

## ART AND BEAUTY IN ISLAM

If we are going to stick to the oldest and most wide-known definition of aesthetics as the *discipline that concerns the beauty* or the science that deals with the beauty, we would say that beauty in the Arab-Islamic civilization constitutes one of the main subjects and goals of arts' approach and philosophy. When beauty is mentioned in the Islamic arts, it does not imply a beauty according to the western concepts, either objectivist or subjectivist ones, but the "absolute beauty" and its expression in the visible part of universe. To the Muslim artist the beauty is not a merit of itself, but of the divine creation, a perfection of the Creator, Who, as attribution of His own creation, has the perfection and beauty of the creature. The rose is beautiful neither by its own nature, nor as a reflection of us in it; its beauty constitutes the manifestation of the divine attribute of beauty (*jamaal*). Whereas the ugliness that is considered as the antithesis of beauty in the western civilization, in the Islamic art it is not perceived as such, since the beauty is absolute, the ugliness does not exist. Unlike Kant's idea (which he developed at *Critics of Judgement* – part of the work *Three Critics*) for an autonomous aesthetics in which the subject and object are separate, as well as Hegel's one, in which art will die some day, the Islamic aesthetics, according to the anesthetist Omar Nasim, it is not as such, it aims at merging into one: subject with object, beauty with the Creator, the absolute with the human and the social with the individual. In this form the aesthetics cannot be separated neither from the general meaning of an art work nor from the meaning that the author gives to it. In general, the tendency of art works goes from individual towards the social or individual towards the absolute, therefore the idea to put social aesthetics into others' service – but to which you can never take off the inspiration and outlook of the author as well as the his viewpoint according to which he has performed one's work – is the objective of any Muslim artist.

Just as any other art, the Islamic art itself is based and has found its

own roots in the personifying past or environment, where energy and genesis of this divine religion are expressed. Of course, the genesis of this religion leads us towards the everlasting source of the inspiration from the Islamic faith, Koran and Kaba'a, respectively the most read book and the most visited monument in the world today. Muslim artists sow in Koran the inexhaustible source of inspiration for their literary and lyric subjects as well as for other art works. While Kabaa is the first monument of the Islamic tradition built as a cult object to worship the God of Ibrahim and Ismail. Then, the Islamic art was strongly based on its own values and attached importance to the mosque – *mesjid* – as the essential element of this religion.

In general the Islamic art as a concept contains in itself all the arts of Islamic origin, both produced and consumed in those countries where Muslims carry out their activities. The Islamic art was characterized by some differences in comparison with other arts, because it is not put into service of religion, but its purpose is to come into service to all Islamic culture. It cannot be necessarily a creation of Muslims alone, and this for the reason that a part of works belonging to this art have been created by non-Muslim artists in the service of various Muslim rulers.

The same has happened with the Islamic civilization. It was so strong the relationship among faith, worship and desire to express this universality and unity, that Muslims tried for hundreds years to define their creed of belief in only one God in every activity and cell of their life. This definition does not leave out the art, which in the Islamic creed of divine absolutism and unity would spread out from the Arabic Peninsula to all possible directions.

This art extended its influence so far (from Mauritania to China, from Yemen to Hungary) that it was difficult to distinguish the main and shaping features of the Islamic art from one region to another and from one culture to another. As soon as entering into contacting Islam, different people used all their inspiring and creating sources to give an impetus and life to this new feature and style of art arriving from East.

Also, in Albania this art spread roots and was approached in all forms, techniques and styles as Islamic art. Initially, it was applied in building small and small mosques, then in those few books in manuscripts in circulation owned by some sympathizers of

knowledge later on with the erection of larger *mesjids* with elegant minarets and blazing leaded domes shining in far distances, with the calligraphy of sultan's documents (firmans) etc.

This art as much prevailing as peaceful, was merged and "translated" by the native Albanian builders, masters and architects, in every region in the most beautiful and simple way. If we look attentively at the objects built by Albanian construction masters, we would clearly notice that the author" of the work, besides the fact of remaining anonymous, does not leave any single note to reveal one's identity. Meanwhile, his work, even though is beautiful and grandiose, comes to the service of the whole: to the public, to individuals and sublime, that in this case is the Absolute (God). This feature distinguishes in Albanian lands for many reasons. The author never wanted to be recognized by people, since he seeks the recognition of the only Creator.

The Islamic art is as much anonymous as personifying, it is suffice to tell that only from architect Mimar Sinani we already know over 300 great public works all over the Islamic world. They belong to the author, but he never dedicated his works to himself. He dedicated them to the Absolute.

Many architectural and artistic works have lived very long and have been inherited generation after generation without knowing their author, architect or worker. We can say the same for the mosque of Et'hem Bey in Tirana. We all know the one who ordered its construction, but no one knows the hand of the architect or builder whose efforts and art gave such a beauty to this art work. No one ever asked which master did construct such a beautiful building, but always the handcraft and technique of the anonymous has been appraised, since it is just the anonymous who builds to remain as such and to be merged inside one's masterpiece. His personality is expressed in the details. Almost all the Islamic architectural and artistic works have remained anonymous, without author (sometimes because their names have not been preserved), often, it is said about them that they were built by (orderers) such as Et'hem beys, Mirahors, Bushatlinjs ect, but in fact no one of them did not s carve the river stones, none of them did erect domes and minarets; they only tasted the grandeur of the work. Frequently, they were buried inside the work, it its bosom (as it is the case of Et'hem bey and his wife Balkise).