Islam was growing into different regions and interacted with different cultures. Over the centuries of Islamic civilizations and evaluation, mosques have reflected Islamic art, featuring in ceramics, textiles calligraphy while from one time to another, and from one culture to another culture their styles of decorations were different. Furthermore, during different Islamic civilizations, mosques were not only considered as places for worshiping Allah, but they were functioning as scientific centers to produce Islamic knowledge as many Islamic scholars and philosophers completed their educations in the mosque's madrasas. The current physical expression of the Herat Great Mosque and Sultan Ahmet Mosque is representing two different Islamic civilizations in the present countries of Afghanistan and Turkey. A glance at these two huge buildings shows a bilateral cultural and religious impact on cities and the architectural style of buildings.

Istanbul and Herat cities have enjoyed several centuries of prosperity and glory since they were two different capital cities of Islamic cultures. While Herat city was known as the pearl of Khurasan, Istanbul was the center of civilizations at the intersection of Asian and European continents. Both cities narrate a long history of Islamic civilization, prosperity, and glory. Therefore, the existences of the Great Mosque of Herat and Sultan Ahmet Mosque in Istanbul and Herat prove their historical and cultural richness.

One of the world's heritage monuments is the Herat Great Mosque which is located right in the center of Herat, Afghanistan, and the several century years old Mosque of Sultan Ahmet is located in Istanbul. Although both mosques are distinguished from each other throughout their different architectural styles and their aesthetical decorations, both mosques have had equal religious, historical, political magnitude. This paper aims to compare the Great Mosque of Herat with the Sultan Ahmet mosque to indicate their impact on the growth of Islamic art and knowledge in two cities.

The author starts the first discussion on the topic of the role of Mosques in Islamic aesthetics. After that, the author continues the discussion by giving descriptive information

about each city. Next, the author compares both cities from different angles. Following the comparison of the two cities, the author starts the descriptive discussion about each mosque separately. In the end, the author concludes the paper, by comparison, the study of both mosques within their similarities and differences.

Mosques in Islamic Aesthetics

The mosque or the masjid, as it is known in Arabic, is a prayer house where Muslims can practice acts of worship or the acts of *sujuud*, and the congregational mosque or Jaamih is a much larger prayer place where the Friday prayers can be performed.¹ The first mosque is considered to be Quba in Medina, Saudi Arabia, in which Prophet (PBH) positioned its first stone during his emigration from Mecca to Medina.² Since the building of the first mosque in Islam, the mosque has not been only the place for prayers and worship but also has played an important role as a center for Islamic information, a scene of the political, social, and cultural life of Muslims.³

Alongside the role that mosques have had in Muslim communities, the Islamic architecture of the mosque must reflect the superiority of Allah the Almighty.⁴ However, the first mosque was very simple and modest as its walls were made of clay and its pillars were palm trees.⁵ Although all mosques around the world have common features, style, layout, decoration of mosques are distinctive as they were constructed throughout different regional traditions of the time and place. As a result, buildings of the mosques can reflect us the Islamic architecture styles in different period and region in which the mosques were built.⁶

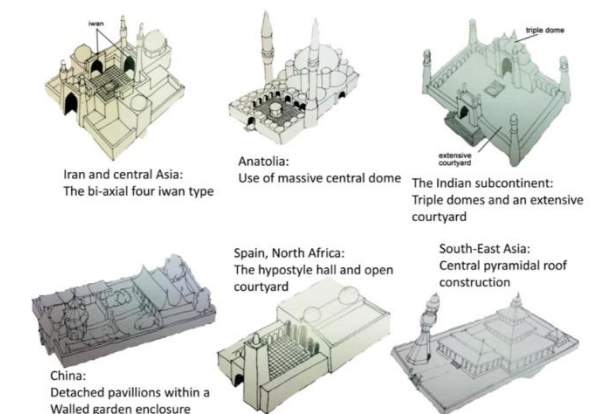


Figure 1. Mosque Typology in Different Culture and Regions. Retrieved from *Great Architecture, Islamic Architecture Types of Domes*. <https://alatpestabogor.com/>

¹ Omar Bakri Muhammad, "The Role of the Mosque," Al-Muhajiroun Publications, 1996.

² Mosques around the World: A Pictorial Representation: 1994 Bait-Ur-Rahman Mosque Souvenir (Silver Springs, 1994).

³ Muhammad, "The Role of the Mosque,".

⁴ R. Othman and Z.J. Zainal-Abidin, "The Importance of Islamic Art in Mosque Interior," *Procedia Engineering* (Published by Elsevier, December 19, 2011).

⁵ Muhammad, "The Role of the Mosque,"

⁶ Weisbin, "Introduction to Mosque Architecture," Khan Academy (Khan Academy).

To reflect the power of Allah the Almighty through the mosque’s architecture, one way is to consider its quality of aesthetics into the view. Therefore, the interior and exterior of the mosques were designed through ornamentation motifs such as floral, geometric, and Calligraphy.⁷

COMPARISON OF TWO CITIES: ISTANBUL & HERAT

Both Herat city and Istanbul city have similarities and differences in terms of their values of geographical, historical, and cultural richness, and economical importance for Afghanistan and Turkey. Each city has its original, historical, social, and cultural form that has made them tremendously distinguished from each other while both cities have insightful beauty and aesthetics features. The existence of monuments in both Herat and Istanbul proves their originality, cultural richness, and long history of civilization.

Herat: Pearl of Khurasan

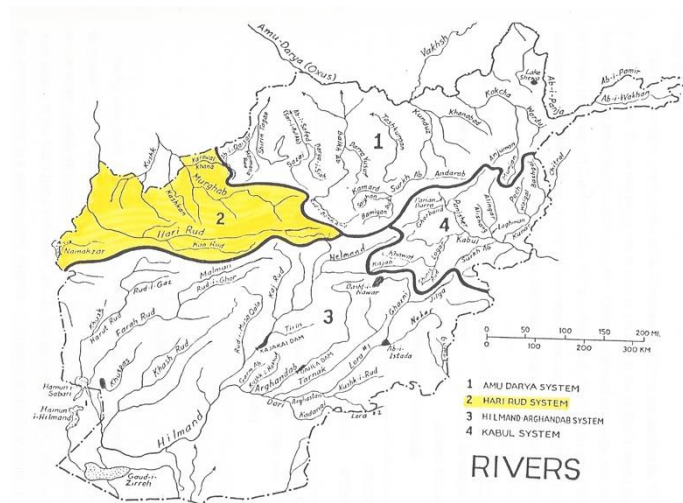


Figure 2. Afghanistan Map-Yellow Highlights Herat Province Alongside Harirud

Herat region is like a flat area surrounded by mountains and drained by the river Harirud.⁸ The Harirud river has a crucial role in the aesthetics of the region for keeping the environment green and fresh which many small and large villages and lands for agriculture have been formed. The current region of Herat is located in western Afghanistan. Herat city in the present time is the center of Herat Province, one of the 34 provinces of Afghanistan that shares borders with two countries of Iran in the west, and Turkmenistan in the north. This province is the center of the western region of Afghanistan that from the east shares border with Badghis and Ghur provinces, and the south shares its border with Farah province. Herat has become the second province of Afghanistan with a population of more

⁷ R. Othman and Z.J. Zainal-Abidin, “The Importance of Islamic Art in Mosque Interior,”

⁸ Irshdul Haq Bashir ibn Al-Haj and Dr Abdullah, “History of A Mosque of Herat And Its Roles in Afghanistan (Mas Jid-J Jami Heart),” 2014.

than three million, and most of the residents speak Dari. More than 80% of the roads in the province of Herat are in good condition and are suitable for heavy traffic, and more than 100 factories are functioning in this province.⁹



Figure 3. Herat City Seen Through Google Map

The ancient “*Silk Road*” crossed this province that has influenced the culture and civilization of this area. Moreover, the Herat age, throughout the pre-Islam era, dates back to Avestan times; however, the exact age is unknown. Herat was known as Hariva (in Old Persian) during the Achaemenid Empire, 550-330 BC, and was known as Aria in the regional classical sources. Furthermore, in the Avesta the Zoroastrian’s source it was stated as Haroiva that was a derivative from the name of the Herey River, Hereyru, “*Silken Water*” (GSV Russia-Islamic World. 2017).

Abu`l-Fadl Bayhaqi, a famous historian 995AD-1077, on his famous book of “*Tarikh-i Bayhaqi*” has named Herat as a part of the great Khurasan.¹⁰ After Muslims arrived in the area, the region of Herat as a part of Greater Khurasan was ruled by Tahirid and then followed by the Saffarids, Samanids, Ghaznavids, Ghurids, Timurids, Safavids, Hotakis, Afsharids, and Duranis until it became a part of modern Afghanistan.¹¹

Herat was the capital of the Ghurid dynasty until Herat, as in most other areas of Khorasan, was invaded by the Mongols in 1221. As a result, most foundations were destroyed, and more than half of the native population was massacred or displaced.¹² Herat was the capital of the Kurt dynasty ruling Khurasan from 1332-1370. Timur captured the city in late 1383.¹³ Shahrokh the great son of Timur transferred the capital of the empire from Samarqand to Herat in 1401 that after this Herat enjoyed a tremendous status (GSV Russia-

⁹ “Provincial Profile: Herat,” The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Office of the President, accessed March 25, 2021, <https://president.gov.af/en/herat/>.

¹⁰ Abbas Amanat, “Herat Question; How Herat Was Separated from Iran,” The Homepage of the Circle of Ancient Iranian Studies (CAIS)

¹¹ Amanat, “Herat Question; How Herat Was Separated from Iran,”

¹² Omar Bakri Muhammad, “The Role of the Mosque,”

¹³ “The Columbia Encyclopedia,” in The Columbia Encyclopedia,

Islamic World. 2017). The city enjoyed prosperity and glory in this period as it becomes the center of art and learning.¹⁴

This city was considered as the key point of Sufism, the ascetic theory of Islam that some of the followers of "Naqshbandiyah" and "Cheshtehya" have come to the top officials of the Sufi brotherhood associations.¹⁵

Center of Civilizations at the Intersection of Asian & European Continents: Istanbul



Figure 4. Map Showing the Location of Istanbul.



Figure 5. Geographical Location of Istanbul between Two Continents

Istanbul is Turkey's largest city and the most populous city as well as its cultural, economic, and historical center. This city is located next to the Bosphorus and the Sea of Marmara. Istanbul is the only major city located on two continents of Asia and Europe as the

¹⁴ "The Columbia Encyclopedia,"

¹⁵ "History of Herat City," The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Herat Province Governor Office, accessed March 25, 2021, <http://herat.gov.af/fa/page/5843>.

Bosphorus strait separates both continents.¹⁶ Having a kind of trade and security control over the natural harbor known as the Golden Horn in this city has given a strategic position for it.¹⁷ After being the imperial capital for long centuries, the capital transformed into Ankara when modern Turkey was founded in 1923. However, the city has not lost its economic and cultural magnitude as it is the largest city in Turkey in our present time. The city has been a sort of transactional area for connecting different civilizations as it has connected west to east as a bridge because of the geographical and topographical position it. ¹⁸ Istanbul expresses its strong cosmopolitan features within security walls, palace buildings, imperial mosques, and monuments from other religions. The history of modern Istanbul is like the history of modern Turkey that starts with the end of the First World War and the fall of the Ottoman Empire. ¹⁹

Comparison of Two Cities



Figure 6. Herat Old City Caravanserai Akhund Zadeh, still in use mainly as a stock house of the nearby markets.

¹⁶ "Istanbul," The Republic of Turkey, Ministry of Culture and Tourism. , accessed February 25, 2021, http://kultur.gov.tr/genel/medya/iltanitimbroşuru-eng/iznik_eng.pdf.

¹⁷ Aynur Can, "İstiklal Caddesi and Kärtner Strasse", 2012. Scribd (Marmara Üniversitesi, Mahalli İdareler ve Yerinden Yönetim).

¹⁸ Aynur Can, "İstiklal Caddesi and Kärtner Strasse", 2012.

¹⁹ Çağlar Keyder, "A Brief History of Modern Istanbul," The Cambridge History of Turkey, 2008, pp. 504-523,



Figure 7. Grand Bazaar, Istanbul

Istanbul and Herat cities were Islam's two centers of civilization as they were the center of science, art philosophy, poetry, and literature for centuries. As a result, they can be compared with each other in terms of the existence of monuments in both cities that existed since Islamic empires and their educational and economic superiorities over the nearby cities. However, Istanbul and Herat can be highly distinguished from each other in different domains such as population data, geographical position, and natural structure.

There are monuments in both cities that once someone may walk along the history visiting these two cities. For instance, shops and roofed caravanserais near to grand bazaar in Istanbul, and caravanserais the old city of Herat that covered and roofed as they were on their time of origin. Furthermore, both cities were centers for the civilization that science, art philosophy, poetry, and literature have been produced in both cities. Herat is famous for the city of knowledge and civilization as many Poets, authors, philosophers, and artists have been grown up in this city from the past till the present. Notable people that have influenced the Herat city's art, poetry, and literature are Tahir ibn Husayn 9th century Abbasid caliphate army general and founder of the Tahirid dynasty, Khawjah Abdullah Ansari, a famous Persian poet of the 11th century, Ghiyath al-Din Muhammad, was the emperor of the Ghurid dynasty 1163-1202, Mevlana Nur ud-Din Abdur-Rahman Jami, a famous Persian Sufi poet of the 15th century, Nizam ud Din Ali Shir Navai, a famous poet and politician of the Timurid era, Fakhr ad-Din ar-Razi famous theologian and philosopher the twelfth century, Ustad Kamal ud-Din Behzad, the greatest of the medieval Persian painters late Timurid, Early Safavid Empire. Similarly, we can briefly outline many influential philosophers that lived in Istanbul during the Ottoman empire. For instance, Rıza Tevfik Bölükbaşı (1869-1949) a Turkish philosopher, poet, politician, and community leader, Mehmet Ziya Gökalp (1876-1924) a Turkish philosopher and sociologist, Prince Sabahaddin (1879-1948) an Ottoman thinker and sociologist.

Istanbul and Herat cities are known as Turkey's and Afghanistan's major cities where both cities have offered better living conditions for many people. After Turkey's industrialization in the 1950s, Istanbul has attracted a massive population from the villages and rural areas that resulted in a dramatic increase in its population. Likewise, despite decades of instability and conflicts in Afghanistan, Herat city still provides a better job opportunity, education, and security for the people of the country that resulted in the rapid growth of its population compared to the other provinces of Afghanistan, and has been ranked Afghanistan's second-largest city after Kabul the capital.

Although existed attractive factors in both cities resulted in rapid population growth, Herat's estimated one million population cannot be compared to Istanbul's estimated 15 million. Herat with its current population is the second-largest city of Afghanistan while Istanbul with the mentioned population is one of the world's megacities.

The other factor that both cities can be distinguished from is their natural and geographical position. The region of Herat city oasis is situated on a valley floor and surrounded by mountains mainly from north and east. Herat is located in the widest part of the valley where the ancient road runs along the northern side of the valley from Iran to the central highland of Afghanistan. As a consequence, the region where Herat is located has a cold winter with heavy snow-falls in the mountains while the spring is a rainy season.²⁰ Unlike Herat city that has been located in a landlocked country, Istanbul is located between the Black Sea and the Marmara Sea and connects Europe and Asia with the Bosphorus strait.

EXAMINATION OF THE MOSQUES BY COMPARISON

The Great Mosque of Herat

The great mosque of Herat is a historic mosque located in the center of Herat, Afghanistan. This congregational mosque is known as Friday Mosque, Masjid Jami Herat.²¹ The mosque was originally built by the vizier of Sultan Tekish, Shams al-Din Masud Haravi. The first building had a wooden roof that was almost destroyed by an earthquake in 1102.²² The first mosque was built on the site of two woody Zoroastrian fire temples that were demolished as a result of an earthquake and fire.

²⁰ "Herat-the Islamic City: A Study in Urban Conservation / Abdul Wasay Najimi.,"

²¹ Irshdul Haq Bashir ibn Al-Haj and Dr Abdullah, "History of A Mosque of Herat And Its Roles in Afghanistan.

²² Lisa Golombek, "The Resilience of the Friday Mosque: The Case of Herat," Muqarnas 1 (1983): p. 95.



Figure 8. Herat Great Mosque

The Great Mosque of Herat was built in 1201 by the Ghurids famous Sultan Ghayas-ud-Din Ghuri, and after his death, the building was completed by his brother and successor Shihab al –Din, 1162-1201.²³ Lisa Golombek indicates in her article titled “The Resilience of Friday Mosque” that Ghiyath al-aDin Ghuri respected the original orientation of the mosque’s structure which reflecting the Hanafite tradition while his Shafiite tradition would have favored a southern orientation of the qibla.²⁴

The mosque was destroyed as a consequence of Genghis khans invade in 1221.²⁵ The mosque was reconstructed back in 1306 by Kart rulers up until the mosque and most of the buildings in Herat were destroyed as a consequence of a harsh earthquake in 1364.²⁶

A madrasa was constructed by the Kurt ruler Ghiyath al Din Muhmmad in the north side of the mosque when the South and east iwans were rebuilt and the entire mosque was redecorated, when it was again repaired by Kurt ruler of Herat Mu’zz al-Din Husayn in 1369-71 that the ruler himself buried in the mausoleum.²⁷

The main evidence describing its history, since its foundation and then after its significant extension by Tumireds, are the Timurid historian Khawndmir, in his *Khulasat al-Akbar*, and the inscription on the southeast Ghurid Portal that was uncovered in 1964 during a restoration.²⁸ According to the historical sources, in 1397 after Shahrukh become the ruler of Herat and made the city provincial capital, the reconstruction of the city became one of his priorities. After 1410 Shahrukh by his wife Ghawhar Shâd founded a new Friday mosque outside the city center in “musalla” where the suburbs developed toward the northwest and

²³ Irshdul Haq Bashar ibn Al-Haj and Dr Abdullah, “History of a Mosque of Herat and Its Roles in Afghanistan (Mas Jid-J Jami Heart),” 2014.

²⁴ Golombek, “The Resilience of the Friday Mosque: The Case of Herat,”

²⁵ Irshdul Haq Bashar ibn Al-Haj and Dr Abdullah, “History of a Mosque of Herat and Its Roles in Afghanistan.

²⁶ Golombek, “The Resilience of the Friday Mosque: The Case of Herat,”

²⁷ Golombek, “The Resilience of the Friday Mosque: The Case of Herat,”

²⁸ Golombek, “The Resilience of the Friday Mosque: The Case of Herat,”

northwest.²⁹ Despite Shahrukh’s attention to the new developing projects, the great mosque did not lose its magnitude at this time.³⁰



Figure 9. Sanctuary-iwan- Photo by Robert Byron 1931.

From the death Shahrukh in 1447 until the emergence of Sultan Husayn Bayqarâ in 1470, the city suffered conflicts, economic challenges, and natural disasters that as a result, most parts of the mosque fell into ruin.³¹ Alī Shīr Nava’l an author, literature, highly cultured aristocrat, known for the promotion of Chagatay Turkish who served as the closest adviser of Sultan Husayn had considerable attention to the city’s urban renewal at this time. Although Ali Shir had a special interest in renewing the monument in the city, he founded a social welfare complex named *ikhalasiya Kulliyaa* which included a mosque, madrasa, *Khanaqah*, library, and hospital. As a result of Ali shir’s interests in repairing the monuments, the Herat’s great mosque, which its old domed sanctuary iwan was almost collapsed, benefited significant repair and extension. However, the original Ghurid character of the mosque was maintained as it was narrated by Khawandamir. While some of the original elements of the mosque such as piers, arches, and vaults have been replaced within different times, the original configuration and its old dimensions have remained as it was in the past. Despite many renovations over seven centuries, people and the rulers of the city tended to preserve the mosque’s origin as it was in the past. During the kingdom of Zahir shah in the 1940s, a reconstruction plan was made for the mosque to repair elements like the mausoleum that were entirely lost.³²

The current building of the mosque is expressing the last major renewal project that was completed by the 1970s. The building is laid out in a traditional rectangular iwan

²⁹ Golombek, “The Resilience of the Friday Mosque: The Case of Herat,”

³⁰ Bashar, “History of a Mosque of Herat and its Roles in Afghanistan.”

³¹ Golombek, “The Resilience of the Friday Mosque: The Case of Herat,”

³² Golombek, “The Resilience of the Friday Mosque: The Case of Herat,”

pattern, with walls, a huge central courtyard, twelve blue minarets, four iwans, four inscriptions that are decorated with Islamic calligraphy of Quran verses and mystical poems. Each minaret is 36-meter in height and 10 meters in diameter. It has a library and a place for ablution. The mosque has five secondary entrances along the north and east walls including the last remaining the Ghurid portal at the southeastern corner of the mosque complex. The exterior and courtyard walls are all richly decorated with bricks and plaster. The calligraphy decorating the walls and minarets are in white and orange on blind mosaics in different styles such as Kufic and Nastaliq that reflect Islamic aesthetics. The largest and deepest sanctuary iwan is in the west while the eastern portal iwan comes after that in size and the two lateral iwans are the smallest, which there are no mini minarets on iwans. There are two minarets at the corners of the sanctuary iwan that shows the significance of this mass contains the mihrab niche on its western wall. The courtyard is surrounded by four sides that are domed or vaulted hypostyle prayer halls. Inside the stoned courtyard, there is a minbar that is made of stone. As enough timber and stone were not available for the whole building, the mosque was built of mud bricks covered in plaster.³³ The doorway is flanked by two engaged columns. The surfaces of the columns and the spandrels of the portal arch are covered with geometric carvings in pink stone. On either side of the doorway are panels of Kufic inscriptions carved in stone and highlighted with blue tiles

Mosques are a great social and spiritual place in the lives of Muslims. The great mosque of Herat was used as an Islamic School or (Madrassah) for learning about Islam, the place of Muslim scholars, a place for people to learn Al Quran, al tafsir, Al-Hadith, Al Fiqah, and Al Aqidah. Friday as a Muslim holiday is a day for Heratians to gather at the Mosque to pray, socialize, and meet their other fellows. As it was mentioned before, congregational mosques do not only function as a place of praying, but also have many other roles such as educational roles, as well as social and cultural. Besides praying five times a day in Herat great mosque, children of the neighborhood are taught to read and recite the Quran, Hadith, and other religious instructions.

Sultan Ahmet Mosque

Istanbul Sultan Ahmed Mosque (also known as the Blue Mosque) is one of the most magnificent buildings in Istanbul, Turkey. The name "blue" is taken from the blue tiles used on it.³⁴ In the 17th century, Sultan Ahmed I. decided to build a place of prayers for Muslims that would be even better than Hagia Sophia.³⁵ The great mosque was not only built as a place of worship but also a külliye or Jami. Sultan Ahmet mosque's complex contained a hospital, a madrasah (a higher educational institution), an imaret, a primary school, a market (bazaar), and a tomb for the royal family. In the complex, there was a room for an

³³ Bashar, "History of a Mosque of Herat and its Roles in Afghanistan.

³⁴ "The-Blue-Mosque-History-Architecture.," Study.com, accessed May 25, 2021, <https://study.com/academy/lesson/the-blue-mosque-history-architecture.html>.

³⁵ Hagia Sophia is a structure, built under order of Justinian, and later turned into a mosque, when it was captured by the Ottoman empire in 1453.

astronomer called Muvakkithane, a time house, for calculation of the times of prayer and the Muslim calendar. Although in our present time most of the buildings are using for a different purpose, the mosque has not lost its magnificence. The architecture of the mosque, Sultan Ahmed, was an artist called Sedefkâr Mehmed Ağa. He was a student of famous architect Mimar Sinan, who combined his teacher's artistic ideas with his talent and used them on a massive, magnificent mosque.³⁶



Figure 10. Sultan Ahmet Mosque.

The beautiful mosque of Sultan Ahmed has a rectangular structure. At first glance, the five domes of the mosque come to an eye, each dome is larger than the other, and located right in the center. The four smaller domes are arranged around the central dome and in total form the cascade of the species. Cascade domes of Sultan Ahmed mosque with its six narrow minarets appear as the skyline of Istanbul, and 8 smaller domes complete the collection. While the interior space gives the feeling of a large palace, it contains a mystical atmosphere as well. A sort of religious place view has been given to it by hand-made colorful original ground carpets, various chandeliers and lamps, and Quran manuscripts on the reading desk.³⁷

Comparison of the Two Mosques

Sultan Ahmed Mosque and the Great Mosque of Herat have had important political, religious, historical, and cultural significance for two different regions throughout their several century years old regardless of their aesthetical value. The notable similarities between the two great mosques can assist us to discover the long history and cultural richness of different civilizations that lived in two regions. However, the differences between the two mosques can be outlined within their architecture style and formation of Islamic aesthetic as they were built in two different regions and two different historical periods.

³⁶ Radha Dalal, "The Blue Mosque (Sultan Ahmet Camii)," Khan Academy (Khan Academy), 2013.

³⁷ Dalal, "The Blue Mosque (Sultan Ahmet Camii).

From the religious perspective, these two mosques have preserved their religious attraction for the people of their regions since the mosque has been regarded as one of the holiest sites for the major Muslims. In addition to five times praying, the other important religious days such as Fridays, Eid prayers, and religious events have been carrying out in these two mosques as congregational places.

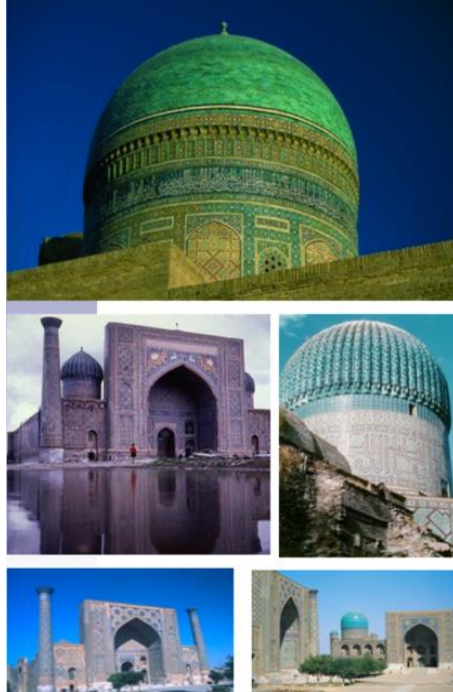


Figure 11. Timurid Khursan Style

In addition to their similarities from the religion's point of view, both mosques can be compared because of their historical prosperity. They have been considered as two historical monuments in Istanbul and Herat. The Great Mosque of Herat was a religious place in the pre-Islamic period has maintained its religious, political, and cultural value within different historical periods such as the Ghaznavids, Ghurids dynasty, Mongols, Kurts, Timurids, and Abdalis. Likewise, the Blue Mosque has been known for its historical significance and religious values during the Othman empire and after the foundation of modern Turkey.

Sultan Ahmet Mosque and the Great Mosque of Herat can be comparable from their past political substances. As was mentioned before, the Sultan Ahmet mosque was founded within the order of Sultan Ahmet 1st, one of the ottomans' sultans. Likewise, the great mosque of Herat was also built throughout an order of the Ghurids famous Sultan Ghayas-ud-Din Ghuri. Both rulers aimed to designate their political power as they were called the Caliphs or representatives of the god the almighty by the construction of such mosques with high quality of aesthetical values. The spectacular architecture used for both mosques has made them seem like two great palaces that indicate the political power of the founders.

Despite all mentioned similarities between the two mosques, they can be distinguished within their different architectural designs and by their aesthetical

expressions. Sultan Ahmet Mosque was designed within the standard plan of Ottoman architecture that was inspired in part by the example of Hagia Sophia. Unlikely, the Great Mosque of Herat is characterized within Timurid and Ghurid architecture style which is the pinnacle of Islamic art in Central Asia and fundamentally derived from Persian architecture. Furthermore, the Timurids architecture style of Herat mosque emphasis is mainly exteriors and perfused with magnificent colors, which the geometric designs on each tile have made beautiful mosaics. On the contrary, Sultan Ahmet mosque's aesthetical decorations are mainly interiors as there are vast inner spaces covered by massive domes, semi-domes, and columns within ornamentation motifs of floral, geometric, and Calligraphy. The calligraphies used for both mosques are mystical poems of Turkish and Persian poets and Al-Quran's verses.

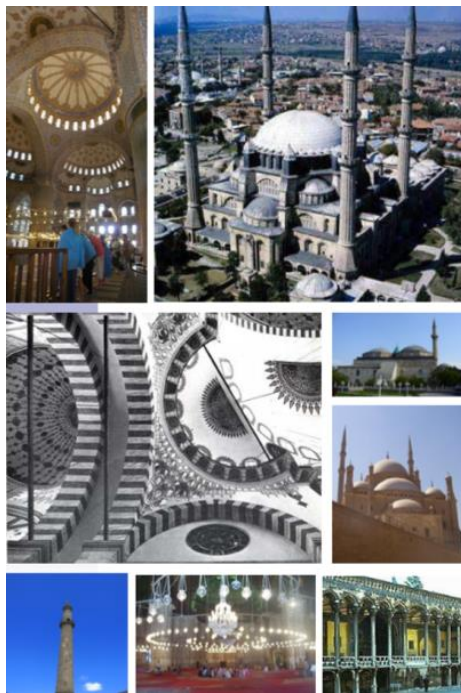


Figure 12. Ottoman-Istanbul Style

CONCLUSION

Mosques have long been considered one of the most fundamental elements in the development of Islamic cities. The construction of mosques has a special role in the development of Islamic cities, which are defined as a glorious symbol. The mosque, as the axis and a part of the main elements of the city, is one of the most important urban uses in Islamic cities and as the main pillar of urban development identity, which has played a role as a prominent factor of identity and city's extract in the urban structure.

Herat and Istanbul were the capital cities of Islamic conquerors for several centuries that ancient monuments narrate their historical richness. These two great cities have preserved their economical, historical, and cultural essential role despite new organization on to their geopolitical systems. Among numerous monuments that existed in both cities,

Blue Mosque in Istanbul and the Great Mosque in Herat are known as the symbol of Islamic civilizations. Othman and Timurid-Khurasan style of architecture used for these great mosques reveals cultural diversity in Islamic civilization. The aesthetical views given to both cities by these two great mosques have influenced the exterior and interior expression of other mosques that have been built nearby two regions.

The Blue Mosque or Sultanahmet is one of the most famous mosques in Istanbul, which was built during the Ottoman Empire. When the Ottoman government achieved many successes in several great wars in the late seventeenth century, this mosque was built by order of Sultan Ahmad with the intention of thanking God. The location of the Blue Mosque next to the Hagia Sophia was a reason for its fame, and in addition, it is no less glorious than its counterpart. The interesting about the Blue Mosque is that it is the first mosque after the Sacred Mosque that has 6 minarets. Sultan Ahmad Mosque or the Blue Mosque has a very beautiful view due to its location next to the Bosphorus Strait. Unlike the Blue Mosque, the Great Mosque of Herat has experienced changes several times that its current building represents the Timurids-Khurasan style. The art and architectural designs that were used in the Blue Mosque and Friday Mosque of Herat are the mirror of different cultures and reflect the way people have viewed the spiritual realm. Therefore, the comparative study of these two mosques indicates that Islamic artist's focus was on the spiritual representation of objects with their aesthetical qualities. Furthermore, throughout the comparative study of these two mosques, we have learned that how these two mosques have had an impact on the art, literature, philosophy, and culture of these two different regions over the history of different civilizations.

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Extended Abstract

Istanbul & Herat: A Comparison Study of Blue Mosque & the Great Mosque of Herat

The first mosque in the early days of Islam, built by the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), was so simple that even because of the lack of a roof, the heat of the sun shone on the worshipers. Since then, as the religion of Islam has spread throughout the wide geography of the world, the Islamic architecture of mosques has been influenced by the different cultures of different places, which to this day is known as a symbol of the richness of Islamic civilization in the world. The city of Herat in Afghanistan and the city of Istanbul in Turkey have been the centers of Islamic empires for centuries, and bear many traces of the glorious era of Islamic civilizations. Among the Islamic historical sites, the Great Mosque of Herat and the Sultan Ahmed Mosque in Turkey are known as the most influential historical monuments.

These two great mosques during the Islamic civilization had numerous crucial roles in people’s everyday life. Herat Great Mosque and the Blue Mosque in Istanbul in addition to their multiple functionalities have influenced the urban aesthetic view of the cities. While the different Islamic architectural styles that have been used for the two great mosques make them distinguished physical expressions, both mosques have had important political,

religious, historical, and cultural significance for two different regions within their several century years of ages.

This article begins its discussion by describing mosques and their role in Islamic society within the history of Islamic civilization. Further, this part of the article discusses the significance of aesthetics in the architecture of mosques, and the tendency of Islamic rulers to use the beauty of architecture in mosques, which later led to the emergence of a unique style of Islamic architecture in different societies within different periods of history. Next, the article starts a comparison of two cities giving descriptions on Herat, which was known as the pearl of khurasan, and Istanbul a bridge linking diverse civilizations of Europe and Asia. After a comparison study of both cities, the article begins a comparing of two mosques within their similarities and differences. The finding of this paper indicates that although these two mosques are dissimilar from each other in terms of time and place that were built within different architecture styles, they have had a high level of impact in both cities.

The article compares two mosques within three dimensions of having religious magnitude, historical value, and their past political prosperity. The article then highlights both mosques' architectural designs which are considered as one of the most prominent variances between these two mosques. Although the Great Mosque of Herat has undergone many changes throughout history, its current construction reflects the Timurid architectural style. According to the Timurid architectural style, the aesthetical arts used in the Herat Grand Mosque are more visible on the outside parts of the mosque than on the inside. Unlikely, the aesthetical arts used in Sultan Ahmad Mosque can be seen from inside the mosque, which reflects the style of Ottoman architecture. Although the Great Mosque of Herat has undertaken transformations during different dynasties, the Sultan Ahmad Grand Mosque has retained its original appearance to this day.

Keywords: Mosques, Istanbul, Herat, Sultan Ahmet Mosque, the Great Mosque of Herat.