

THE CROSS AS DECORATING THE MINARETS OF A PERSIAN MAUSOLEUM

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ABSTRACT

The cross is one the earliest symbols man created. It signifies the Soul. Placed on a grave or on a minaret of a mausoleum the cross, as the plenipotentiary of the soul, functions as soul, expediting resurrection of the dead. It makes the site itself auspicious as one where resurrection is to occur. In effect, while we pray for the salvation of the dead, to inscribe a cross meant the mason's prayer materialized, also hoping to see the resurrection of the dead. In Persian art, reality is best expressed by the opposites. There have to be black and white crosses as opposites to reveal the cross. There is a case of a whole Quranic text inscribed right to left as normal, but also its opposite, written inverse from left right. This is being discussed in another article. To have black and white crosses is to emphasize the cross.

The Cross is so much believed to be sacred to the Christians that it has to be told that it dates much earlier and had long been recognized as an amuletic sign. Budge (1961) writes that "one of the oldest amuletic signs is the cross". He however does not refer to its origin or to its earliest significance. Recently (in 1986) I have tried to explain that the cross is the symbol of the soul and as symbol it is the plenipotentiary of the soul itself. Then to decorate with the sign of the cross a grave amounts to a concrete prayer recalling the soul to confer resurrection upon the dead, this being all that can be done for the dead. Fortunately Ragozin (1897) illustrates the Rock-

Tomb of King Midas of phrygia which is well decorated with the cross. The Chaukhandi tombs in Pakistan, belonging to Muslims, have been fully decorated with the crosses has been beautifully illustrated by Khurshid Hassan (1984).

Even in Persia there is a mausoleum, the Shrine of Mahan, near Kirman, which has two minarets, both decorated with the cross and then one white and the other black. Pope (1965) has illustrated the shrine with these two minarets in colour on plate XVI. Fig. 1 here shows the minaret which is nearer as illustrated on Pl. XVI by Pope. Fig. 2 illustrates the other seen a little further

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to our right in plate XVI. Both minarets are fully decorated with crosses, white and black. Their function is naturally identical with the crosses carved on Chaukhandi tombs and also on the Rock Tomb of King Midas. Fig. 3 illustrates enlarged part of minaret 1. There are elliptical units, with the centre as black cross. The two ends contain V shaped signs in white, which become half of a cross and when one is near another, such bodies as parts of two elliptical bodies, appear as a white cross. At any rate fig. 3 shows the black cross and also the white.

In fig. 1 the black cross is clear enough while the arms of the white cross appear as V shaped or U shaped in fig. 1 the white and black crosses both are discernable. A careful examination of fig. 3, which is an enlargement of part of fig. 1, shows the white crosses better.

Fig. 4 shows again part of fig. 1 but with the white cross as clearer than the black one. Fig. 4 is the best realistic reproduction taken of Pope's picture as the original. To supplement fig. 4, another picture, showing the contrast far better, appears as fig. 5. The item to our left

below shows an elliptical unit and above it white cross which arose when the ends of two elliptical units met with a black dot in the centre of the white cross.

Fig. 6 is a drawing to show schematically how the elliptical unit is constituted. In the centre is a black cross. At each end is a V shaped sign in white, which joined with another of an opposite elliptical body, together appears as a white cross, usually with a black dot in the centre.

Minaret II is otherwise decorated, though even here there, are both white and black crosses. If there were elliptical units in Minaret I there are lozenge-shaped unit in Minaret II. The last but one row from the bottom in fig. 7 shows, with an arrow to our right, two of these units particularly clear. These two lozenge shaped bodies have been slightly retouched to show their real forms. All the upper parts appear as they existed but being near one another the lozenge-shape of the component units is discernable only when carefully examined. What has been called V shaped white sign before appears to be U shaped in fig. 7' but seen at a distance two of them together finally appear as a white cross.

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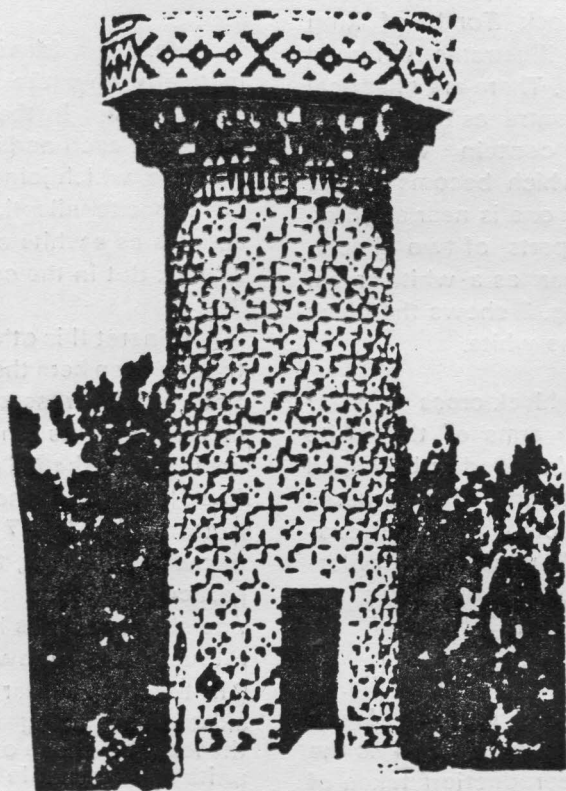


Fig. 1. Minaret of Shrine of Mahan, Kirman, White and Black crosses, traceable to a unit which is elliptical from Pope (1965).

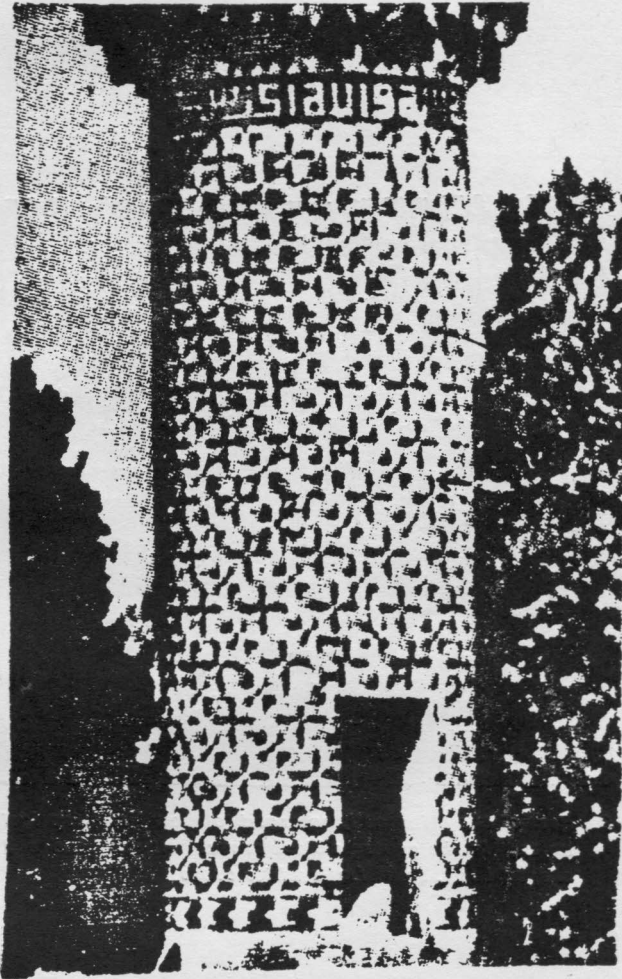


Fig. 2. Another minaret again of the above shrine there being black and white crosses traceable to a lozenge shaped unit. From Pope.

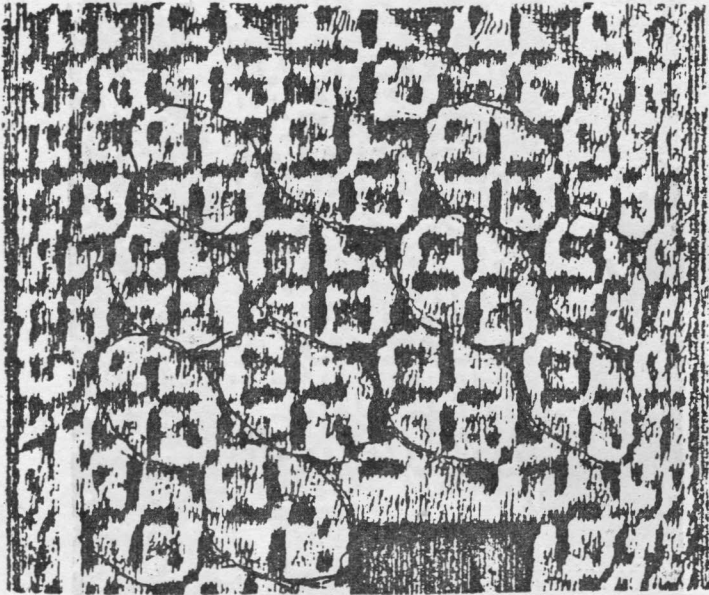


Fig. 3. Part of the Minaret I, enlarged to show the elliptical units. In the centre a black cross. At each end a V shaped body, as half of a white cross.

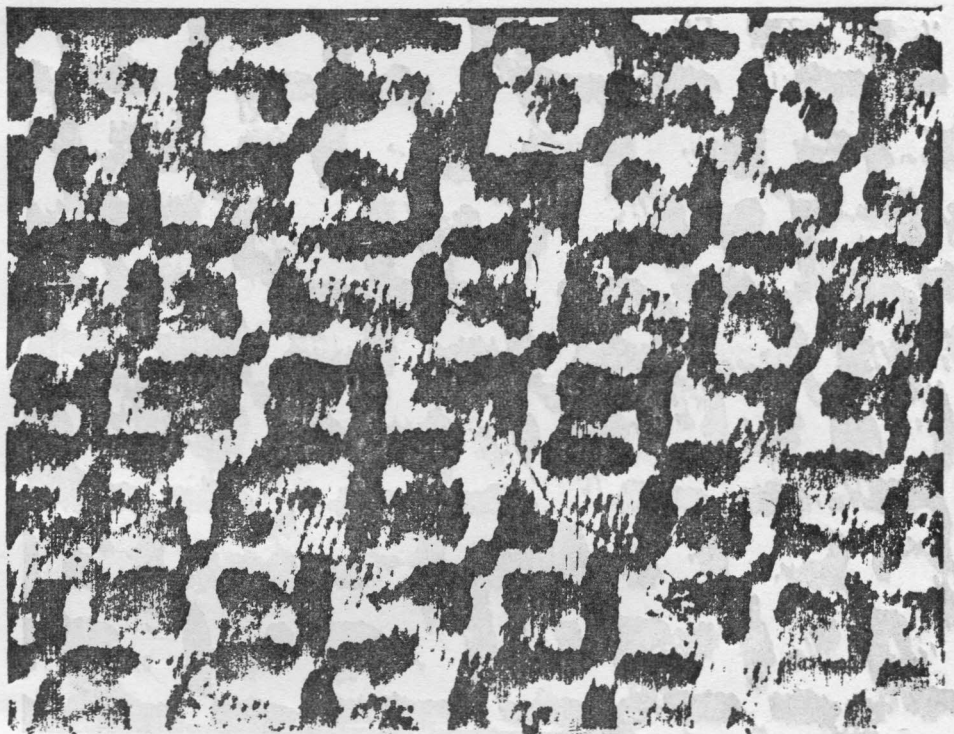


Fig. 4. A realistic photographic reproduction as enlargement of elliptical units.

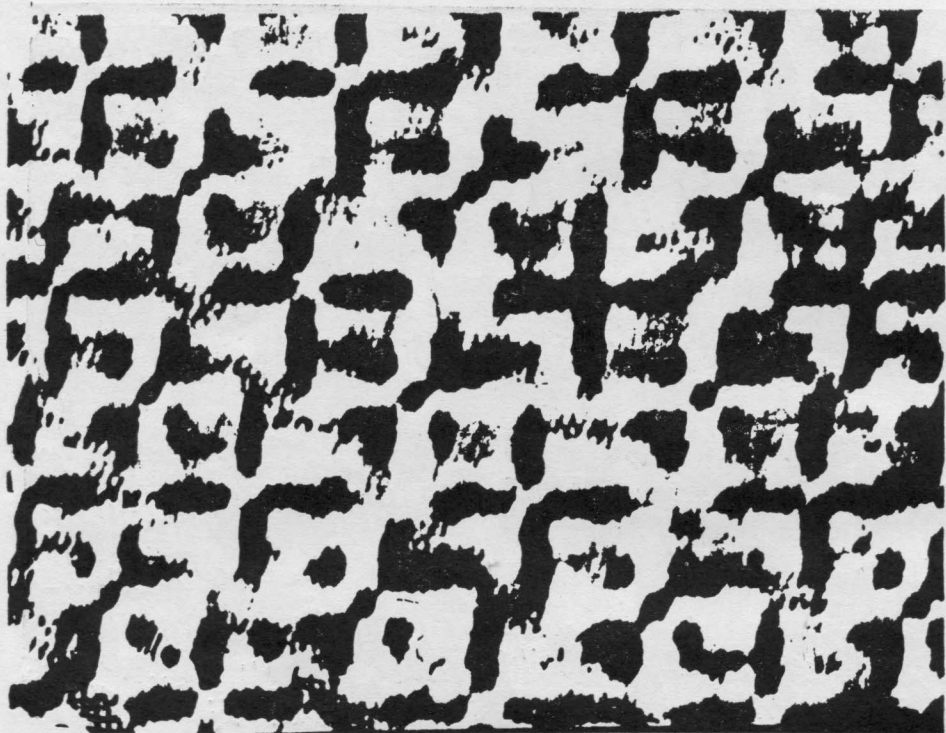


Fig. 5. A photograph showing contrasts of the same spot, as in fig. 4, which it supplements.

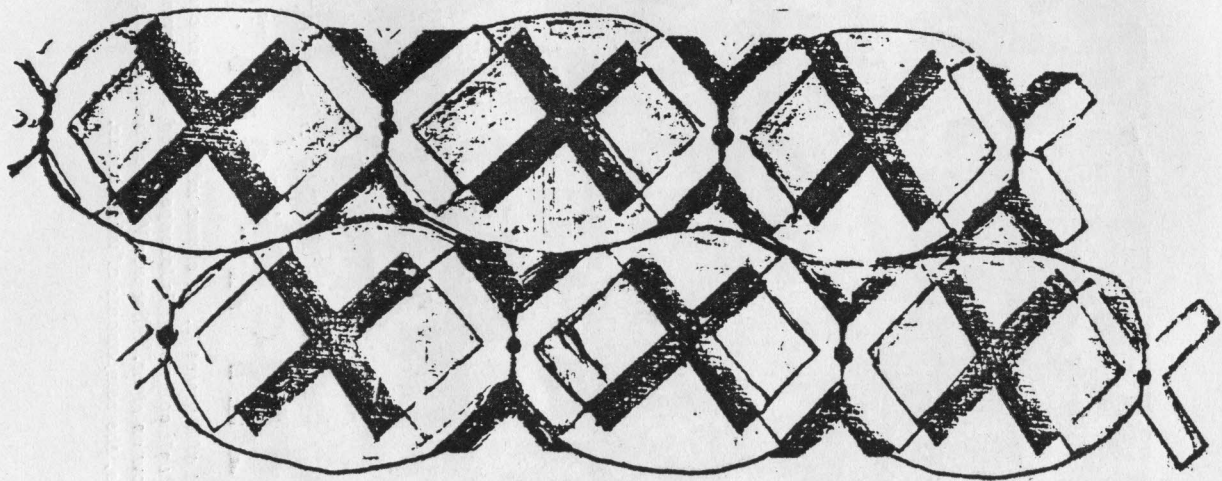


Fig. 6, Schematic representation of the make-up of an elliptical unit. In the centre a black cross. At each end a V shaped sign, as half of a cross.

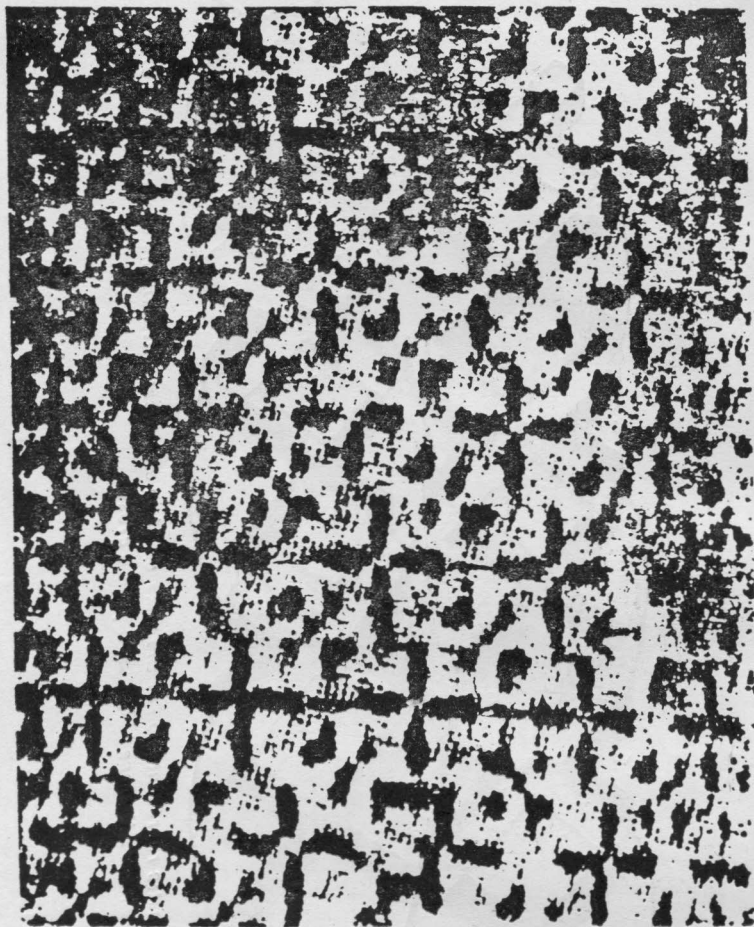


Fig. 7. Part of Minaret II. It shows white and black crosses. The unit component is lozenge shaped, one shown by an arrow on right. What was V shaped before is U shaped here, the components of white cross.

सारांश

ईरान के एक मकबरे के मीनारों की “क्रास” द्वारा सजावट

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मनुष्य द्वारा सर्वप्रथम निर्मित चिन्हों में से “क्रास” भी एक है। यह आत्मा का द्योतक है। किसी समाधि या मीनार या मकबरे पर लगाया गया यह “क्रास” का चिन्ह आत्मा के दूत के रूप में उस मृतक आत्मा के शिघ्रातीशीघ्र पुर्नजन्म के लिये कार्यकरता है। जहाँ पुर्नजन्म होना है उस स्थान के शुभ होने में यह कारण बनता है। जब मृतक की मोक्ष प्राप्ती के लिये हम प्रार्थना करते हैं तो उस के फलस्वरूप जैसे कि संगतराश की प्रार्थना फलित हो गयी, उसको दर्शाने के लिये “क्रास” बनाया जाता है और उस मृतक के पुर्नजन्म की आशा में भी। ईरानी कला में यथार्थ को विरोधाभासों से बहुत अच्छी तरह से दर्शाया गया है। जैसे “क्रास” के अर्थ को बताने के लिए कृष्ण एवं श्वेत क्रास एक दूसरे के विरोधाभास के रूप में बनाये जा सकते हैं। कृष्ण एवं श्वेत “क्रास” चिन्हों का बनाया जाना क्रास कि विशेषता का द्योतक है।