

EARLY ISLAMIC ARCHITECTURE IN IRAN  
(637-1059)

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To My wife,  
and in memory of my parents

# Contents

|                                                          |     |
|----------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Preface.....                                             | iv  |
| List of Abbreviations.....                               | vii |
| List of Plates .....                                     | ix  |
| List of Figures .....                                    | xix |
| Introduction .....                                       | 1   |
| I Historical and Cultural Overview .....                 | 5   |
| II Legacy of Sasanian Architecture .....                 | 49  |
| III Major Feature of Architecture and Construction ..... | 72  |
| IV Decoration and Inscriptions .....                     | 114 |
| Conclusion .....                                         | 137 |
| Catalogue of Monuments .....                             | 143 |
| Bibliography .....                                       | 353 |

## PREFACE

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The system of transliteration is that used in *Iran*, the journal of the British Institute of Persian Studies. The major dynasties such as ‘Abbasid, Sasanian, Saljuq, Ilkhanid, Timurid, Safavid and Qajar and also certain major cities and provinces, such as Khurasan, Isfahan, Mazandaran, Kirman, Fars, Yazd, Nishapur, Shiraz, Tabriz, Damghan, Simnan, Na’in, Ardistan, Samarqand, Bukhara, Heart, Baghdad and Samarra are not transliterated.

In the text of the thesis the dates are given in the Islamic lunar calendar (*Hijrī*), followed by the corresponding date in the Gregorian calendar (A.D). Dates from the later 20<sup>th</sup> century are given in the solar calendar (*Shamsī*), followed by equivalent in the Gregorian calendar. A single date in the text is always in the Gregorian calendar. In the bibliography the dates are given where appropriate in the Islamic solar calendar followed by the date in the Gregorian calendar.

*Notice*

After mentioning the name of the prophet of Islam - Muḥammad - and each of the twelve Shī‘ite Imāms (and their offspring), it is customary to add the honorific phrase, *ṣallā allāhu wa ālihi*, “may the blessing of Allāh be upon him and his Family” and *‘alayhi al-salām*, “may Allāh bless him”, respectively. Owing to limited space these honorific phrases have been shortened as (*ṣ*) and (*‘a*) in the text.

## List of Abbreviations

|               |                                                                         |
|---------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>AeI</b>    | <i>Āthār-é Īrān</i>                                                     |
| <b>AI</b>     | <i>Ars Islamica</i>                                                     |
| <b>AKTMSI</b> | <i>Maqālāt-i Avvalīn Kungira Tarīkh-i Mi‘mārī va Shahr Sazī-yi Iran</i> |
| <b>AMI</b>    | <i>Archaeologische Mitteilungen aus Iran</i>                            |
| <b>AO</b>     | <i>Ars Orientalis</i>                                                   |
| <b>BMMA</b>   | <i>Bulletin of the Metropolitan Museum of Art</i>                       |
| <b>CHI</b>    | <i>Cambridge History Iranica</i>                                        |
| <b>DKTMSI</b> | <i>Maqālāt-i Dūvūmīn Kungira Tarīkh-i Mi‘mārī va Shahr Sazī-yi Iran</i> |
| <b>EI2</b>    | <i>Encyclopedia of Islam, Second Edition</i>                            |
| <b>EIr</b>    | <i>Encyclopedia of Iran</i>                                             |
| <b>EMA</b>    | <i>Early Muslim Architecture</i>                                        |
| <b>IAA</b>    | Hattstein and Delius, eds., <i>Islam. Art and Architecture</i>          |
| <b>ICHO</b>   | Iranian Cultural Heritage Organization                                  |
| <b>IS</b>     | <i>Iranian Studies</i>                                                  |
| <b>JRAS</b>   | <i>Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society</i>                             |
| <b>MAE</b>    | <i>Muslim Architecture of Egypt</i>                                     |

|              |                                                               |
|--------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>NOPAM</b> | National Organization for the Protection of Ancient Monuments |
| <b>SI</b>    | <i>Studia Iranica</i>                                         |
| <b>SBU</b>   | Shahīd Bihishtī University                                    |
| <b>SPA</b>   | Pope and Ackerman, eds., <i>Survey of Persian Art</i>         |

## List of Plates

Pl.III.1. Ribāṭ-i Ziyārat, mosque. View of *qibla* wall and detail of its inscription.

Pl.III.2. Friday mosque, Raqqa. View of the *qibla ṭwān* and its groined vault.

Pl.III.3. Zindān-i Hārūn, near Rayy. View of building.

Pl.III.4. Bishāpūr. Remains of a *ḥammām*.

Pl.III.5. Zindān-i Hārūn, near Rayy. View of squinch.

Pl.III.6. Imāmzada J‘afar, Damghan. View of squinch.

Pl.III.7. Gunbad-i Zangūla, Damghan. View of squinch.

Pl.III.8. Zūzan. The recent discovered piers.

Pl.III.9. Ṭūs. The recent discovered piers.

Pl.IV.1. Tabriz. Remains of the *miḥrāb*.

Pl.IV.2. Rayy. View of flat *miḥrāb*.

Pl.1.1. Tārī Khānā. General view.

Pl.1.2. Tārī Khānā. View of main aisle.

Pl.1.3. Tārī Khānā. View of minaret.

Pl.1.4. Tārī Khānā. Elliptical arch.

Pl.1.5. Tārī Khānā. View of southern corner of the courtyard, 1312/1894.

- Pl.1.6. Tārī Khānā. View of the main aisle, 1312/1894.
- Pl.1.7. Tārī Khānā. Constructional detail of a column.
- Pl.1.8. Tārī Khānā. View of north-east arcade.
- 
- Pl.2.1. Friday mosque, Shūshtar. View of a pier in the *shabistān*.
- Pl.2.2. Friday mosque, Shūshtar. View inside the *shabistān*.
- Pl.2.3. Friday mosque, Shūshtar. Decorative patterns on a pier.
- Pl.2.4. Friday mosque, Shūshtar. View of supporting walls in *shabistān*.
- Pl.2.5. Friday mosque, Shūshtar. Exterior façade, projecting semi-circular pier.
- Pl.2.6. Friday mosque, Shūshtar. Exterior facade, grilles of open-jointed brickwork.
- Pl.2.7. Friday mosque, Shūshtar. View of the minaret and *guldasta*.
- Pl.2.8. Friday mosque, Shūshtar. Remains of Kufic inscription on the *qibla* wall.
- Pl.2.9. Friday mosque, Shūshtar. Elaborate inscription next to the *mihrāb*.
- Pl.2.10. Friday mosque, Shūshtar. Kufic inscription of wood.
- 
- Pl.3.1. Friday mosque, Fahraj. View of engaged columns.
- Pl.3.2. Friday mosque, Fahraj. View of the small *mihrāb*.
- Pl.3.3. Friday mosque, Fahraj. View of the four-vaulted arcade.
- Pl.3.4. Friday mosque, Fahraj. View of double elliptical squinch.
- Pl.3.5. Friday mosque, Fahraj. View of the minaret.
- Pl.3.6. Friday mosque, Fahraj. Decorative pattern of stepped design.
- Pl.3.7. Friday mosque, Fahraj. View of blind lobed arch with an ogee apex.
- Pl.3.8. Friday mosque, Fahraj. View of blind lobed arch with a pointed apex.
- Pl.3.9. Friday mosque, Fahraj. View of cannular grooves.
- Pl.3.10. Friday mosque, Fahraj. The remains of a decorative false doorway.

- Pl.4.1. Qal‘a-yi Ramūk , Shahdād. View of entrance.
- Pl.4.2. Qal‘a-yi Ramūk, Shahdād. Entrance of a room in ground floor.
- Pl.4.3. Qal‘a-yi Ramūk, Shahdād. Interior view of a room.
- Pl.4.4. Qal‘a-yi Ramūk, Shahdād. View of the courtyard and the upper floor.
- Pl.4.5. Qal‘a-yi Ramūk, Shahdād. View of corridor in the upper floor.
- Pl.4.6. Qal‘a-yi Ramūk, Shahdād. View of an arrow-slit.
- 
- Pl.5.1. Friday mosque, Sāva. View of the *qibla īwān*.
- Pl.5.2. Friday mosque, Sāva. View of north-western *īwān*.
- Pl.5.3. Friday mosque, Sāva. View of the minaret and eastern courtyard façade.
- Pl.5.4. Friday mosque, Sāva. View of two early piers.
- Pl.5.5. Friday mosque, Sāva. View of earliest *mihrāb* attached to a pier.
- Pl.5.6. Friday mosque, Sāva. Fragment of an inscription painted on plaster.
- Pl.5.7. Friday mosque, Sāva. Detail of inscription bands on the earliest *mihrāb*.
- 
- Pl.6.1. Friday mosque, Ardistan. View of south-eastern and south-western *īwāns*.
- Pl.6.2. Friday mosque, Ardistan. Exterior view of dome chamber.
- Pl.6.3. Friday mosque, Ardistan. View of the north-eastern *īwān*.
- Pl.6.4. Friday mosque, Ardistan. The entrance on the south-west.
- Pl.6.5. Friday mosque, Ardistan. View of engaged column.
- Pl.6.6. Friday mosque, Ardistan. Remains of carved stucco.
- Pl.6.7. Friday mosque, Ardistan. Remains of carved stucco in upper storey.
- Pl.6.8. Friday mosque, Ardistan. Decorative band on the south-west of the building.
- Pl.6.9. Friday mosque, Ardistan. Part of a Kufic inscription band.

- Pl.7.1. Masjid-i Malik, Kirman. View of the *qibla* *īwān*.
- Pl.7.2. Masjid-i Malik, Kirman. View of inside the dome chamber.
- Pl.7.3. Masjid-i Malik, Kirman. View of northern exterior minaret.
- Pl.7.4. Masjid-i Malik, Kirman. View of historical inscriptions in the *qibla* *īwān*.

- Pl.8.1. Friday mosque, Na'in. View of niche in the *qibla* wall.
- Pl.8.2. Friday mosque, Na'in. Domical vault in the *qibla* area.
- Pl.8.3. Friday mosque, Na'in. Interior view of the south-eastern arcade.
- Pl.8.4. Friday mosque, Na'in. View of north-western arcade.
- Pl.8.5. Friday mosque, Na'in. View of the middle niche of *mihrāb*.
- Pl.8.6. Friday mosque, Na'in. Two-storied bay in the main aisle.
- Pl.8.7. Friday mosque, Na'in. A pier with engaged columns.
- Pl.8.8. Friday mosque, Na'in. View of stalactite domical vault.
- Pl.8.9. Friday mosque, Na'in. View of minaret.
- Pl.8.10. Friday mosque, Na'in. Detail of ornament on a column.
- Pl.8.11. Friday mosque, Na'in. View of the decorated spandrels.
- Pl.8.12. Friday mosque, Na'in. View of the *mihrāb* on a pier.
- Pl.8.13. Friday mosque, Na'in. View of a decorative baked brick pattern.
- Pl.8.14. Friday mosque, Na'in. Decorative band on the minaret.
- Pl.8.15. Friday mosque, Na'in. Inscription band on the extrados of the arch.
- Pl.8.16. Friday mosque, Na'in. View of an epigraphic frieze.

- Pl.9.1. Tomb tower, Samīrān. General view.
- Pl.9.2. Tomb tower, Samīrān. View of doorway.

Pl.9.3. Tomb tower, Samīrān. View of the interior niche.

Pl.9.4. Tomb tower, Samīrān. Transition zone of building.

Pl.10.1. Gunbad-i Qābūs. General view.

Pl.10.2. Gunbad-i Qābūs. View of entrance.

Pl.10.3. Gunbad-i Qābūs. Detail of triangle flanges and inscription below the roof.

Pl.10.4. Gunbad-i Qābūs. A pair of squinches above the doorway.

Pl.10.5. Gunbad-i Qābūs. Detail of first inscription band.

Pl.11.1. Kashkān Bridge. Remains of piers.

Pl.11.2. Kashkān Bridge. View of two bays.

Pl.11.3. Kashkān Bridge. Base of piers.

Pl.11.4. Kashkān Bridge. View of openings over each pier.

Pl.12.1. Masjid-i Kūshk, Firdaws. General view.

Pl.12.2. Masjid-i Kūshk, Firdaws. Southern façade of the courtyard.

Pl.12.3. Masjid-i Kūshk, Firdaws. Façade of the arcade behind the entrance.

Pl.12.4. Masjid-i Kūshk, Firdaws. View of the *mihrāb*, inside the arcade.

Pl.12.5. Masjid-i Kūshk, Firdaws. View of a pier with engaged column.

Pl.12.6. Masjid-i Kūshk, Firdaws. View of the remains of the main *mihrāb*.

Pl.12.7. Masjid-i Kūshk, Firdaws. View of the small *mihrāb*.

Pl.12.8. Masjid-i Kūshk, Firdaws. View to the north-east of *shabistān*.

Pl.13.1. Kūshk-i Raḥīmābād, Bam. South-west view.

Pl.13.2. Kūshk-i Raḥīmābād, Bam. View of south-western *īwān*.

Pl.13.3. Kūshk-i Raḥīmābād, Bam. North-eastern squinch of the dome chamber.

Pl.13.4. Kūshk-i Raḥīmābād, Bam. South-western squinch of the dome chamber.

Pl.13.5. Kūshk-i Raḥīmābād, Bam. View of three rectangular openings.

Pl.13.6. Kūshk-i Raḥīmābād, Bam. Remains of a barrel vault on the south-east.

Pl.14.1. Mosque at Bishāpūr. Exterior view of the north-east wall.

Pl.14.2. Mosque at Bishāpūr. Remains of a round tower.

Pl.14.3. Mosque at Bishāpūr. Remains of the *miḥrāb*.

Pl.14.4. Mosque at Bishāpūr. Remains of columns in the *qibla shabistān*.

Pl.14.5. Mosque at Bishāpūr. A rectangular pier with rounded terminations.

Pl.14.6. Mosque at Bishāpūr. Remains of the northern wall.

Pl.15.1. Friday mosque, Nīrīz. View of *qibla īwān*.

Pl.15.2. Friday mosque, Nīrīz. View of the eastern arcade of courtyard.

Pl.15.3. Friday mosque, Nīrīz. View of the north-eastern *īwān*.

Pl.15.4. Friday mosque, Nīrīz. Exterior view of the entrance and minaret.

Pl.15.5. Friday mosque, Nīrīz. Carved stucco decoration of the *miḥrāb*.

Pl.15.6. Friday mosque, Nīrīz. Projecting pattern inside the *miḥrāb*.

Pl.15.7. Friday mosque, Nīrīz. Kufic band, inside the *miḥrāb*, on the right side.

Pl.15.8. Friday mosque, Nīrīz. Kufic band inside the niche of the *miḥrāb*.

Pl.16.1. Friday mosque, Simnan. View of the *qibla īwān*.

Pl.16.2. Friday mosque, Simnan. Interior view of the dome chamber.

Pl.16.3. Friday mosque, Simnan. View of a column, north-eastern *shabistān*.

Pl.16.4. Friday mosque, Simnan. Interior view of the south-eastern *shabistān*.

- Pl.16.5.Friday mosque, Simnan. Quadripartite vault of south-eastern basement.
- Pl.16.6.Friday mosque, Simnan. View of the minaret.
- Pl.16.7.Friday mosque, Simnan. Detail of inscription band on the minaret.
- Pl.16.8.Friday mosque, Simnan. Inscription over the doorway of the dome chamber.
- 
- Pl.17.1. Ispī Masjid, Tālish. Northern exterior façade.
- Pl.17.2. Ispī Masjid, Tālish. View of the *riwāq*.
- Pl.17.3. Ispī Masjid, Tālish. View of the doorway.
- Pl.17.4. Ispī Masjid, Tālish. View of the courtyard to the north.
- Pl.17.5. Ispī Masjid, Tālish. Remains of floral pattern on the dado.
- Pl.17.6. Ispī Masjid, Tālish. A floral pattern on spandrel of arch.
- Pl.17.7. Ispī Masjid, Tālish. Remains of inscription in Kufic.
- Pl.17.8. Ispī Masjid, Tālish. Remains of inscription on façade of the courtyard.
- 
- Pl.18.1. Tomb tower at Rādkān West. South-western view.
- Pl.18.2. Tomb tower at Rādkān West. Fragments of inscription over the doorway.
- Pl.18.3. Tomb tower at Rādkān West. Vertically impressed joints.
- Pl.18.4. Tomb tower at Rādkān West. View of decoration beneath the roof.
- Pl.18.5. Tomb tower at Rādkān West. Kufic and Pahlavī inscriptions.
- 
- Pl.19.1. Tomb tower at Lājīm. Exterior view.
- Pl.19.2. Tomb tower at Lājīm. Decorative panel over the doorway.
- Pl.19.3. Tomb tower at Lājīm. Blind outset arches beneath the roof.
- Pl.19.4. Tomb tower at Lājīm. Detail of Kufic and Pahlavī inscriptions.

Pl.20.1. Pīr-i ‘Alamdār. Western view.

Pl.20.2. Pīr-i ‘Alamdār. View of the entrance.

Pl.20.3. Pīr-i ‘Alamdār. View of decoration beneath the roof.

Pl.20.4. Pīr-i ‘Alamdār. Detail of decoration.

Pl.20.5. Pīr-i ‘Alamdār. Decoration over the doorway.

Pl.21.1. Davāzdah Imām. View of entrance.

Pl.21.2. Davāzdah Imām. View of south–eastern corner.

Pl.21.3. Davāzdah Imām. Interior view.

Pl.21.4. Davāzdah Imām. View of transition zone.

Pl.21.5. Davāzdah Imām. View of a quarter-dome on the roof.

Pl.21.6. Davāzdah Imām. Panel of curvilinear stucco over the *mirab*.

Pl.21.7. Davāzdah Imām. Reamians of panles of stucco.

Pl.21.8. Davāzdah Imām. Detail of inscription band around the base of dome.

Pl.21.9. Davāzdah Imām. Inscription band on the east spandrel.

Pl.21.10. Davāzdah Imām. Detail of inscription band on the west spandrel.

Pl.22.1. Chihil Dukhtarān. Exterior view.

Pl.22.2. Chihil Dukhtarān. View of the entrance.

Pl.22.3. Chihil Dukhtarān. Decoration below the roof.

Pl.22.4. Chihil Dukhtarān. Decoration over doorway.

Pl.22.5. Chihil Dukhtarān. Detail of decoration over doorway.

Pl.23.1. Gunbad-i ‘Alī. Exterior view.

Pl.23.2. Gunbad-i ‘Alī. View of entrance.

Pl.23.3. Gunbad-i ‘Alī. Decorative element at corner of doorway.

Pl.23.4. Gunbad-i ‘Alī. View of transition zone.

Pl.23.5. Gunbad-i ‘Alī. View of decoration below the dome.

Pl.23.6. Gunbad-i ‘Alī. Inscription band over the doorway.

Pl.24.1. Caravansarai at Muḥammadābād. View of north-eastern arcade.

Pl.24.2. Caravansarai at Muḥammadābād. View of the west *īwān*.

Pl.24.3. Caravansarai at Muḥammadābād. Courtyard façade of the entrance.

Pl.24.4. Caravansarai at Muḥammadābād. Exterior view of the entrance.

Pl.24.5. Caravansarai at Muḥammadābād. View of the north-west corner.

Pl.24.6. Caravansarai at Muḥammadābād. Exterior view of the north-west corner.

Pl.24.7. Caravansarai at Muḥammadābād. View of a squinch of baked brick.

Pl.24.8. Caravansarai at Muḥammadābād. The remains of an inscription band.

Pl.25.1. Pīr-i Ḥamza Sabzpūsh. The north-east façade.

Pl.25.2. Pīr-i Ḥamza Sabzpūsh. The south-east façade.

Pl.25.3. Pīr-i Ḥamza Sabzpūsh. Remains of carved stucco decoration on dado.

Pl.25.4. Pīr-i Ḥamza Sabzpūsh. View of double reverse broken arch.

Pl.25.5. Pīr-i Ḥamza Sabzpūsh. View of inscription band.

Pl.26.1. Mausoleum at Sangbast. General view.

Pl.26.2. Mausoleum at Sangbast. Southern façade.

Pl.26.3. Mausoleum at Sangbast. View of transition zone.

Pl.26.4. Mausoleum at Sangbast. View of minaret.

- Pl.26.5. Mausoleum at Sangbast. Remains of an engaged column.
- Pl.26.6 Mausoleum at Sangbast. Remains of a wall between minaret and tomb.
- Pl.26.7. Mausoleum at Sangbast. Photograph from the Gulistan Palace Museume.
- Pl.26.8. Mausoleum at Sangbast. Multi-stepped pattern inside the building.
- Pl.26.9. Mausoleum at Sangbast. Geometrical pattern, painted on plaster.
- Pl.26.10. Mausoleum at Sangbast. Painted geometrical patterns on plaster.
- Pl.26.11. Mausoleum at Sangbast. Detain of inscription around the base of dome.
- Pl.26.12. Mausoleum at Sangbast. Painted Kufic band.
- 
- Pl.27.1. Tomb tower at Risgit. Eastern view.
- Pl.27.2. Tomb tower at Risgit. Decoration beneath the cornice.
- Pl.27.3. Tomb tower at Risgit. Detail of decorative patterns.
- Pl.27.4. Tomb tower at Risgit. Stucco plaque over the doorway.

## List of Figures

Fig.II.1. Qaşr-i Shīrīn. The recent discovered plan of entrance (after ICHO).

Fig.III.1. Friday mosque, Nihāvand. Plan (after ICHO).

Fig.III.2. Friday mosque, Raqqa. Plan (after ICHO).

Fig.1.1. Tārī Khāna. Plan and section (after Godard).

Fig.1.2. Tārī Khāna. Axonometric view (after Pīrniyā).

Fig.2.1. Friday mosque, Shūshtar. Plan and section (after SBU).

Fig.2.2. Friday mosque, Shūshtar. Axonometric view of *shabistān* (after SBU).

Fig.3.1. Friday mosque, Fahraj. Plan and section (after Pīrniyā).

Fig.3.2. Friday mosque, Fahraj. Axonometric view (after Pīrniyā).

Fig.4.1. Qal‘a-yi Ramūk. Plan of ground floor and upper floor (after ICHO).

Fig.5.1. Friday mosque, Sāva. Plan and section. axonometric view (after SBU).

Fig.5.2. Friday mosque, Sāva. Section and axonometric view (after SBU).

Fig.6.1. Friday mosque, Ardistan. Plan and section (after SBU).

Fig.6.2. Friday mosque, Ardistan. Plan and axonometric view of destroyed piers (after Pīrniyā).

Fig.7.1. Masjid- Malik. Plan (after *SPA*).

Fig.7.2. Masjid- Malik. Axonometric cutaway of *qibla īwān* (after ICHO).

Fig.7.3. Masjid- Malik. Plan and section of SIH (after ICHO).

Fig.7.4. Masjid- Malik. Proposed plan of the original form of building above the SIH.

Fig.8.1. Friday mosque, Na'in. Plan (after ICHO).

Fig.8.2. Friday mosque, Na'in. Plan of basement (after SBU).

Fig.8.3. Friday mosque, Na'in. Section(after SBU).

Fig.9.1. Tomb tower, Samīrān. Plan, section and elevation (after ICHO).

Fig.10.1. Gunbad-i Qābūs. Plan and section (after Tavasūlī).

Fig.10.2. Gunbad-i Qābūs. Elavation (after Tavasūlī).

Fig.11.1. Kashkān Bridge. Plan, northern and southern elevation (after Sajādī).

Fig.11.2. Kashkān Bridge. Proposed plan and northern elevation of original form (after Sajādī).

Fig.11.3. Kashkān Bridge. Sketch detail of construction (after Sajādī).

Fig.12.1. Masjid-i Kūshk, Firdaws Plan (after ICHO).

Fig.12.2. Masjid-i Kūshk, Firdaws. Proposed plan of original form (after ICHO).

Fig.13.1. Kūshk-i Raḥīmābād. Sketch plan and section (after ICHO).

Fig.14.1. Mosque at Bishāpūr. Proposed plan of original form (after ICHO).

Fig.15.1. Friday mosque, Nīrīz. Plan and section (after SBU).

Fig.15.2. Friday mosque, Nīrīz. Axonometric view (after SBU).

Fig.16.1. Friday mosque, Simnan. Plan (after SBU).

Fig.16.2. Friday mosque, Simnan. Section (after SBU).

Fig.16.3. Friday mosque, Simnan. Axonometric view (after SBU).

Fig.16.4. Friday mosque, Simnan. Map of findings of earlier buildings (after ICHO).

Fig.17.1. Ispī Masjid. Remains of the mosque (after Kishāvarz Khalīqī).

Fig.17.2. Ispī Masjid. Proposed plan of original form (after Kishāvarz Khalīqī).

Fig.17.3. Ispī Masjid. Proposed sections of original form (after Kishāvarz Khalīqī).

Fig.17.4. Ispī Masjid. Inscription band (after Kishāvarz Khalīqī).

Fig.18.1. Tom tower, Rādkān West. Plan and section (after SBU).

Fig. 19.1. Tom tower, Lājīm. Plan (after Godard), elevation (after ICHO).

Fig.20.1. Pīr-i ‘Alamdār. Plan, section and elevation (after Adle and Melikian-Chirvani).

Fig. 21.1.Davāzdah Imām. Plan and section (after SBU).

Fig. 21.2.Davāzdah Imām. Northern elevation (after SBU).

Fig. 22.1. Chihil Dukhtarān. Plan, section and elevation (after Adle and Melikian-Chirvani).

Fig. 23.1. Gunbad-i ‘Alī . Plan and section (after SBU).

Fig. 23.2. Gunbad-i ‘Alī . Eastern elevation (after SBU).

Fig. 24.1. Caravansarai at Muḥammadābād. Plan (after ICHO).

Fig. 24.2. Caravansarai at Muḥammadābād. Section (after ICHO).

Fig. 25.1. Pīr-i Ḥamza Sabzpūsh. Plan and section (after ICHO).

Fig. 26.1. Mausoleum at Sangbast. Plan and section (after ICHO).

Fig. 26.2. Mausoleum at Sangbast. South-western elevation (after SBU).

Fig. 27.1. Tomb tower at Risgit. Plan and elevation (after ICHO).

Fig. 27.2. Tomb tower at Risgit. Detail of baked brick decoration (after ICHO).

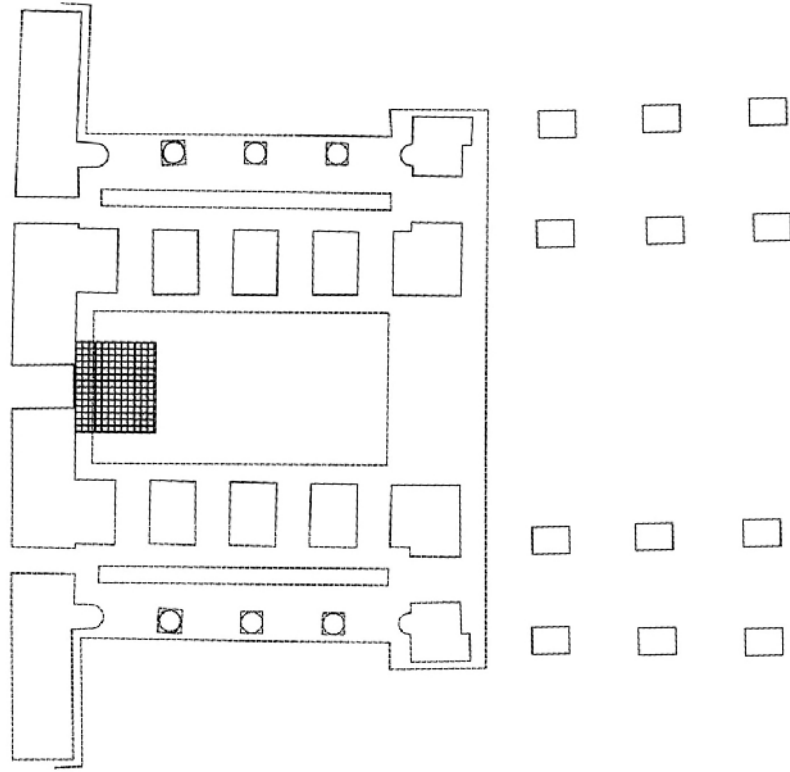


Fig.II.1. Qaṣr-i Shīrīn. The recent discovered plan of entrance (after ICHO).

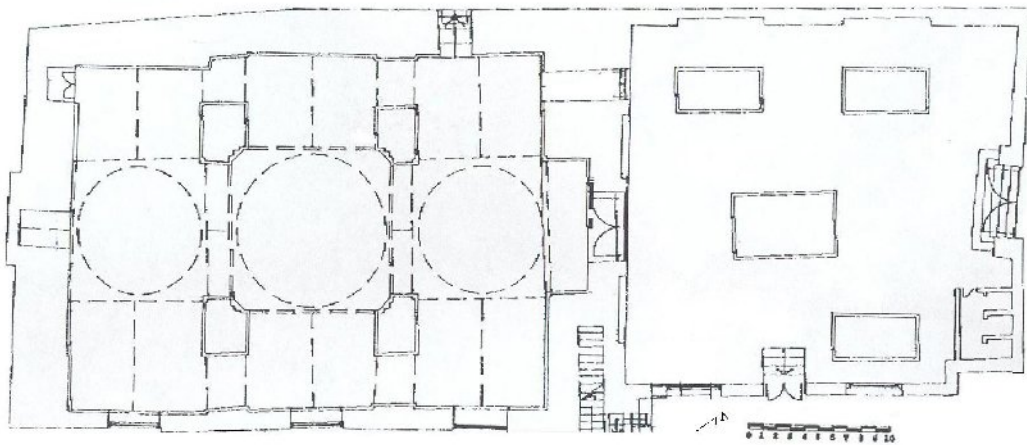


Fig.III.1. Friday mosque, Nihāvand. Plan (after ICHO).

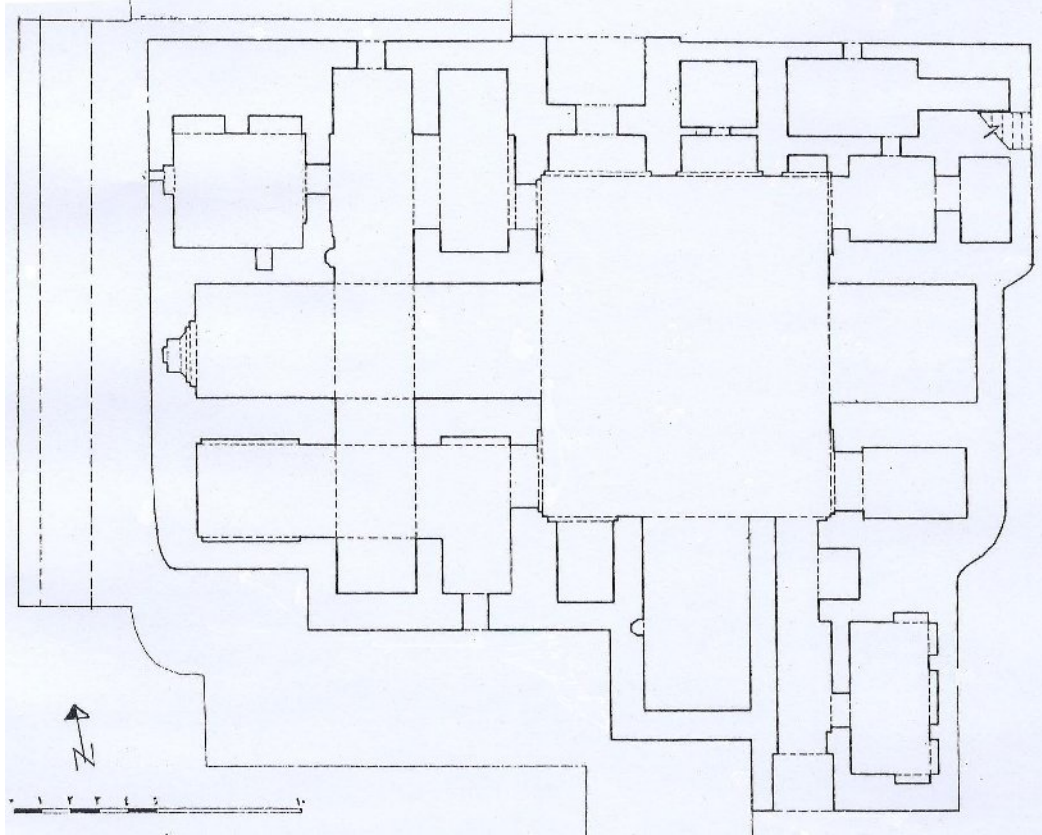


Fig.III.2. Friday mosque, Raqqa. Plan (after ICHO).

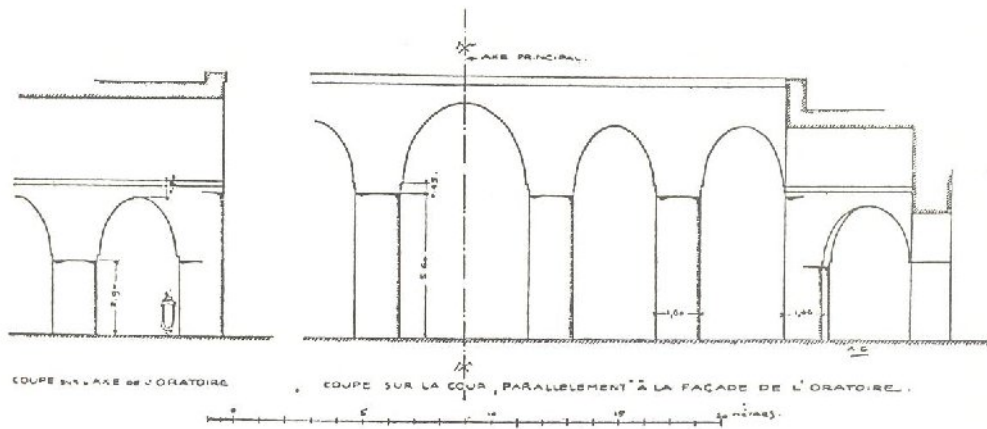
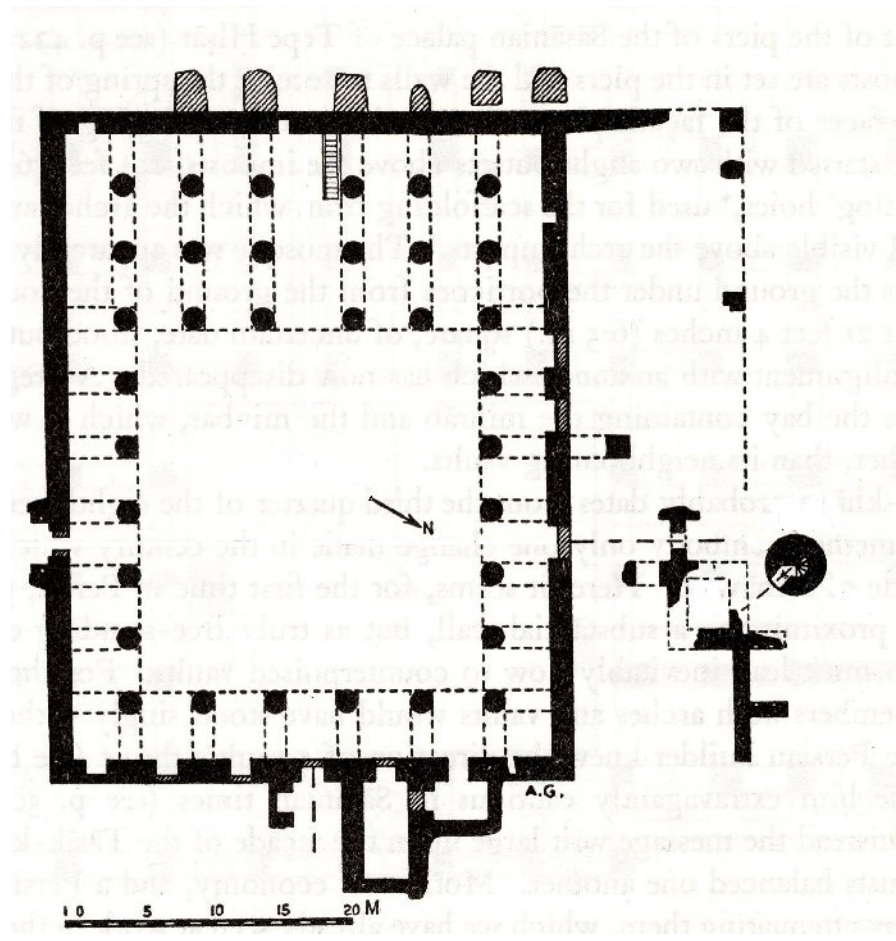


Fig.1.1. Tārī Khāna. Plan and Section (after Godard).

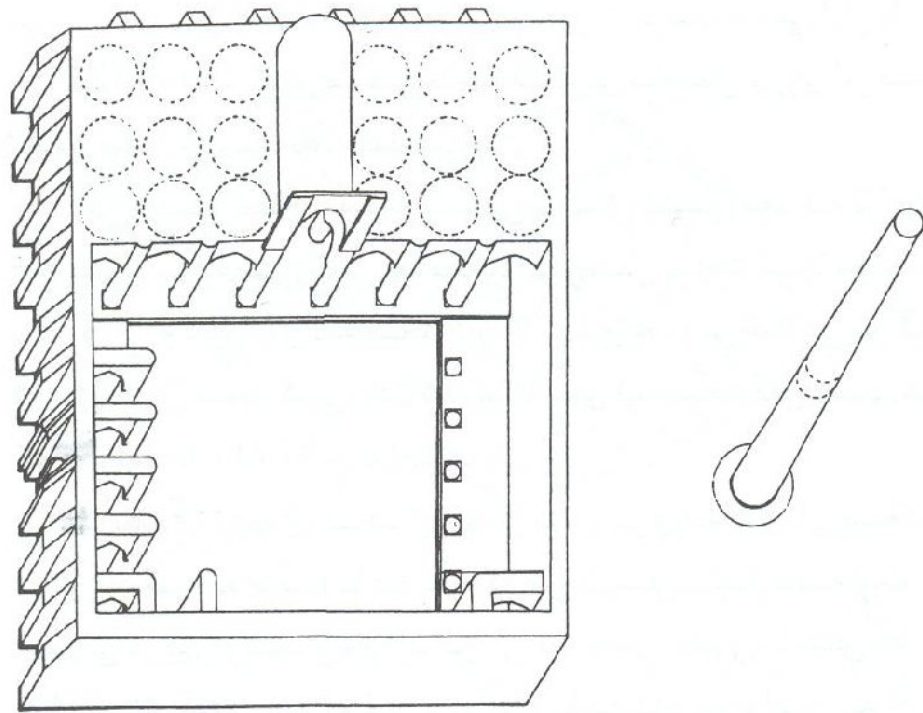


Fig.1.2. Tārī Khāna. Axonometric view (after Pīrniyā).

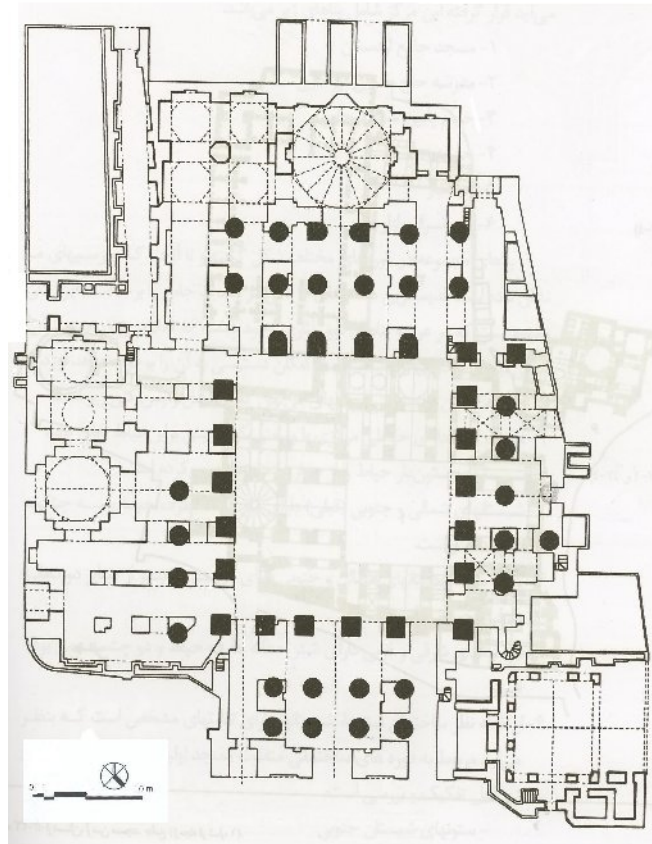
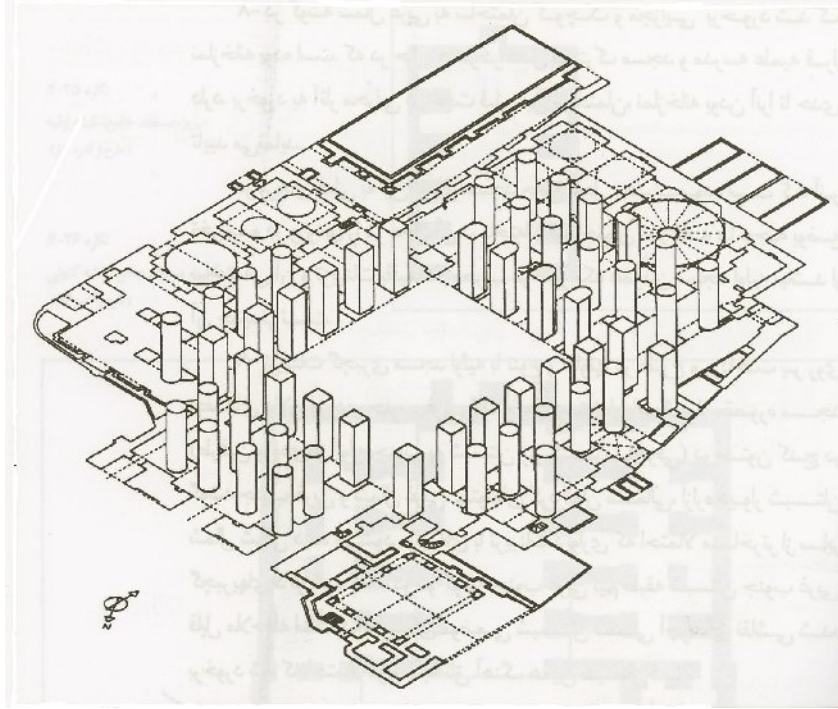


Fig.6.2. Friday mosque, Ardistan. Plan and axonometric view of destroyed piers (after Pīrniyā).

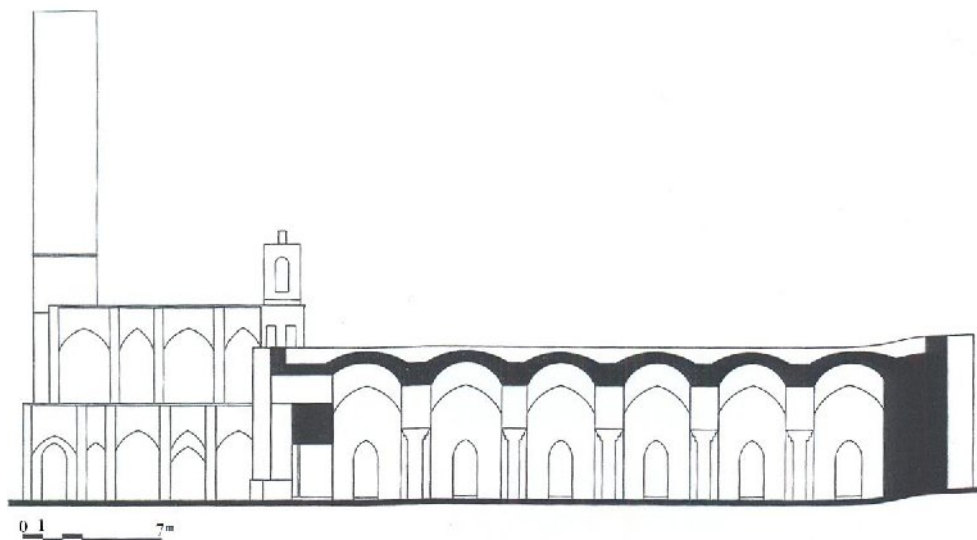
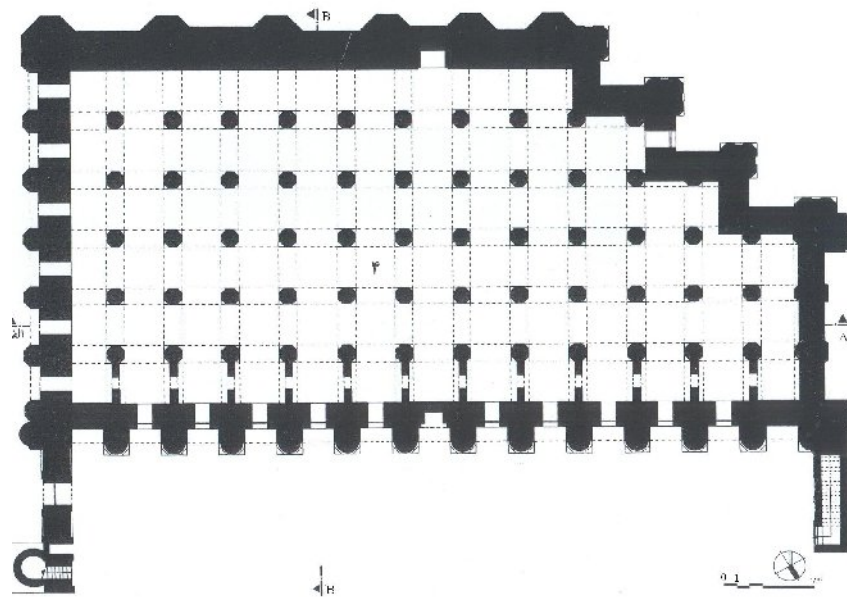


Fig.2.1. Friday mosque, Shūshtar. Plan and Section (after SBU).

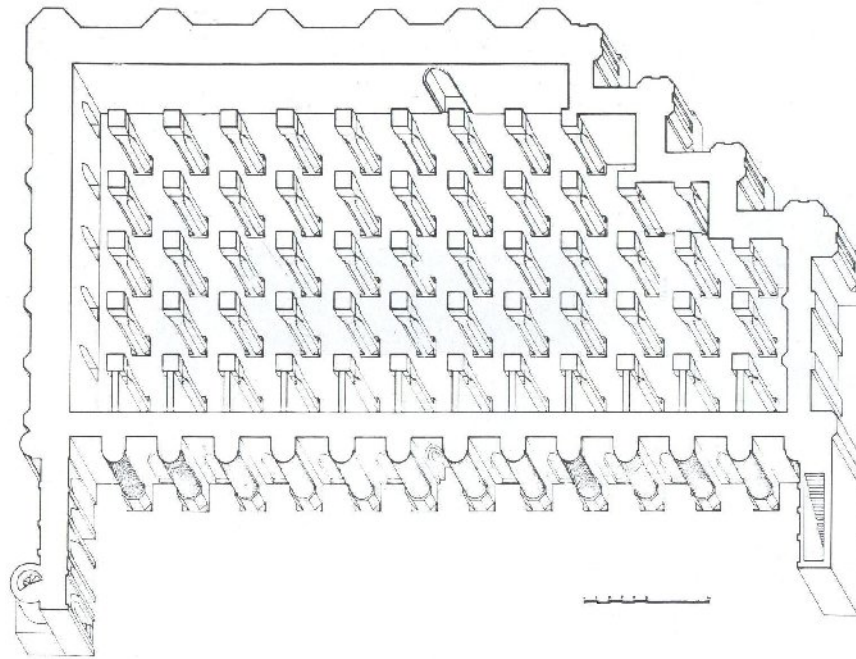


Fig.2.2. Friday mosque, Shūshtar. Axonometric cutaway of *shabistān* (after SBU).

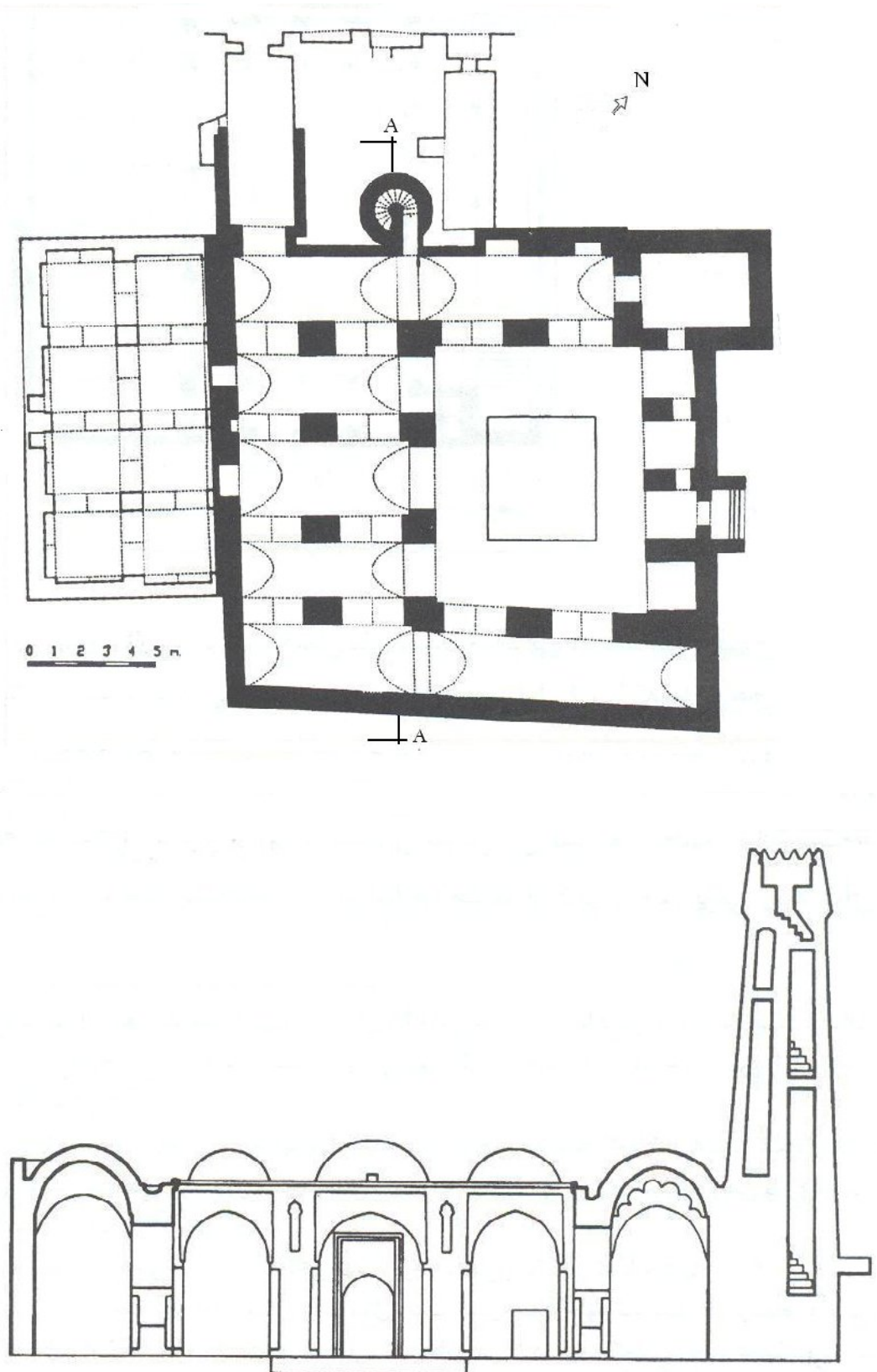


Fig.3.1. Friday mosque, Fahraj. Plan and section (after Pīrniyā).

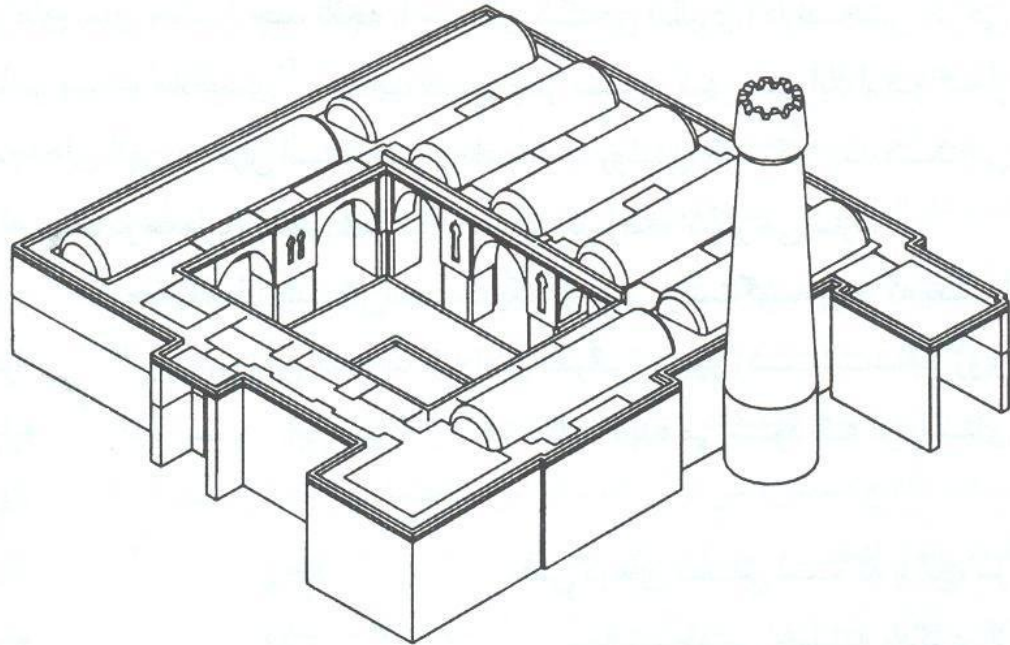


Fig.3.2. Friday mosque, Fahraj. Axonometric view (after Pīrniyā).

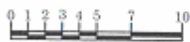
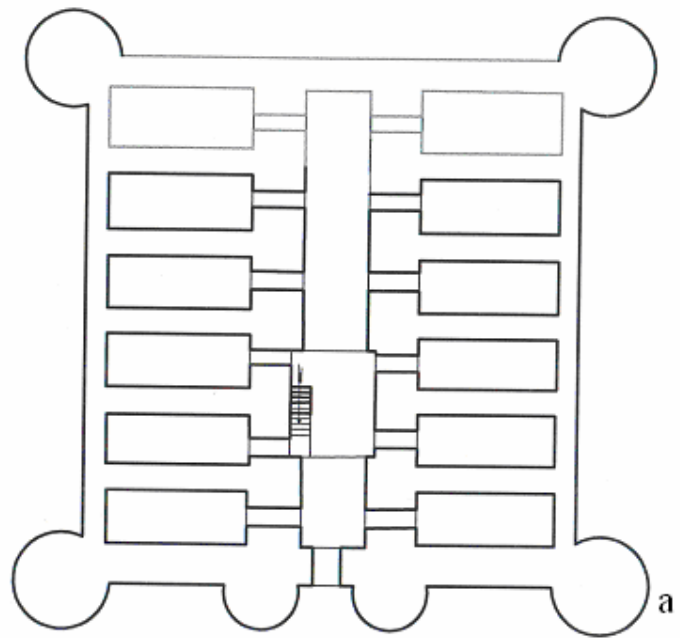
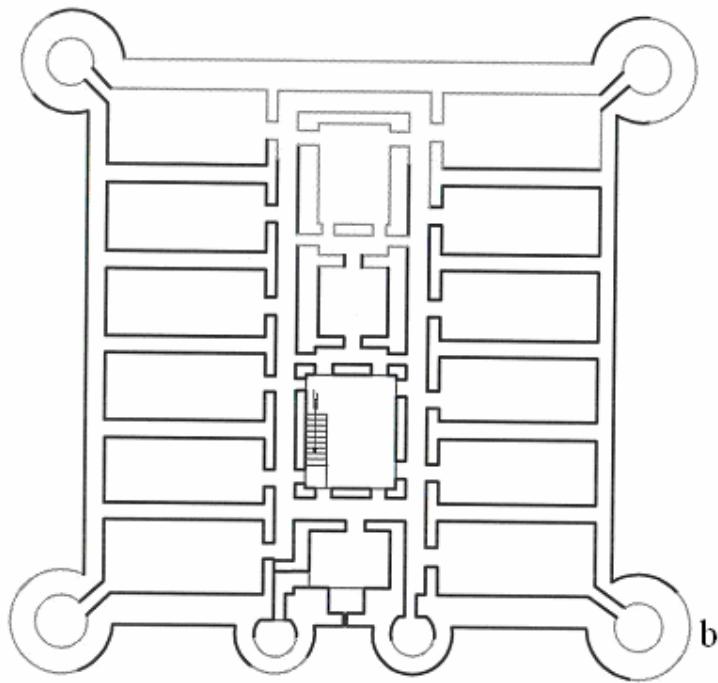


Fig.4.1. Qal'a-yi Ramūk. (a) Plan of ground floor, (b) Upper Floor (after ICHO).

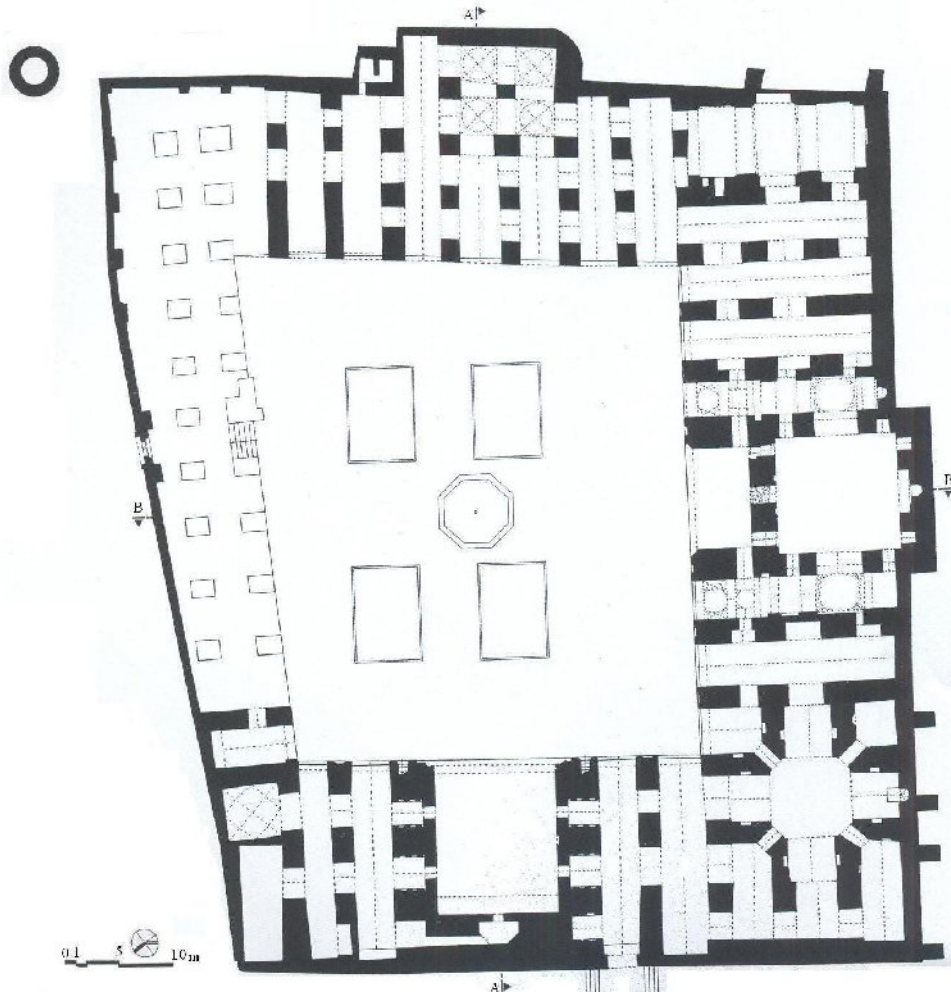
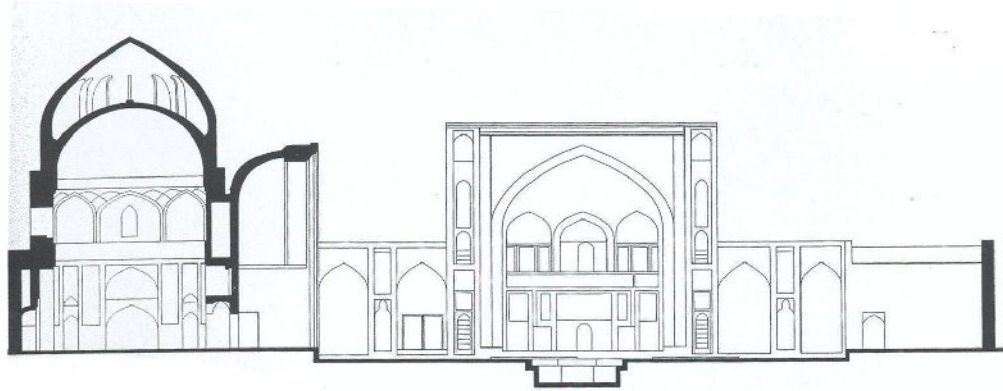


Fig.5.1. Friday mosque, Sāva. Plan and section (after SBU).

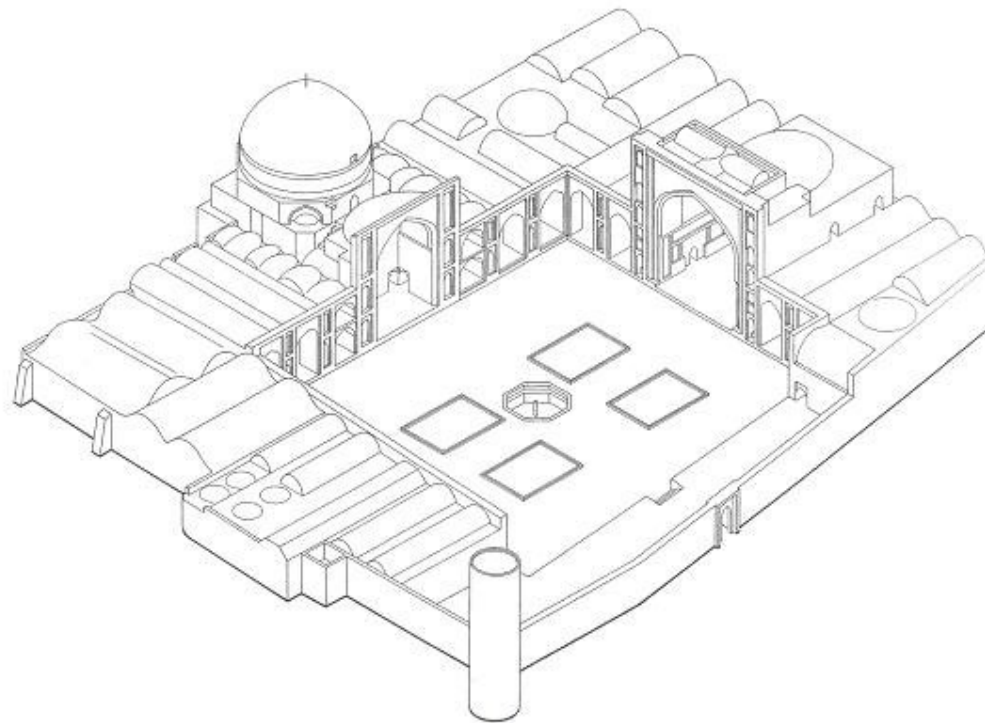
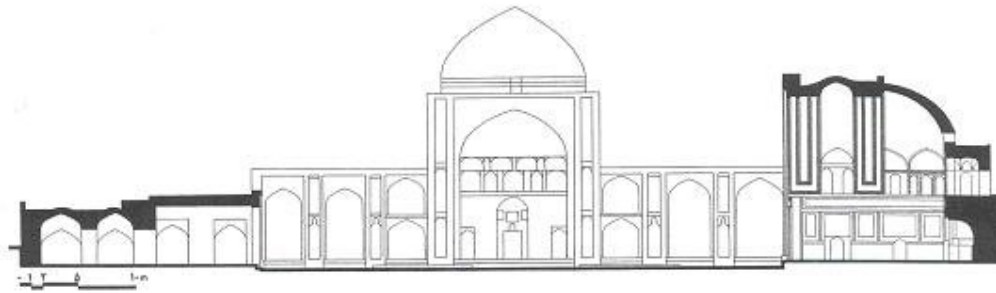


Fig.5.2. Friday mosque, Sāva. Section and axonometric view (after SBU).

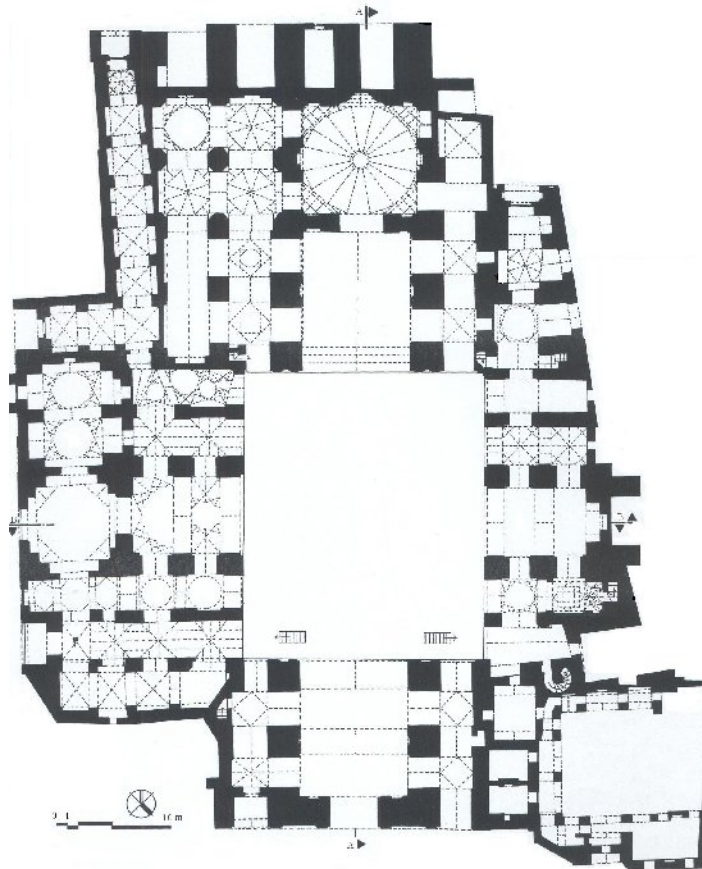
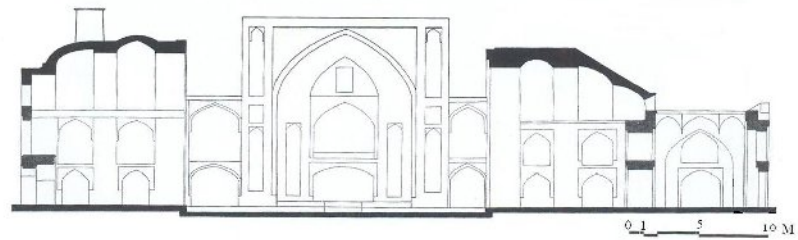
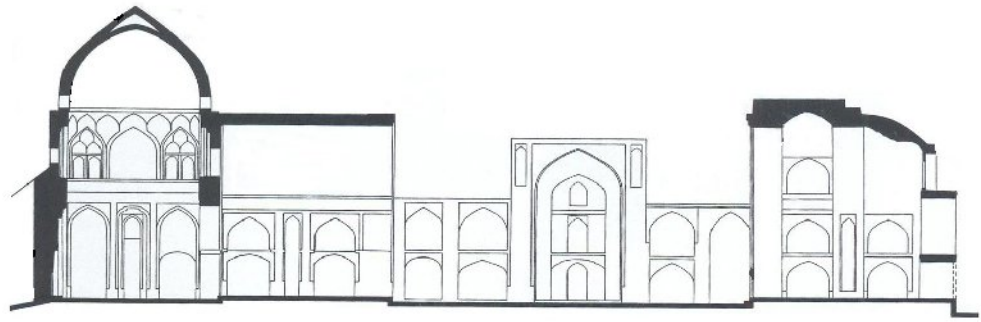


Fig.6.1. Friday mosque, Ardistan. Plan and sections (after SBU).

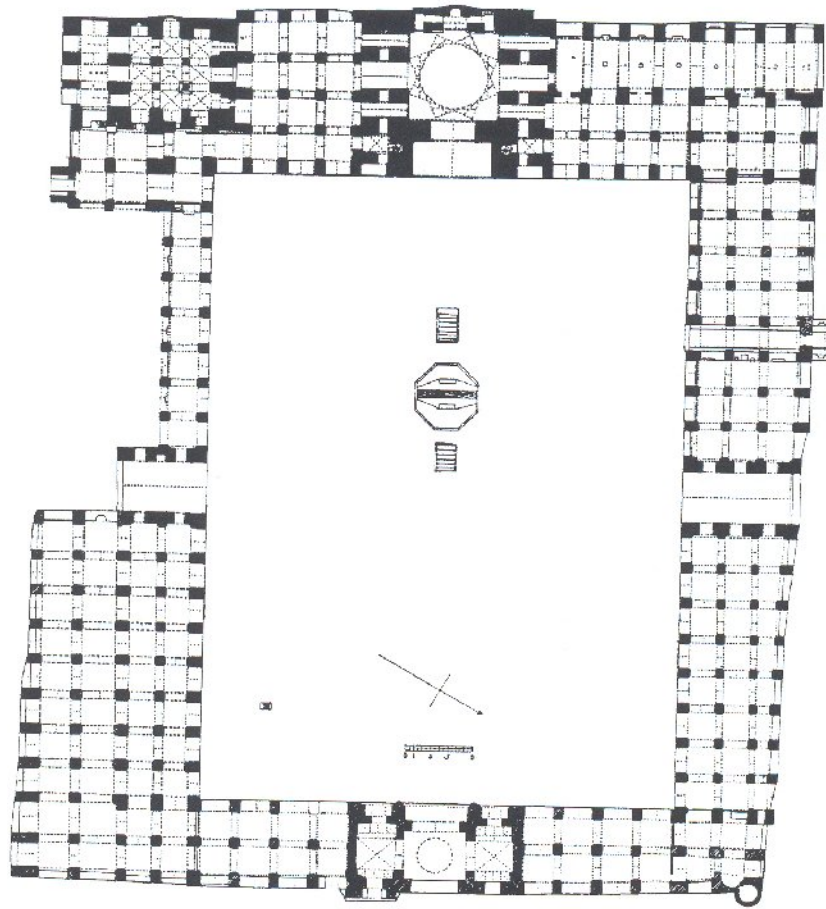


Fig.7.1. Masjid- Malik. Plan (after SPA).

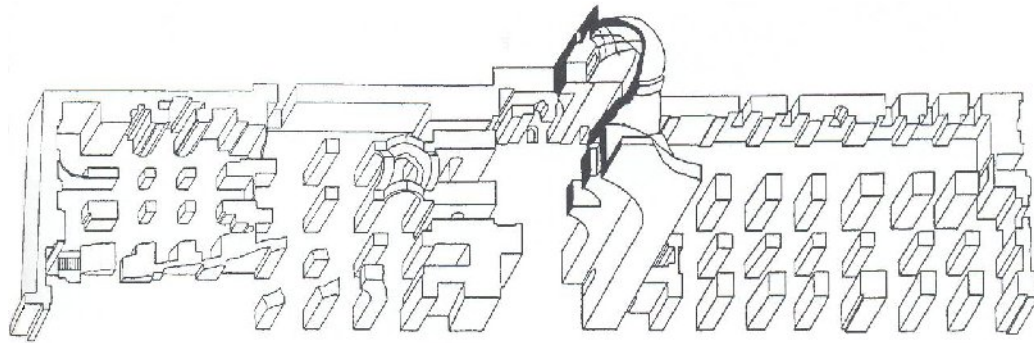


Fig.7.2. Masjid- Malik. Axonometric cutaway of *qibla iwān* (after ICHO).

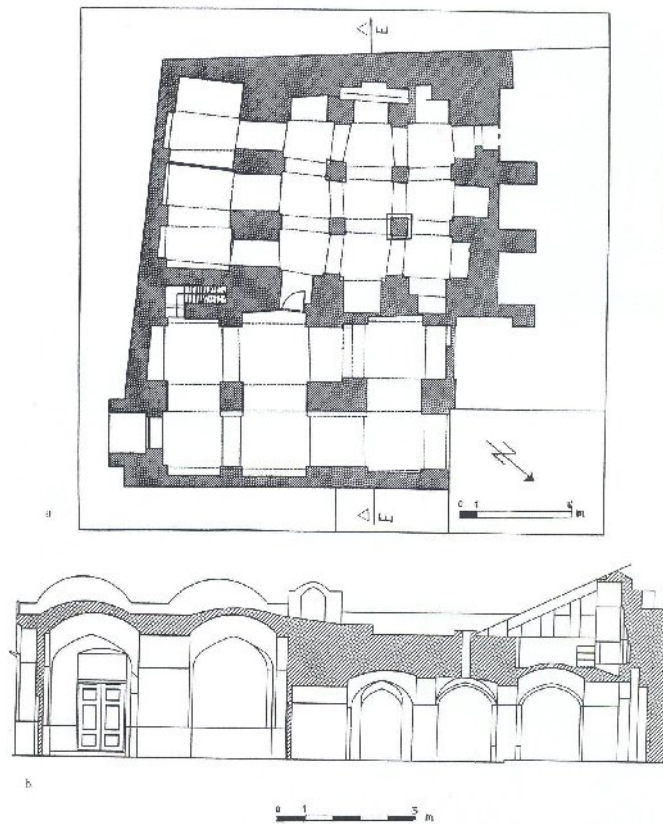


Fig.7.3. Masjid- Malik. Plan and section of SIH (after ICHO).

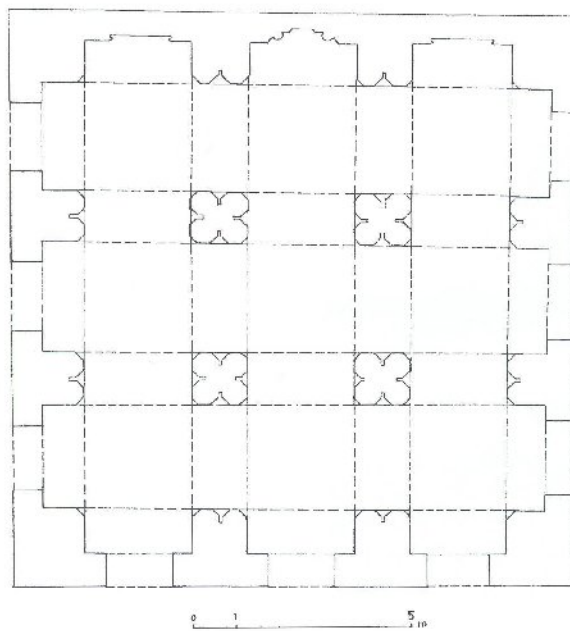


Fig.7.4. Masjid- Malik. Proposed plan of the original form of building above the SIH.

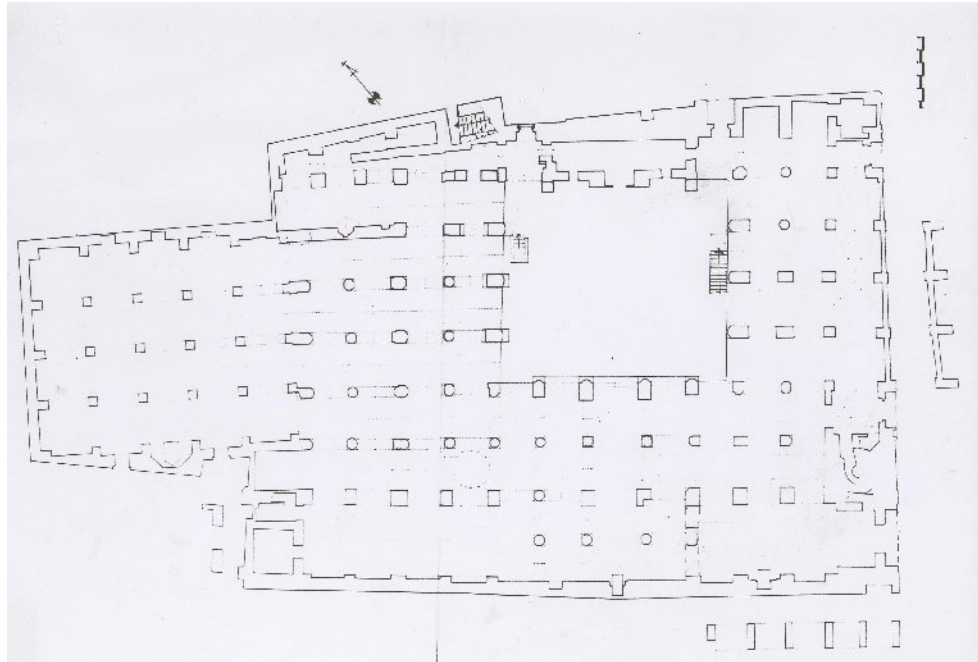


Fig.8.1. Friday mosque, Na'in. Plan of ground floor (after ICHO).

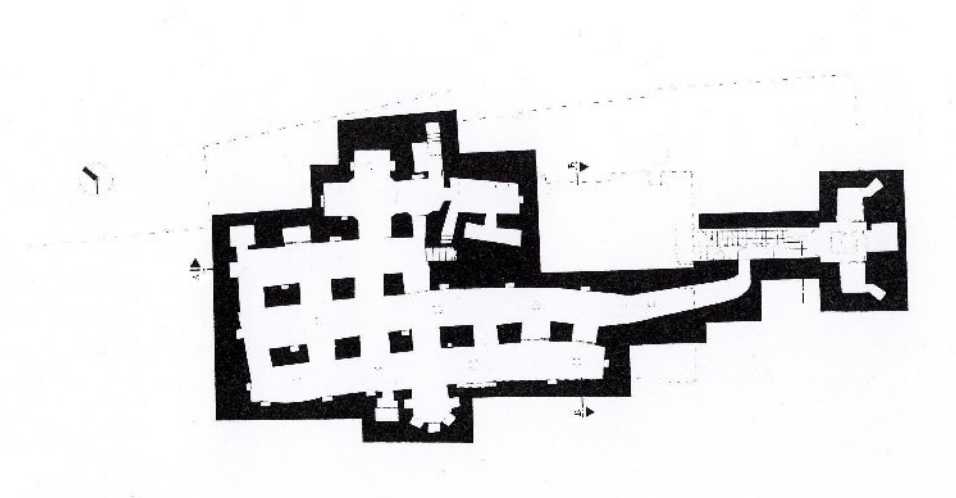


Fig.8.2. Friday mosque, Na'in. Plan of basement (after SBU).

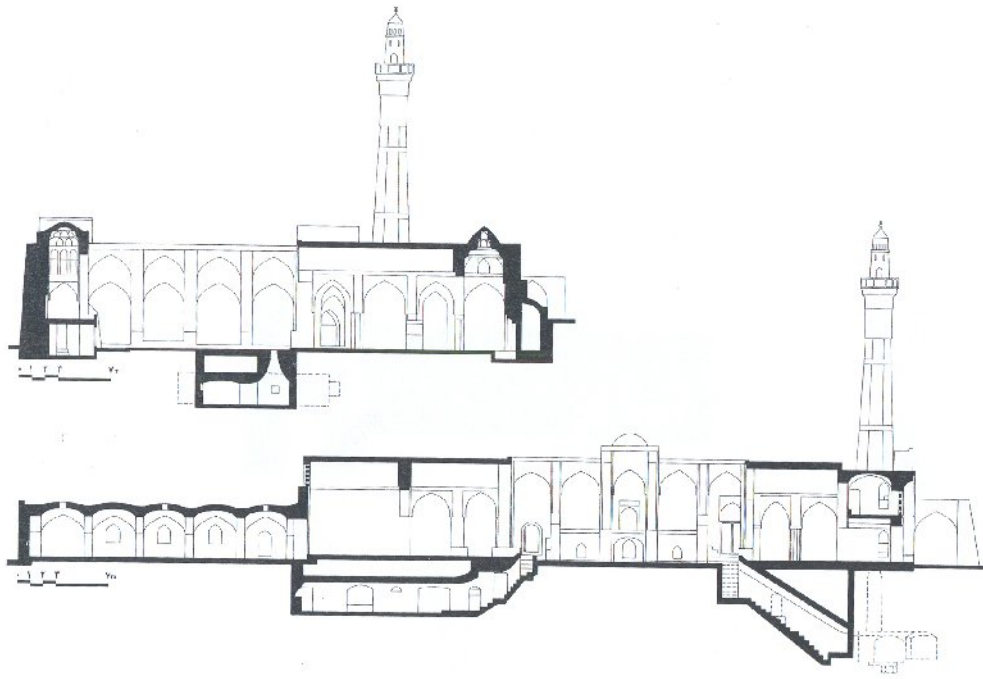
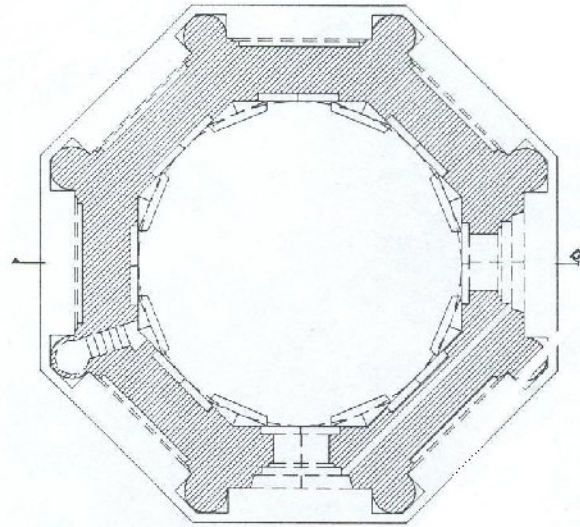
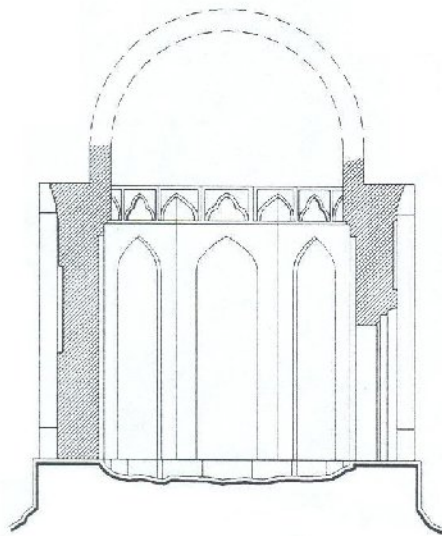


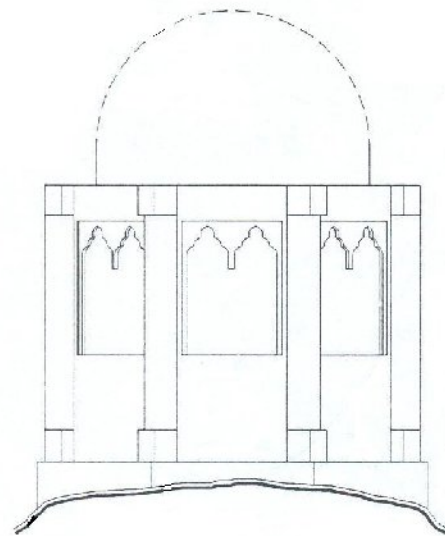
Fig 8.3. Friday mosque, Na'in. Section (after SBU).



Plan



Section



Elevation



Fig.9.1. Tomb tower, Samīrān. Plan, section and elevation (after ICHO).

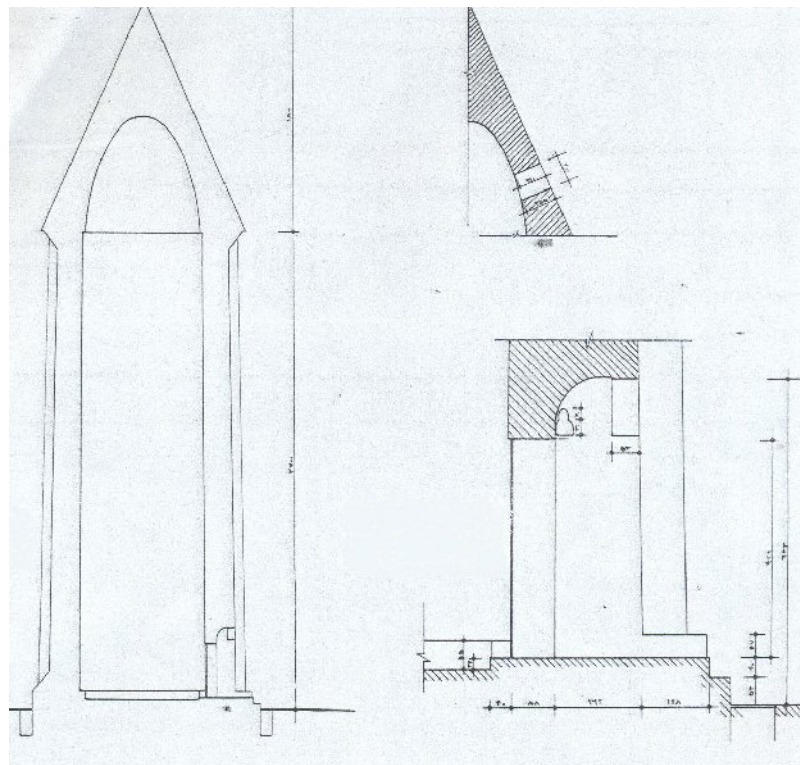
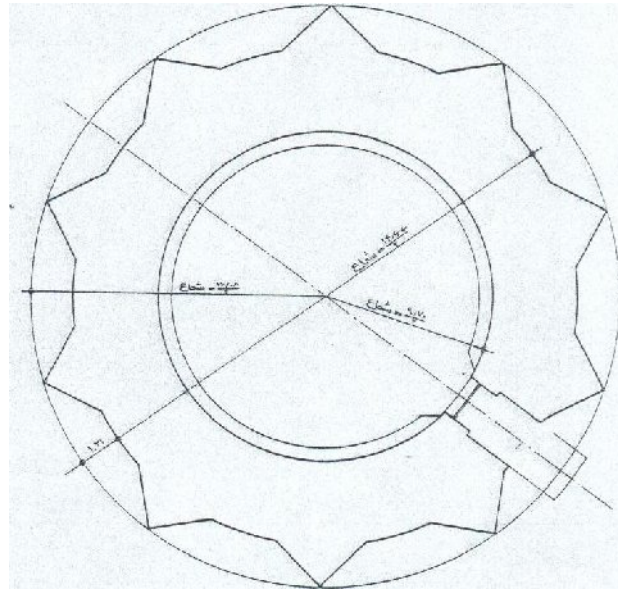


Fig.10.1. Gunbad-i Qābūs. Plan and section (after Tavasūlī).

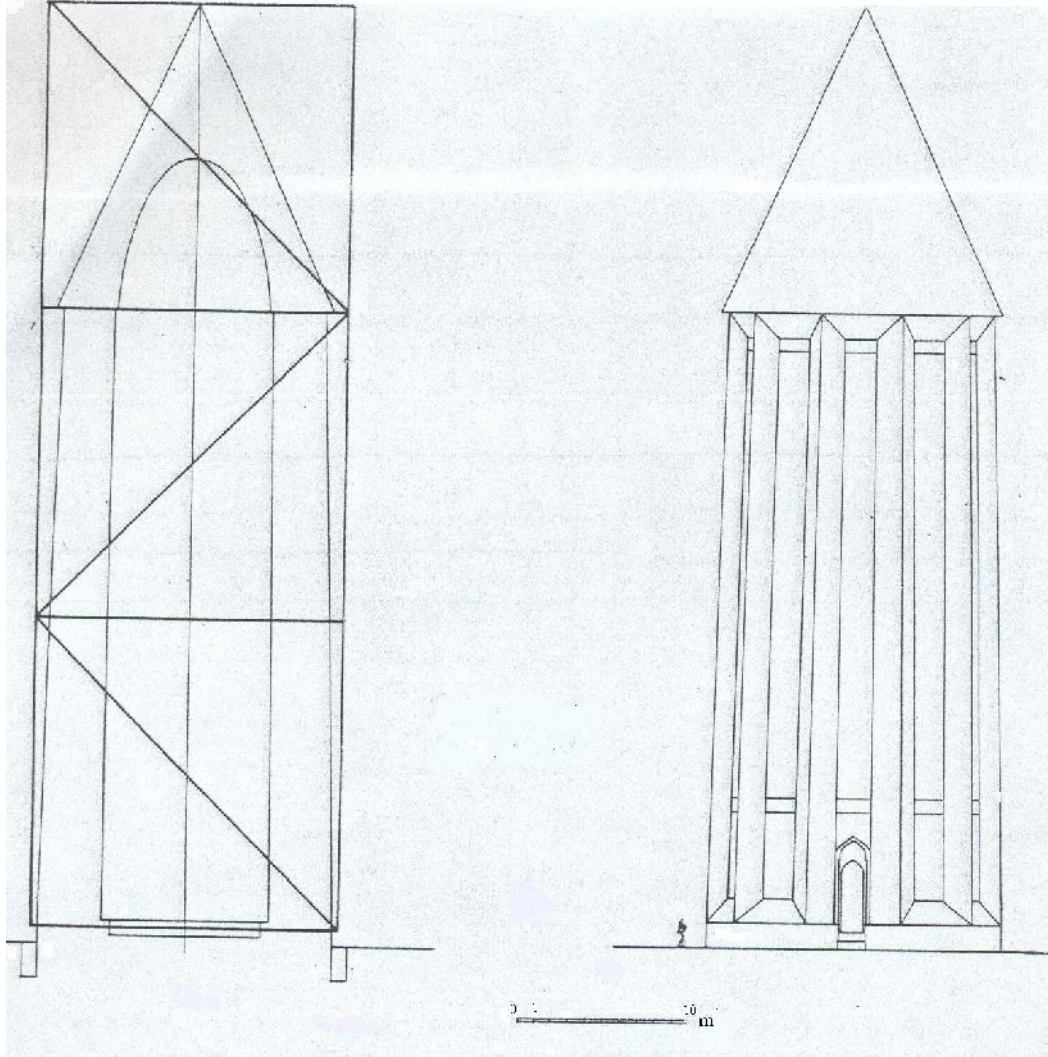


Fig.10.2. Gunbad-i Qābūs. Elavation (after Tavasūlī).

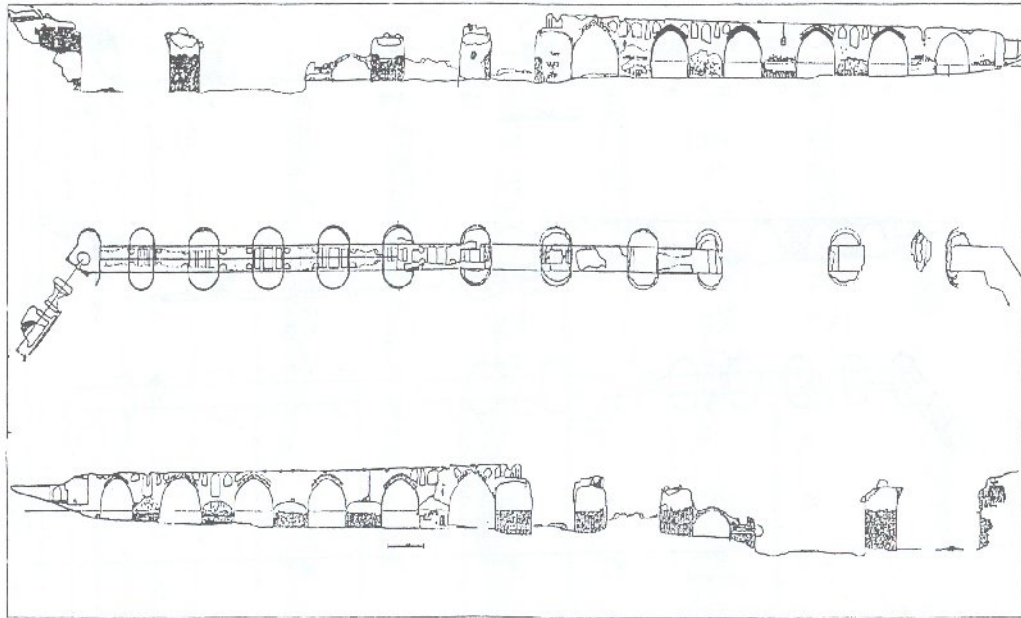


Fig.11.1. Kashkân Bridge. Plan southern and northern elevation (after Sajādī).

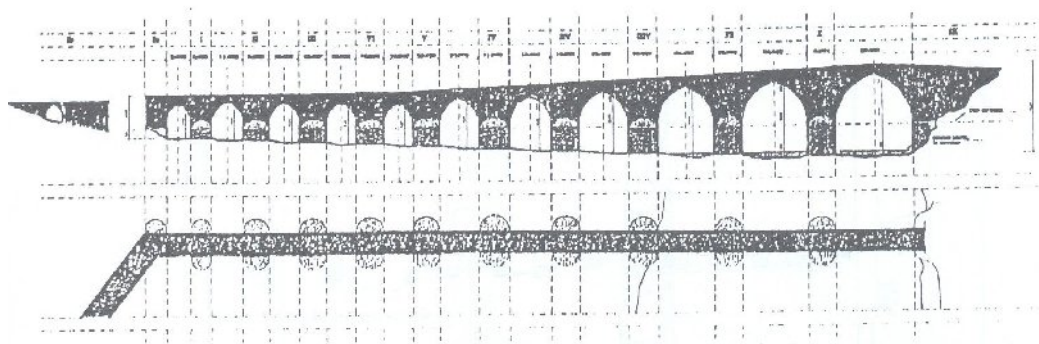


Fig.11.2. Kashkân Bridge. Proposed plan and northern elevation of original form (after Sajādī).

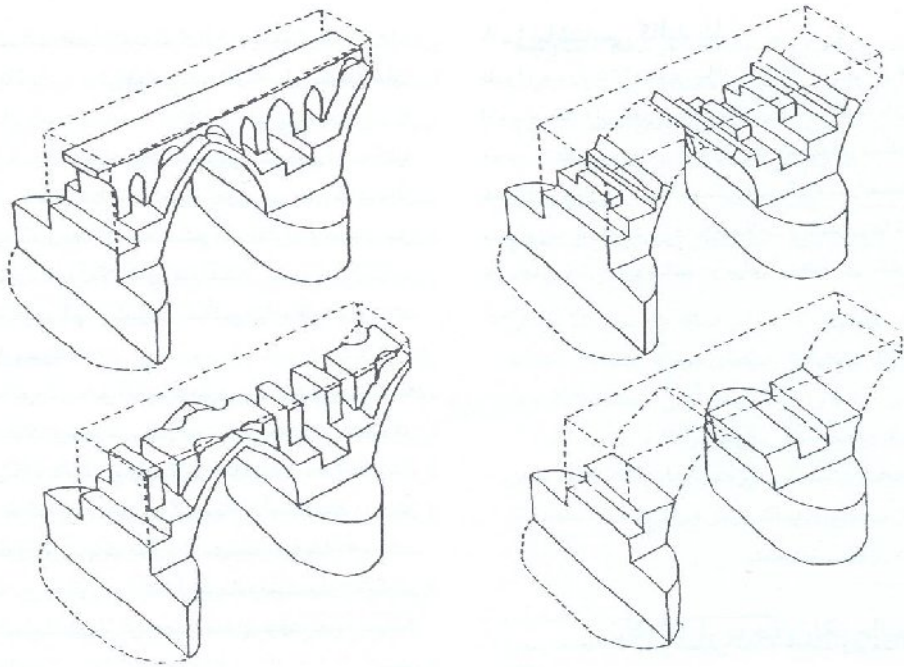


Fig.11.3. Kashkân Bridge. Sketch detail of construction (after Sajādī).

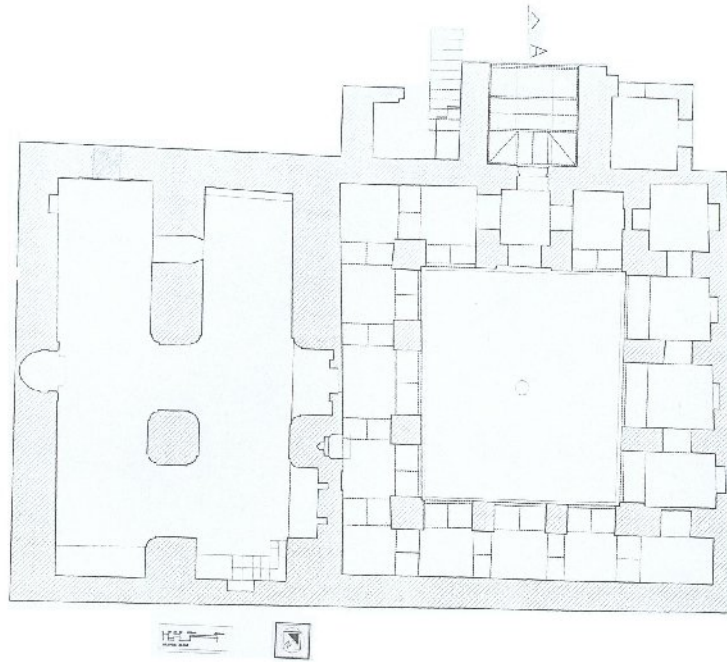


Fig.12.1. Masjid-i Kūshk, Firdaws Plan (after ICHO).

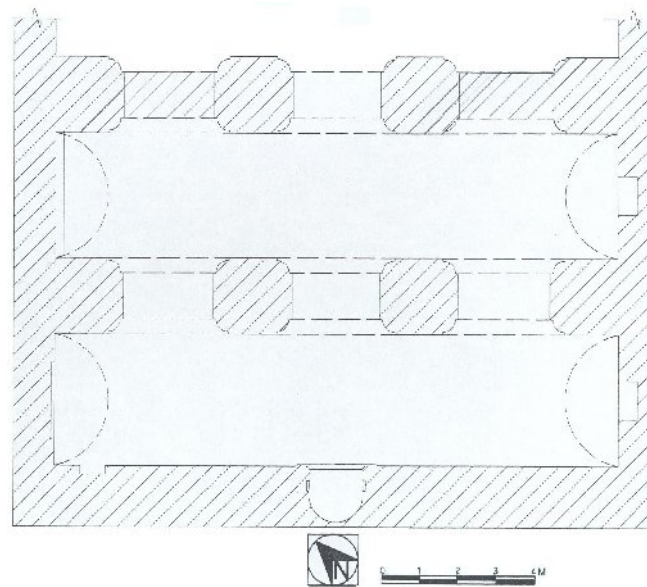


Fig.12.2. Masjid-i Kūshk, Firdaws. Proposed plan of original form (after ICHO).

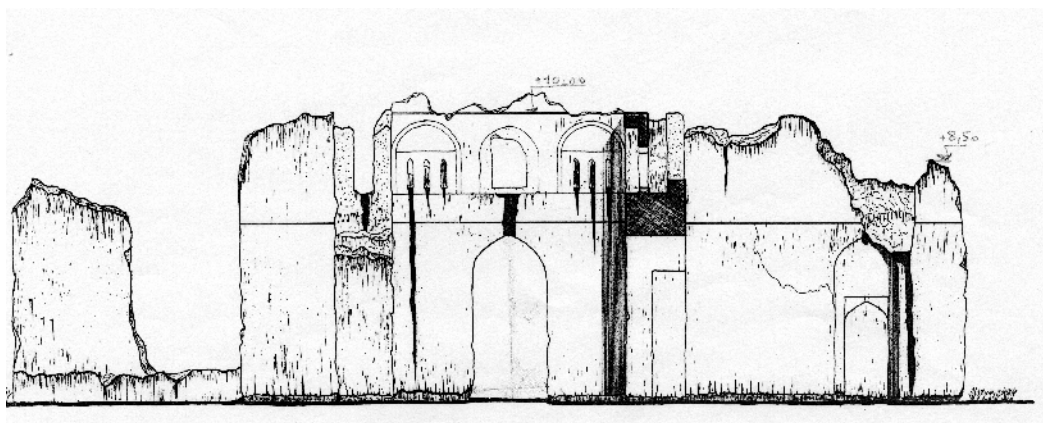
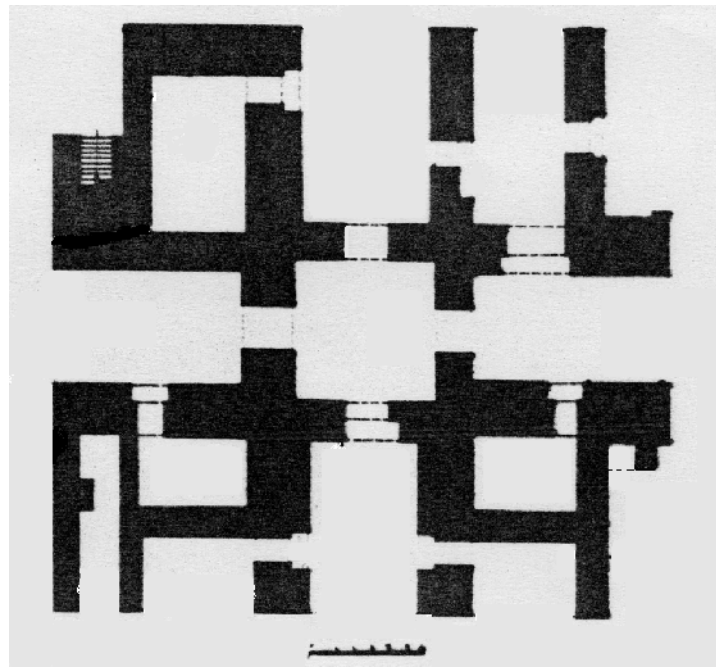


Fig.13.1. Kūshk-i Raḥīmābād. Sketch plan and section (after ICHO).

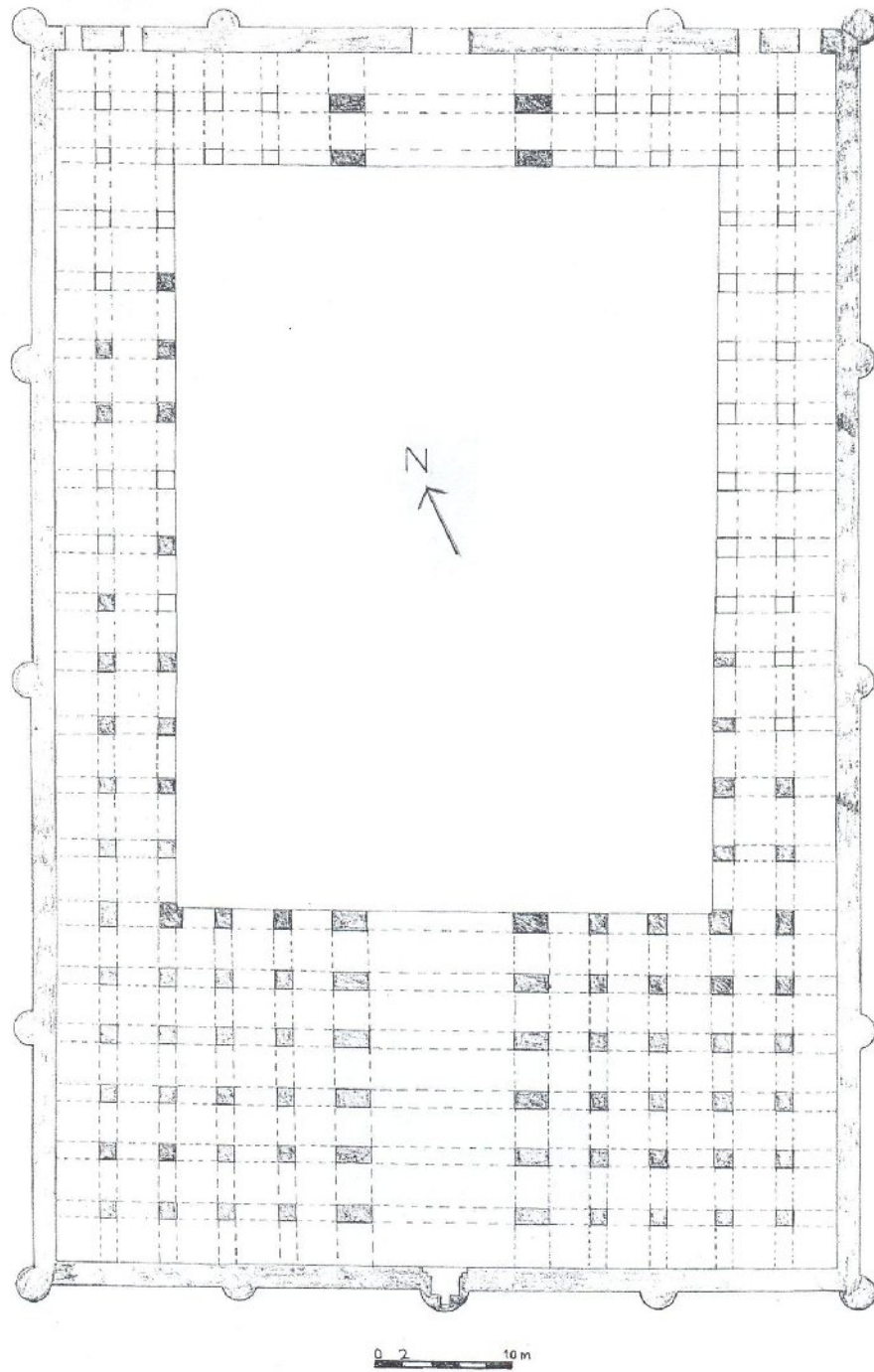


Fig.14.1. Mosque at Bishāpūr. Proposed plan of original form (after ICHO).

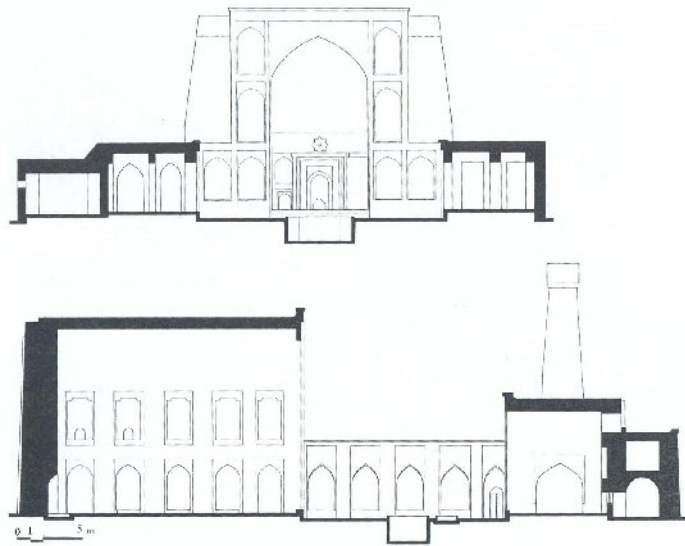
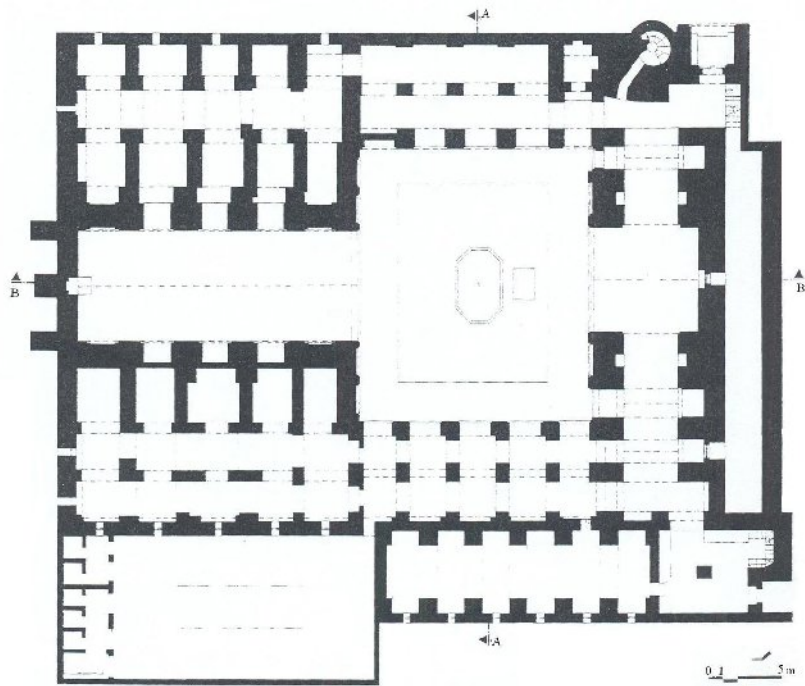


Fig.15.1. Friday mosque, Nīrīz . Plan and sections (after SBU).

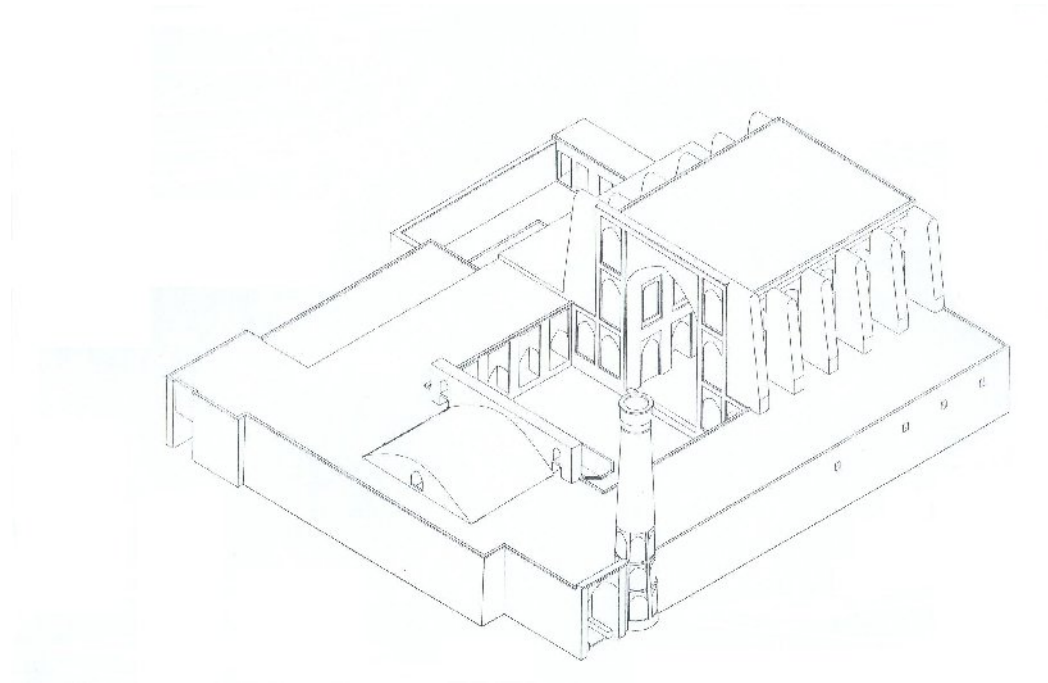


Fig.15.2. Friday mosque, Nīrīz. Axonometric view (after SBU).

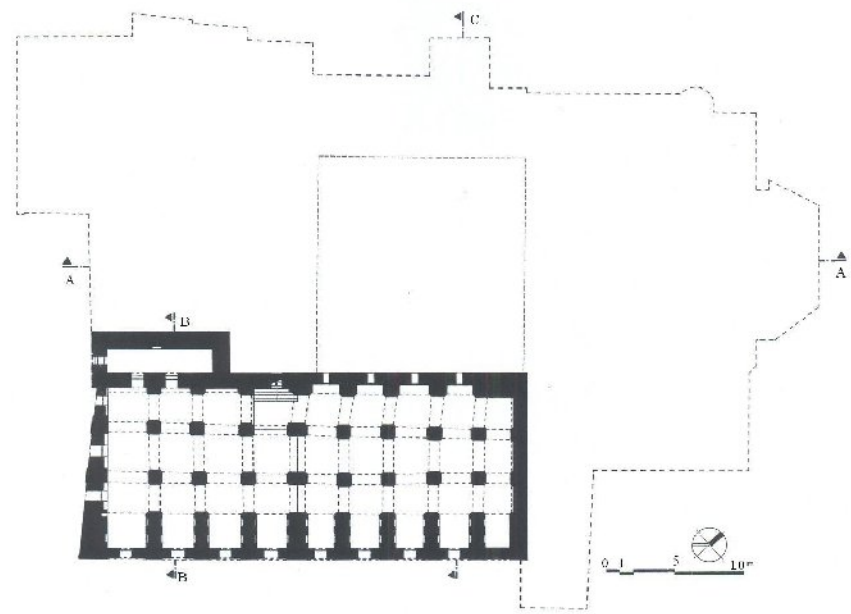
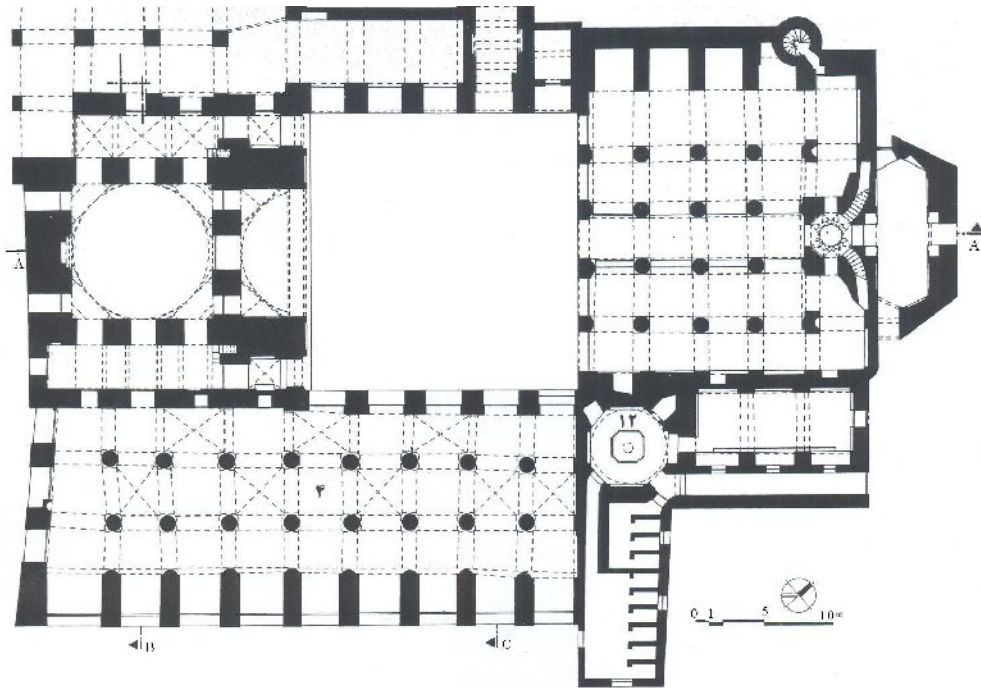


Fig.16.1. Friday mosque, Simnan. Plan (after SBU).

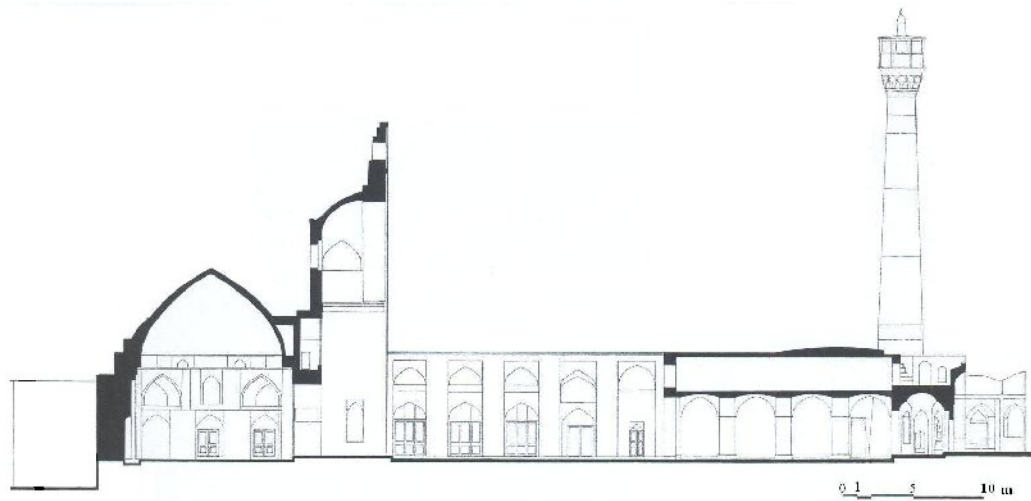


Fig.16.2. Friday mosque, Simnan. Section (after SBU).

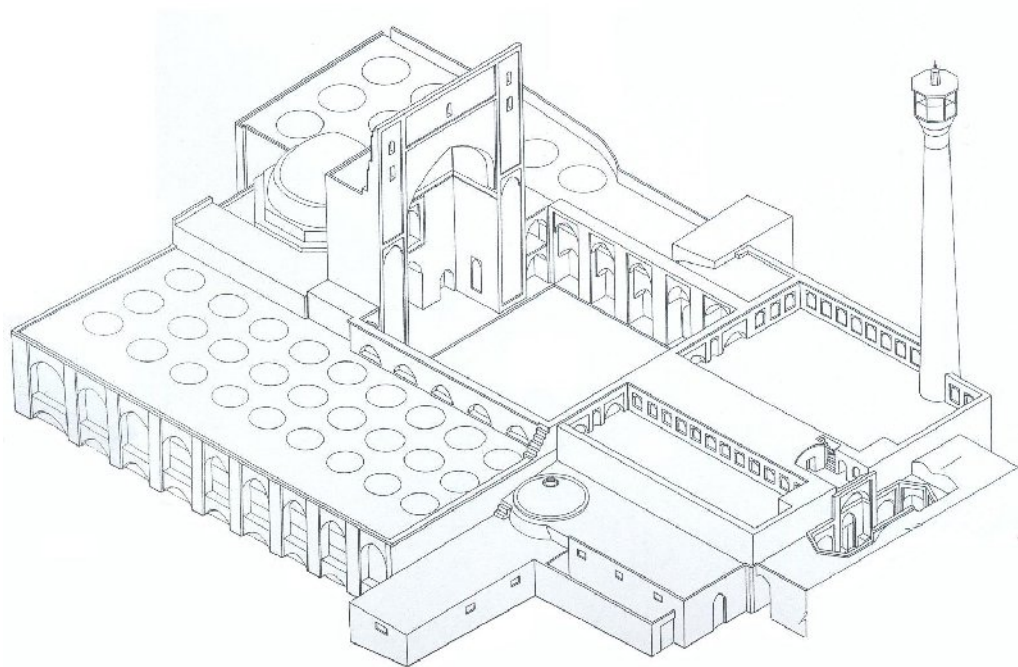


Fig.16.3. Friday mosque, Simnan. Axonometric view (after SBU).

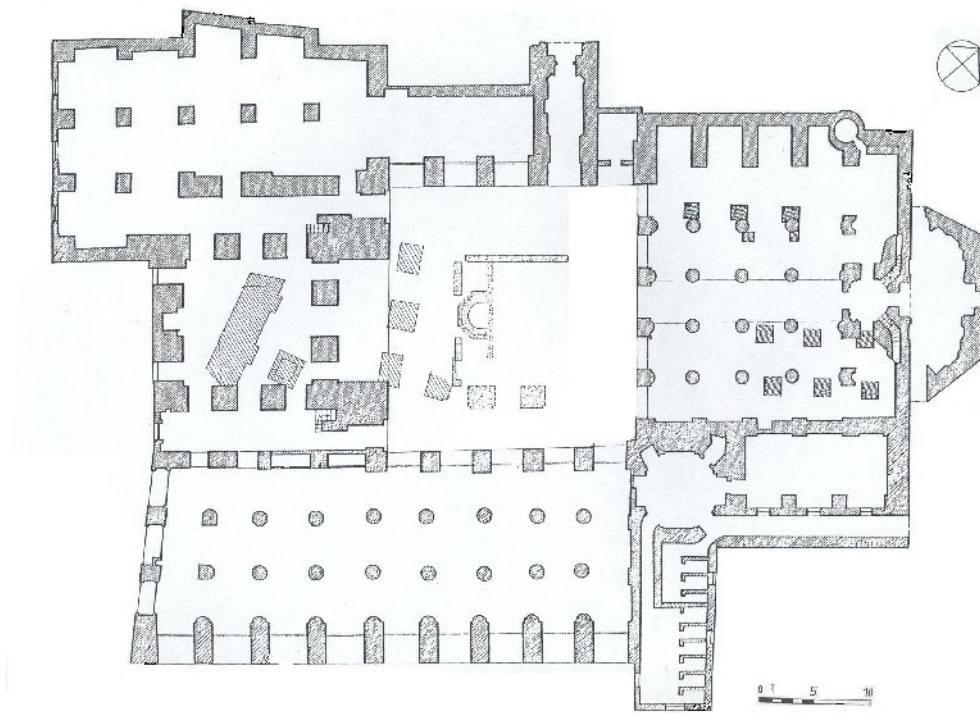


Fig.16.4. Friday mosque, Simnan. Map of findings of earlier buildings (after ICHO).

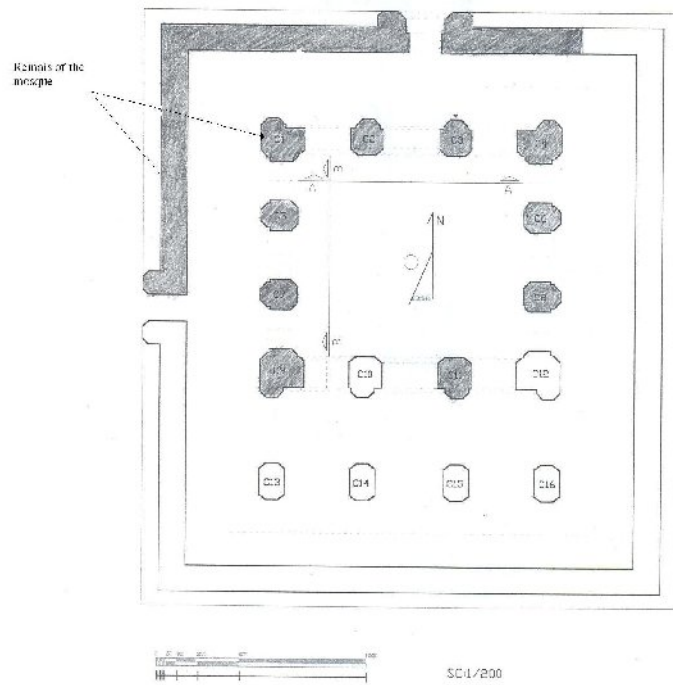


Fig.17.1. Ispī Masjid. Remains of the mosque (after Kishāvarz Khalīqī).

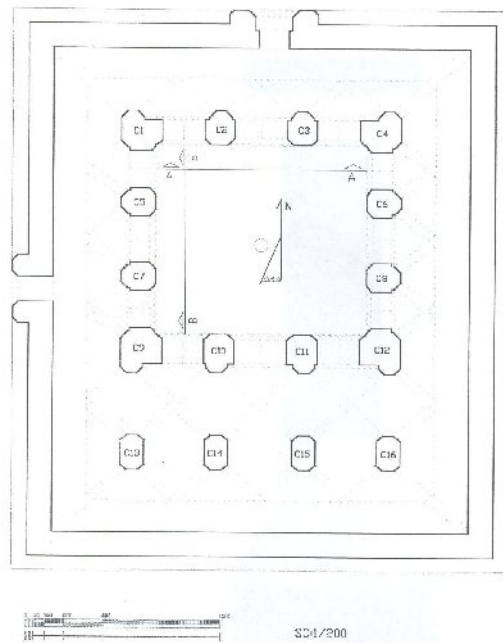
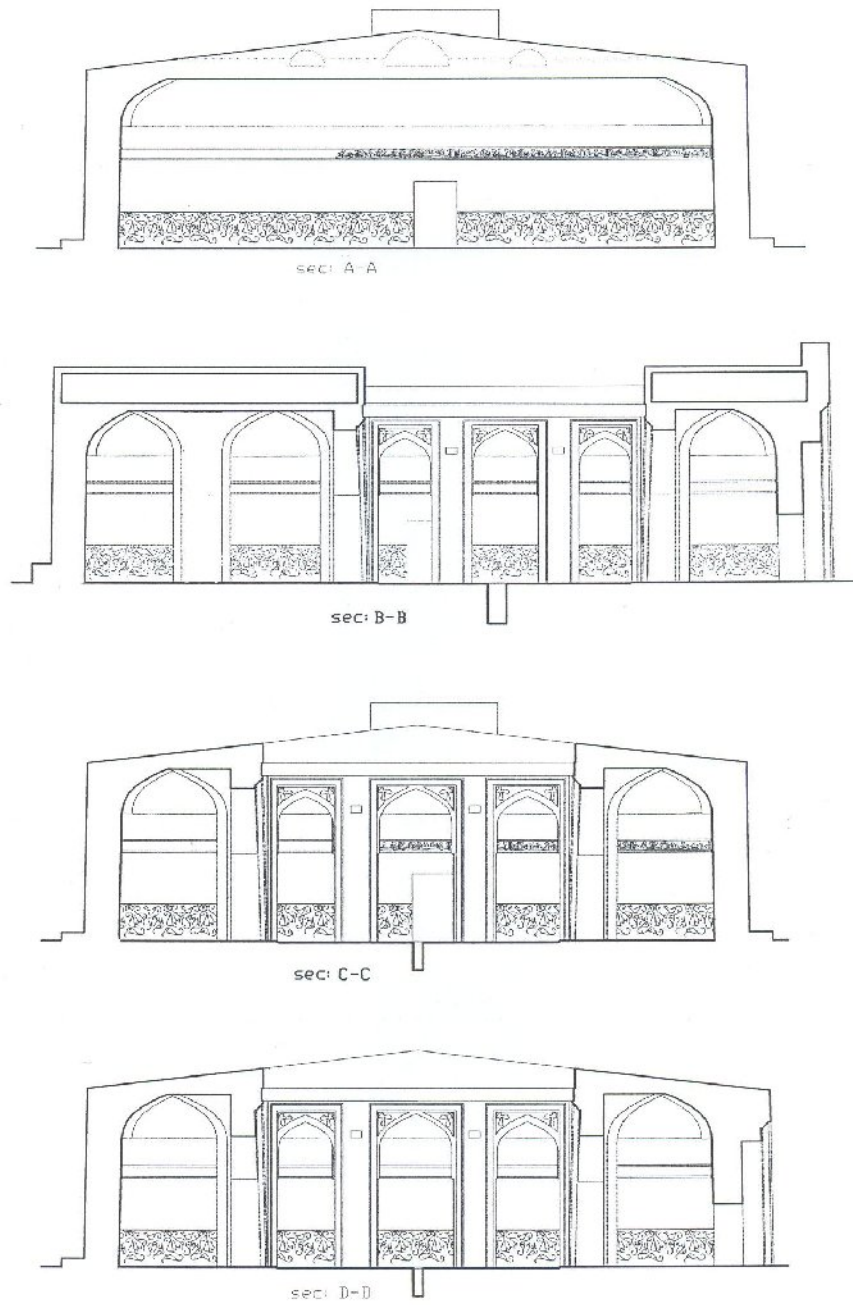


Fig.17.2. Ispī Masjid. Proposed plan of original form (after Kishāvarz Khalīqī).



SC1/200

Fig.17.3. Ispī Masjid. Proposed sections of original form (after Kishāvarz Khalīqī).

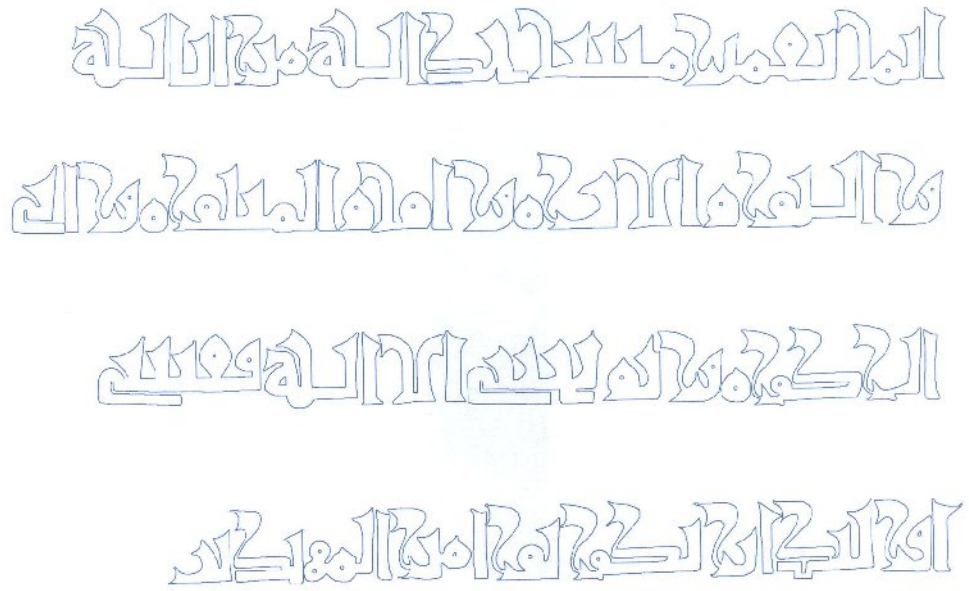


Fig.17.4. Ispī Masjid. Inscription band (after Kishāvarz Khalīqī).

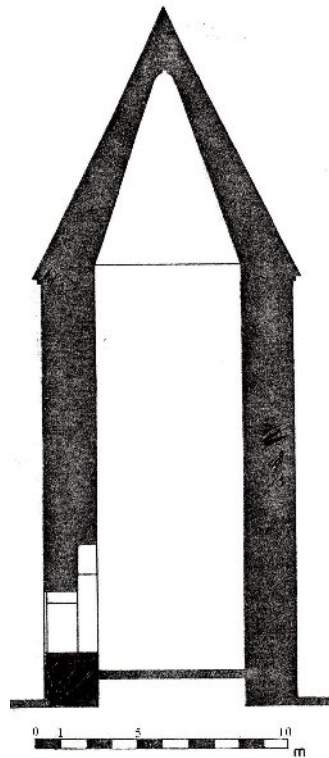
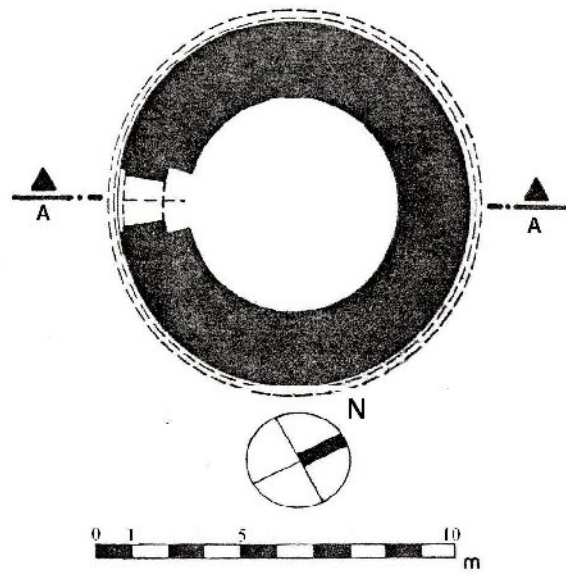


Fig.18.1. Tom tower, Rādkān West. Plan and section (after SBU).

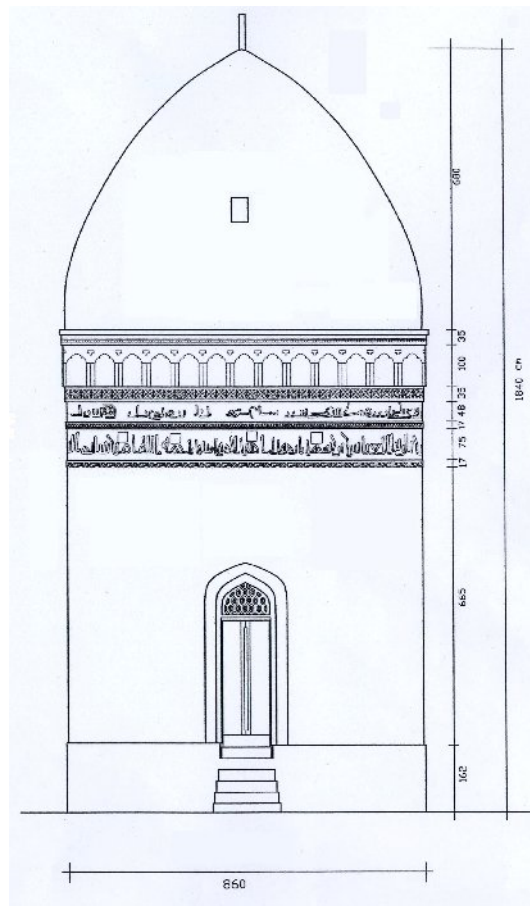
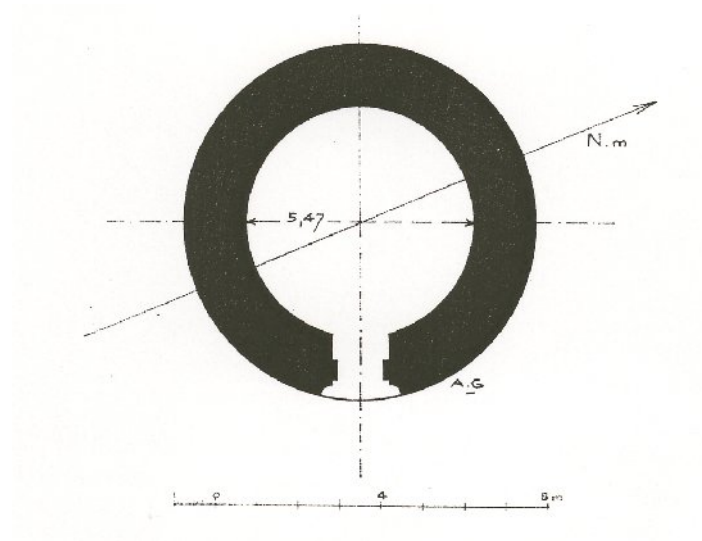


Fig. 20.1. Tom tower, Lājīm. Plan (after Godard), elevation (after ICHO).

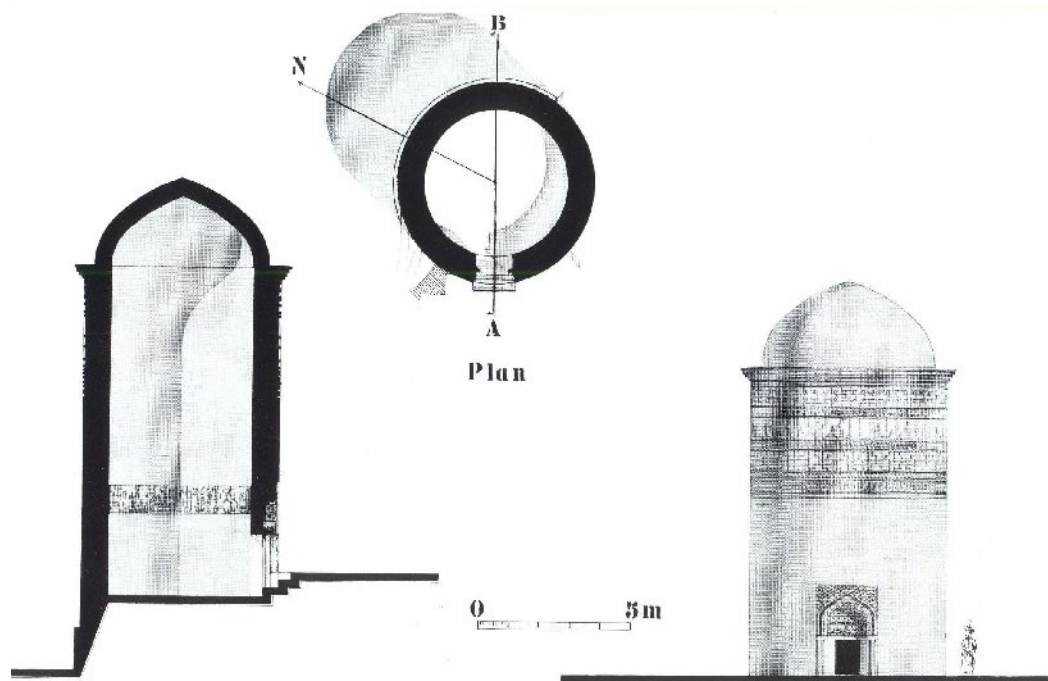


Fig.19.1. Pīr-i 'Alamdār. Plan, section and elevation (after Adle and Melikian-Chirvani) .

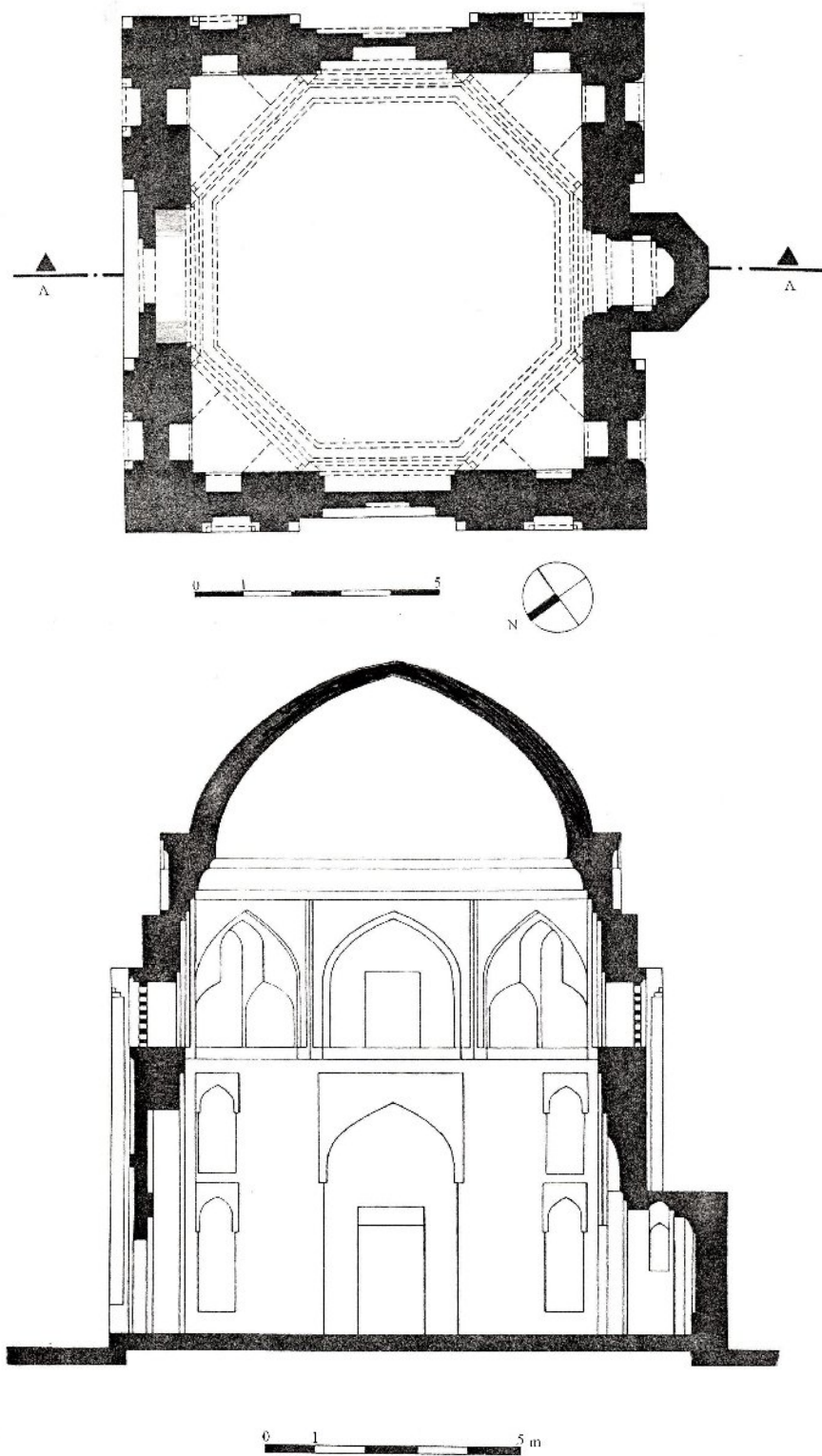


Fig. 21.1. Davāzdah Imām. Plan and section (after SBU).



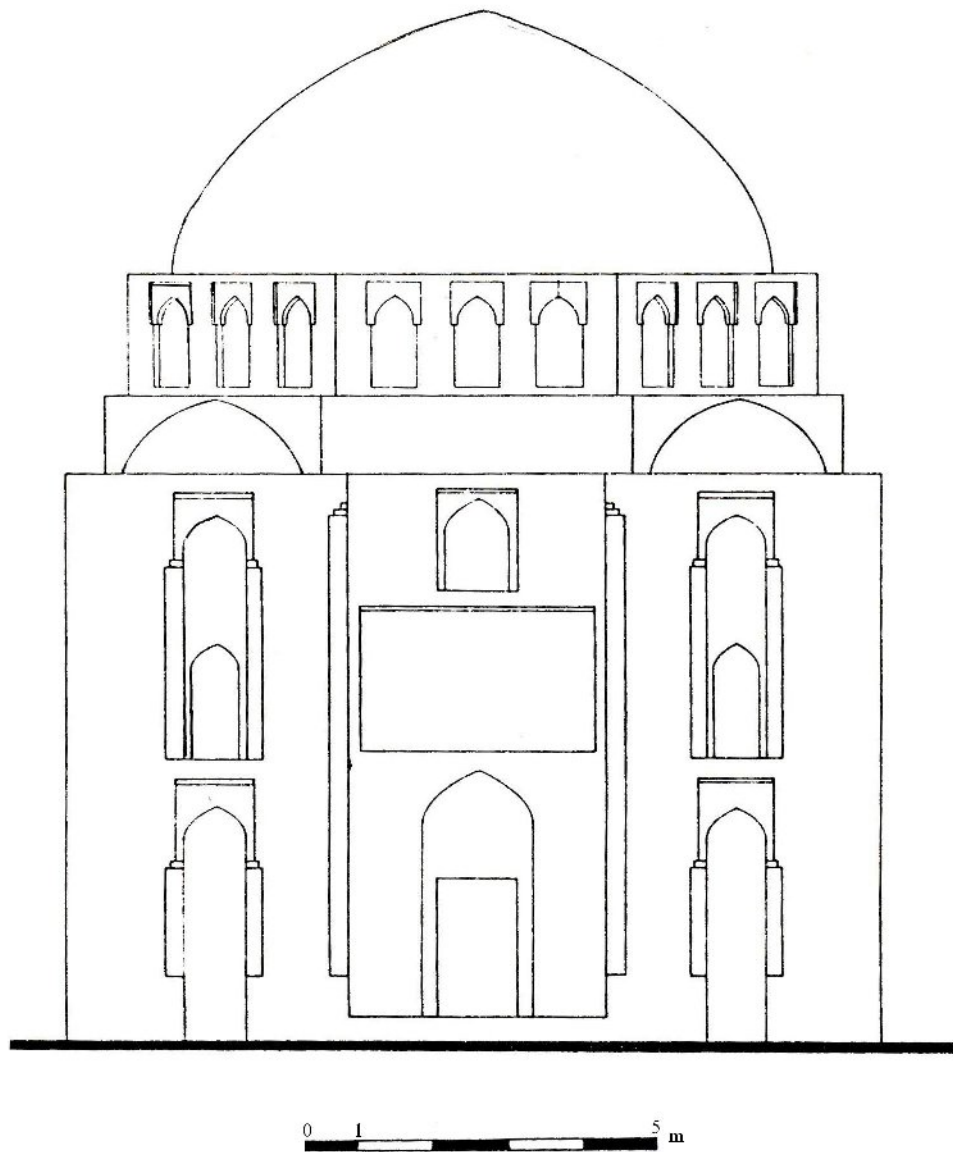


Fig. 21.2. Davāzdah Imām. Northern elevation (after SBU).

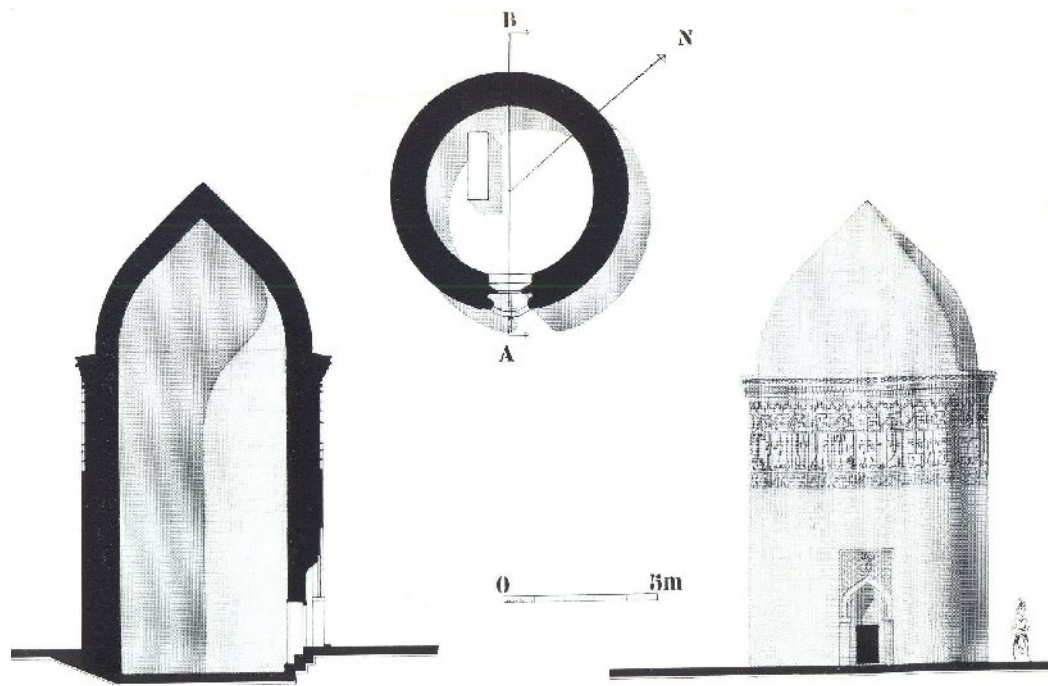


Fig. 22.1. Chihil Dukhtarān. Plan, section and elevation (after Adle and Melikian-Chirvani).

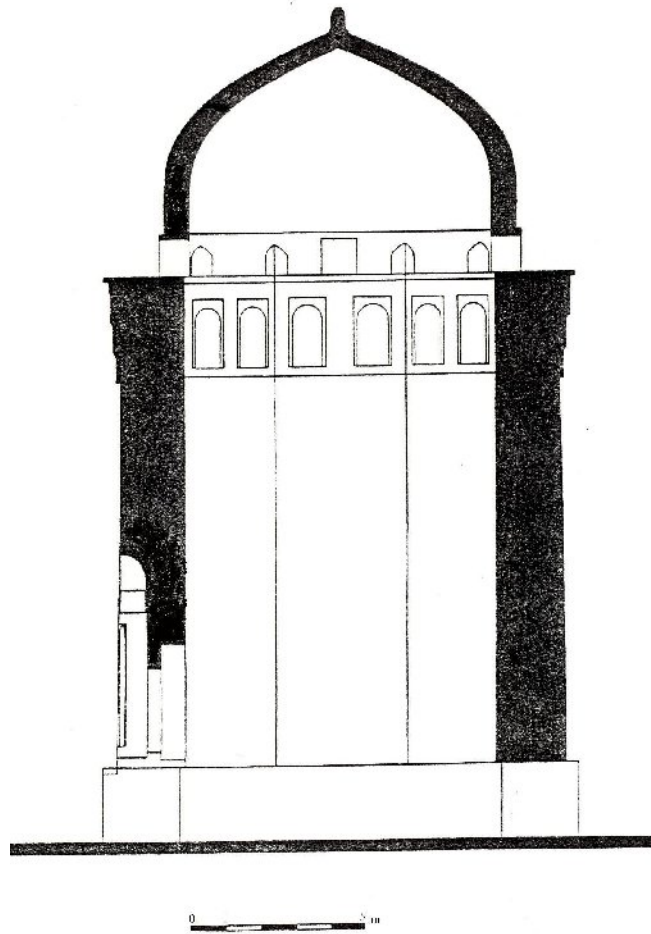
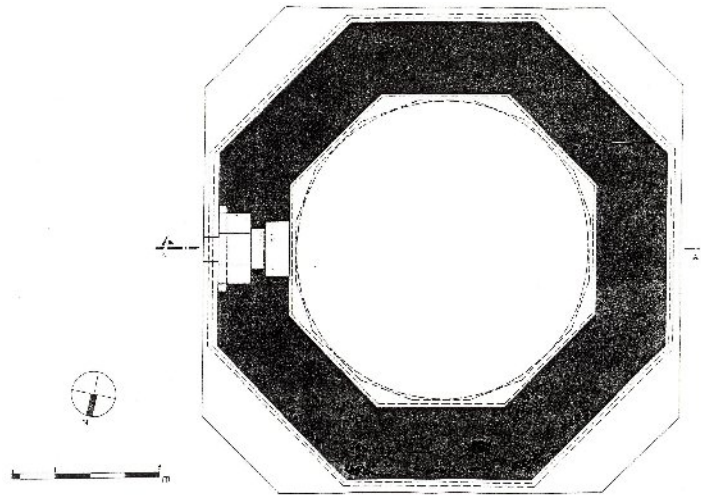


Fig. 23.1. Gunbad-i 'Alī . Plan, and section (after SBU).

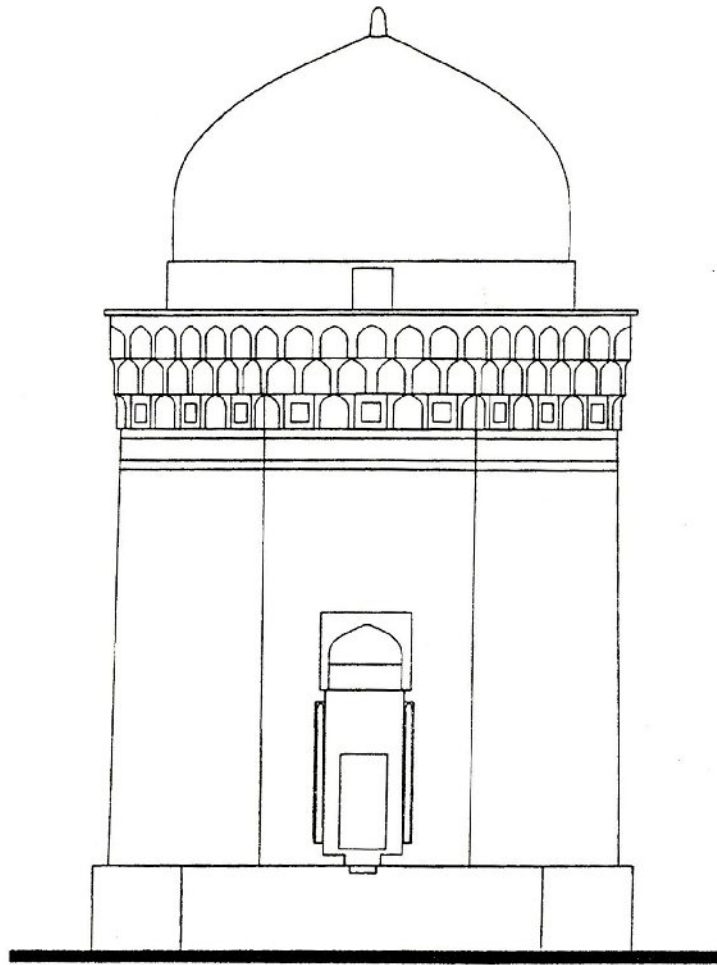


Fig. 23.2. Gunbad-i 'Alī. Eastern elevation (after SBU).

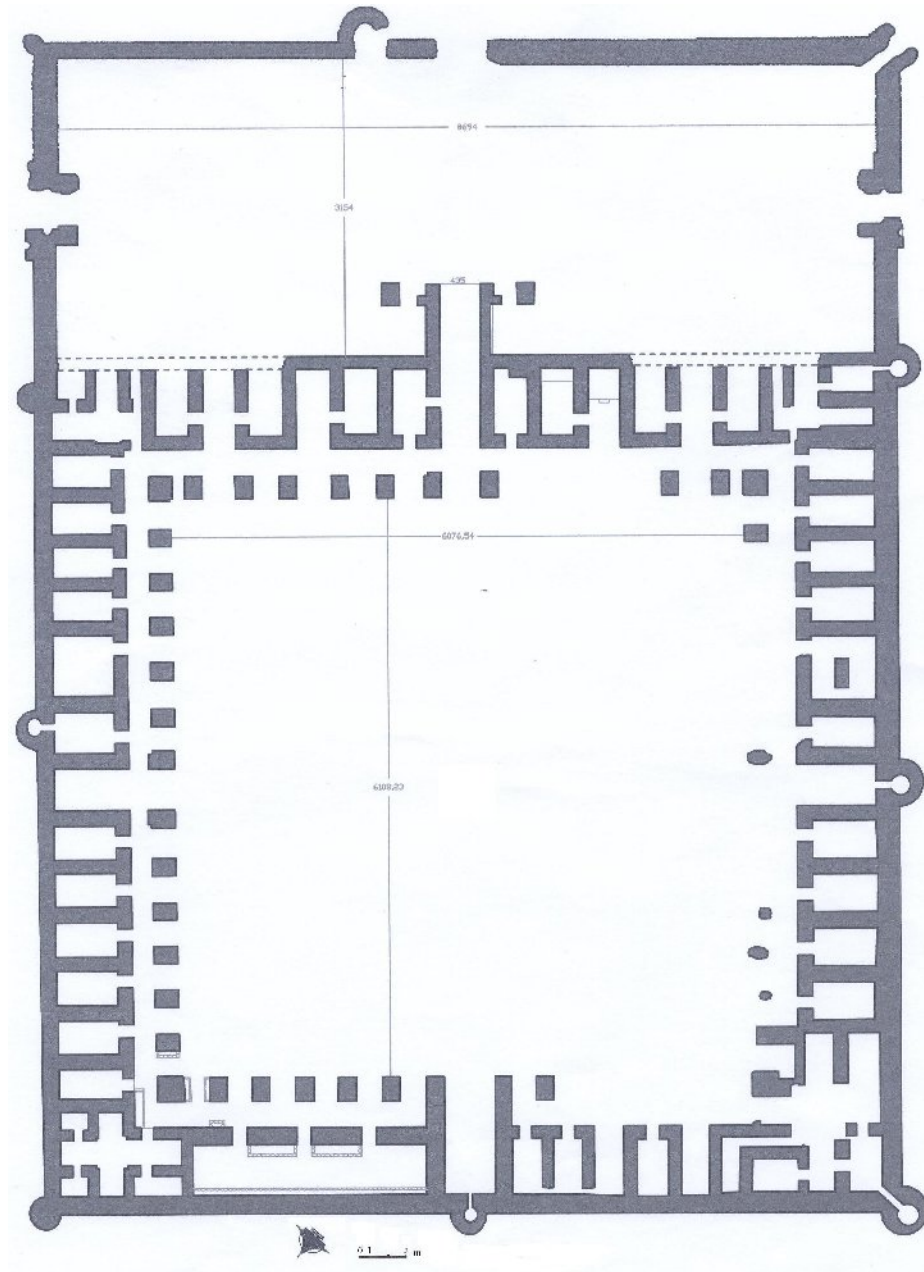


Fig. 24.1. Caravansarai at Muhammadābād. Plan (after ICHO).

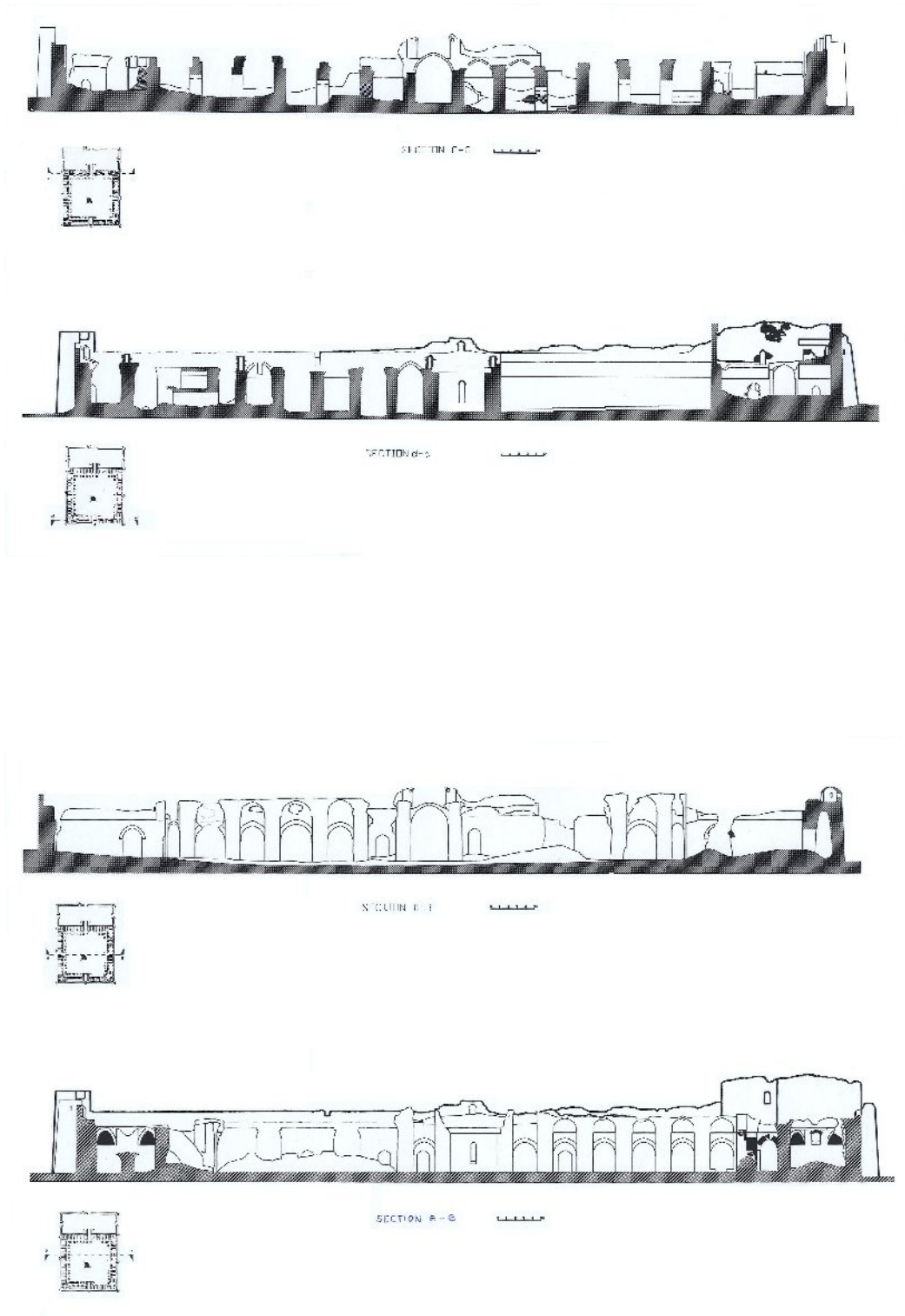


Fig. 24.2. Caravansarai at Muḥammadābād. Section (after ICHO).

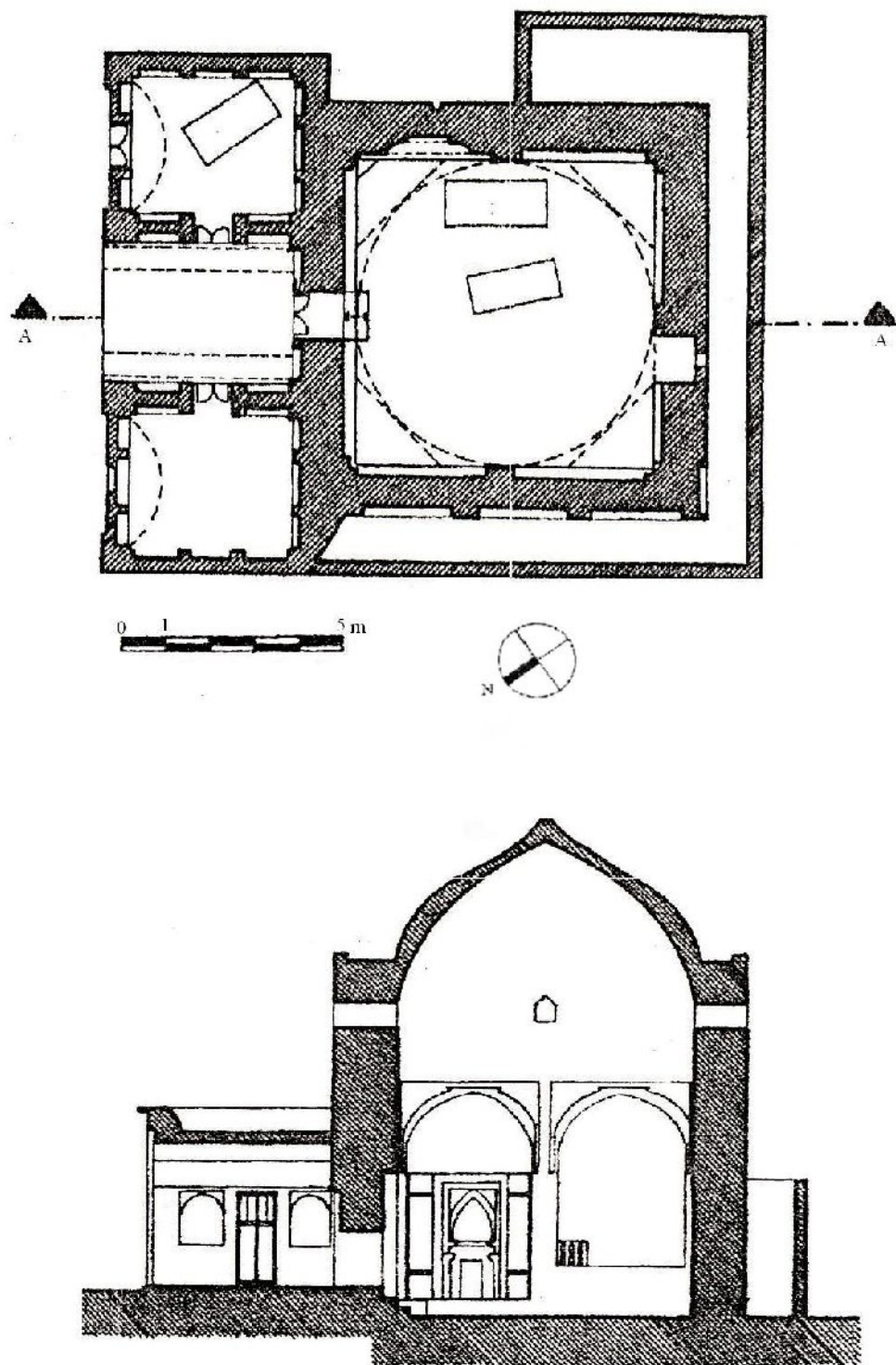


Fig. 25.1. Pīr-i Ḥamza Sabzpūsh. Plan and section (after ICHO).

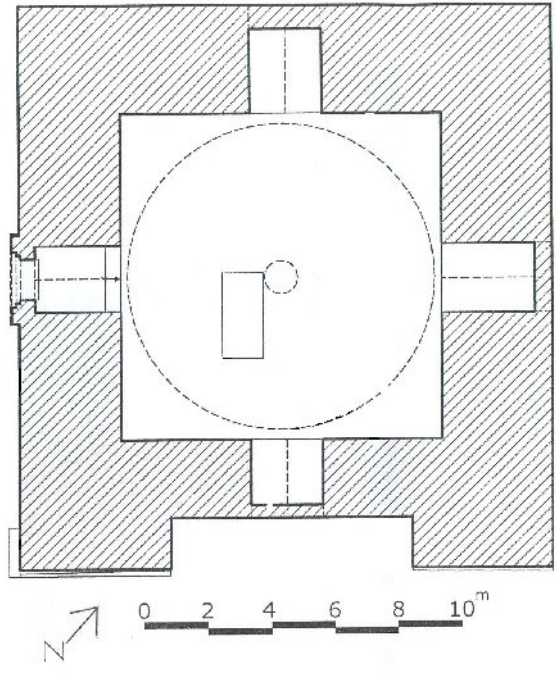
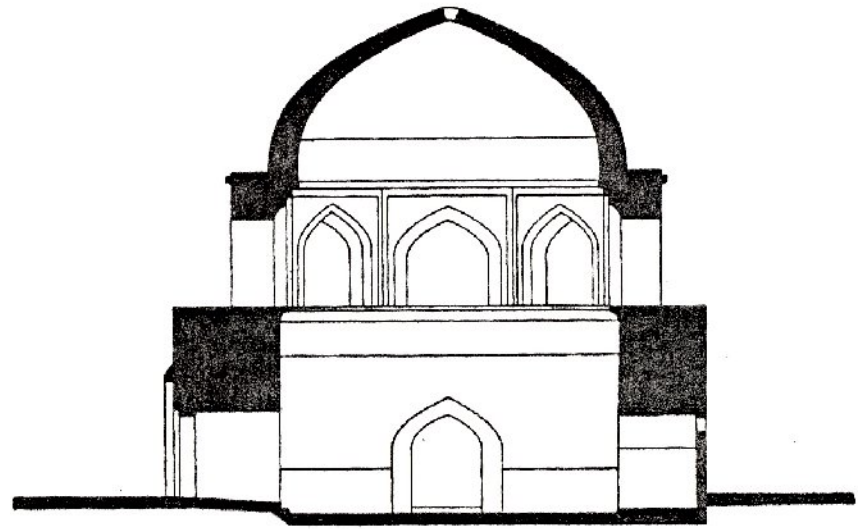


Fig. 26.1. Mausoleum at Sangbast. Plan and section (after ICHO).



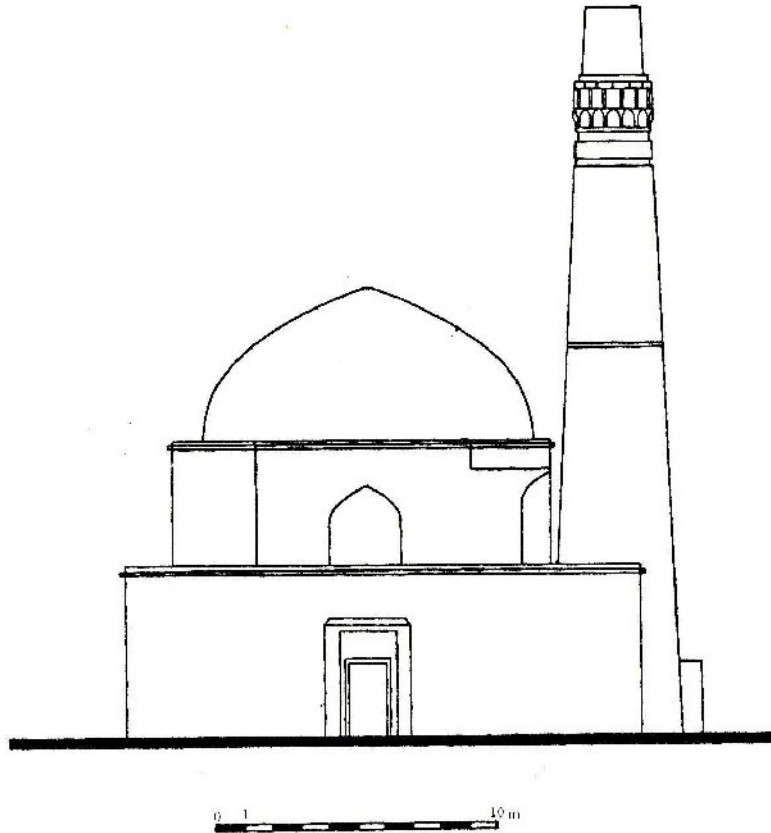


Fig. 26.2. Mausoleum at Sangbast. South-western elevation (after SBU).

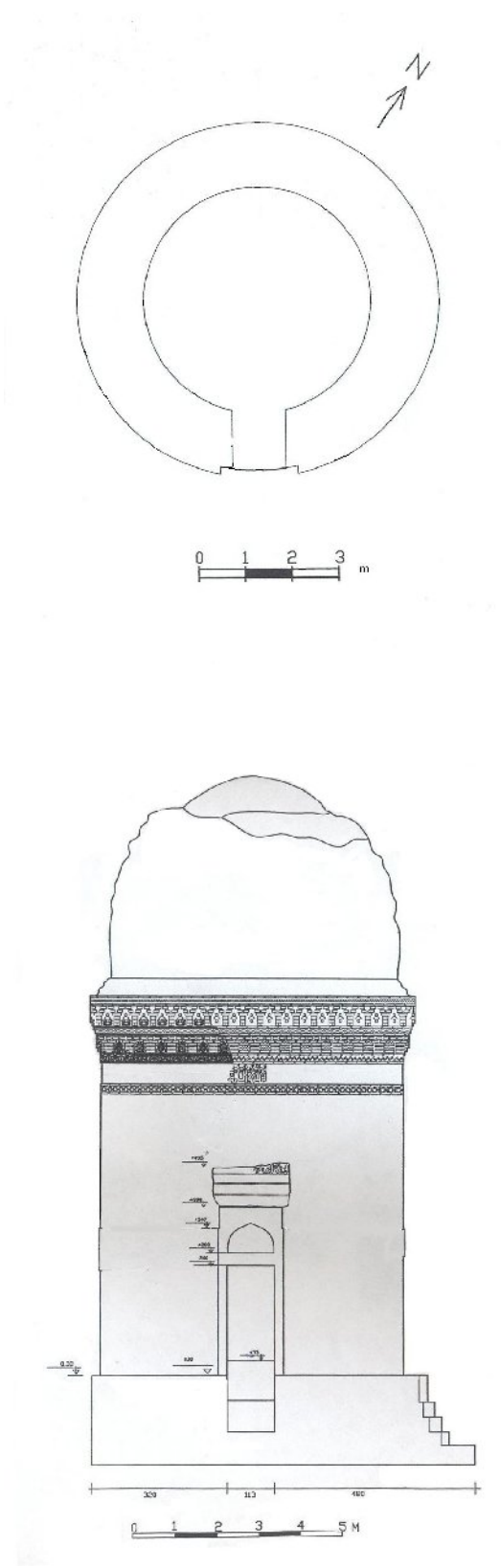


Fig. 27.1. Tomb tower at Risgit. Plan and elevation (after ICHO).

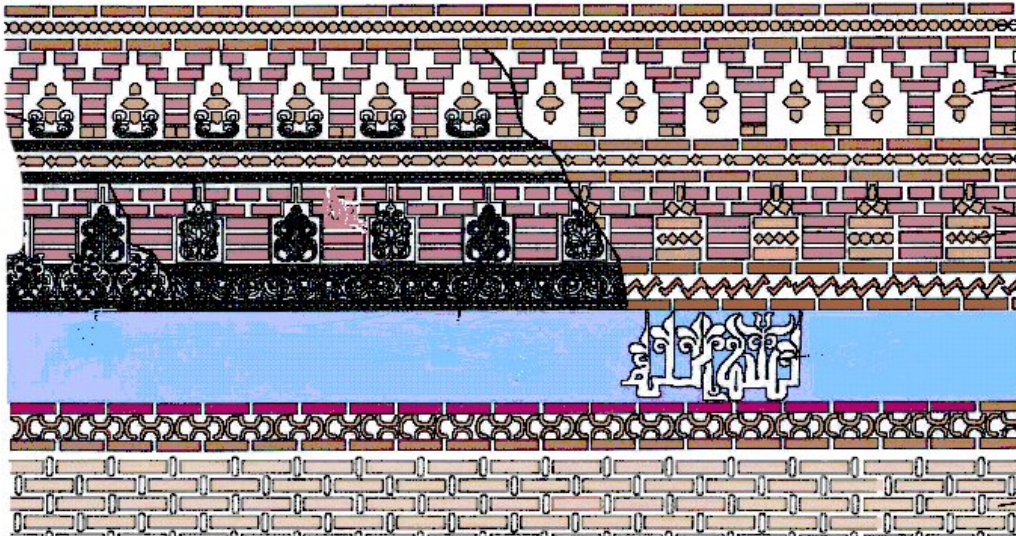


Fig. 27.2. Tomb tower at Risgit. Detail of baked brick decoration (after ICHO).

## INTRODUCTION

This thesis discusses the architecture of early Islamic Iran (16-450/637-1059). To better understand the architectural history of this period, it is necessary to specify in detail how it took shape and to describe its features.

Hitherto, no fully comprehensive study has been carried out on this subject. Most of the earlier attempts in that direction are the products of Western scholars. Few of these can be regarded as fully comprehensive - however worthy they were in their own time - in the light of the huge amounts of information now available. This mass of new material, a good deal of it unearthed in the decades since the Islamic Revolution, at last makes it possible to outline in detail the architectural characteristics of this early period.

The proposed study will build on the work done by earlier scholars in the field, both western and Iranian, among which two lengthy studies are of particular value.

Mehrdad Shokoohy in his unpublished Ph.D. thesis, *Studies in the early mediaeval architecture of Iran and Afghanistan* (Edinburgh, 1978), describes twelve buildings in

Iran and Afghanistan which he dates to the early mediaeval period. This research - some of which has been published in article form<sup>1</sup>- introduces some monuments that are little known, but there is still ample room for more detailed conclusions and analysis to clarify the evolution of Iranian architecture in this period.

The latest study, *Frühe Iranische Moscheen* (Berlin, 1994), has been carried out by Barbara Finster. This book explains the different types of early mosques in Iran, with much material from literary sources to supplement the author's own fieldwork.

Since the Islamic revolution in Iran (1357/1979), Iranian specialists have carried out some significant architectural and archaeological research; some of this work has not been published yet while other work has been published only in Persian and is difficult of access. In the course of restoration operations in key historical monuments much new and important material has been assembled, though much of this has not been reported yet. To gather together and to order all of this new information is one of the most important aims of my study. Its primary aim is to understand the characteristics and the underlying principles of early Islamic Iranian architecture.

In what follows, I shall try to explain how and why this early (and neglected) period holds the key to understanding the Islamic architecture of Iran. It is essentially a transitional period, a time of laying the foundations for what was to come. It documents the earlier experiments in building types, structural techniques and architectural decoration. We see here the earliest attempt of Islamic architecture in Iran to find a distinctive voice. Only few buildings survive – though it is very likely that more will be

found in years to come - but their wide range of form, style, material and decoration reveals a national tradition that – even though it was still in the process of tradition that was already, in key ways, different from that of the other Islamic lands.

The thesis tries to explain how the heritage of pre-Islamic Iranian architecture evolved and how it laid the foundations for Iranian, and especially Saljuq, architecture. Thus, to create a solid base for studying the later period is an important supplementary aim of this thesis. This study is in two parts:

*(A) Catalogue*

This is the core of the thesis and describes all types of buildings (mosque, mausoleum, tomb tower, etc.) in chronological order. It consists of twenty-seven entries.

*(B) General themes*

These cover the historical and cultural setting, Sasanian architecture and a classification of the main architectural and structural factor that operated in this period. This part comprises four chapters and a conclusion.

I carried out extensive fieldwork during this study and all the monuments in this thesis were carefully examined, some even several times. To avoid repetition, especially about the monuments that have previously been discussed in detail by other scholars, only the key monuments of the period, and those about which nothing or little has been published were discussed. Shortage of space dictated the omission of certain buildings of lesser importance. For various reasons it was impossible to do fieldwork in Central Asia and

Afghanistan, but relevant information that has been published on their monuments has been mentioned.

This study was intended to probe pre-Saljuq architecture in Iran. However, due to the relevance to the early period of the architectural style of the Gunbad-i ‘Alī (448/1056), and similarly some of other monuments which are datable to the first half of the 5<sup>th</sup>/11<sup>th</sup> century, I extended the time of catalogue to 450/1058-59. The general scheme that has been adopted for writing the catalogue is based on that of O’Kane,<sup>2</sup> with some modification.

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<sup>1</sup> See Bibliography.

<sup>2</sup> *Timurid Architecture in Khurasan* (Costa Mesta, 1987).

# I

## HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL OVERVIEW

### **1. AN HISTORICAL OVERVIEW**

#### **1.1 From the Muslim Conquest to the Rise of Iranian Dynasties**

The downfall of the Sasanian empire achieved by the Muslim Arabs was a crossroads in the history of Iran and consequently resulted in the formation of an Islamic culture and civilization in this nation.

The first major encounter between the Muslims and the Iranians occurred during the reign of the first caliph, Abū Bakr (11-13/632-34). At that time he was engaged with other areas such as Syria, then under the control of Byzantium, and there was no plan to attack Sasanian territory. In this period, however, several minor battles took place

around the Sasanian frontier; the area of Ḥīra was taken and the Arab-inhabited areas on the banks of the Euphrates were pillaged.

In the time of ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb, the second caliph, however, a serious attempt to conquer Iran was launched. After some encounters between the two sides, the Muslims defeated the Sasanian army at Qādisiyya, a small town and frontier post situated fifteen miles from the site of Kūfa, in 16/637.<sup>1</sup> Two months after this victory, the Arabs marched on Madā’in or Ctesiphon, the celebrated Sasanian capital. The Muslims reached the banks of the Tigris without encountering any opposition worth mentioning. This city, which, as its name Madā’in implies, was a group of cities, including Ctesiphon and Seleucia, had been from the time of the Parthians successor to the ancient role of Babylon; in fact it comprised seven cities adjoining one another on either bank of the Tigris.<sup>2</sup> This complex was surrounded by lofty walls (*hiṣār*), in which gates had been symmetrically arranged. The king (*shāh*) resided in the White Palace of Ctesiphon, and the *īwān-i Madā’in*, the Arch of Khusraw, where receptions took place and feasts were held, was in Asbānbur. This city was occupied and the commander of Muslims, Sa’d b. Abī Waqqāṣ, ordered a mosque to be built in the citadel.<sup>3</sup> Thus, the four – hundred-year-old capital of the Sasanian Empire became, for a time, the camping-ground of the Muslims.

The conquest of Iraq was the beginning of other victories. In fact the conquest of the central and eastern parts of Iran was unavoidable to protect the Arabs’ new possessions.

To create a place for the Muslim army to be accommodated, the garrison city of Kūfa was constructed by the Arabs. It was near Hīra, on the right bank of the Euphrates, where there was no natural obstacle between it and Medina. Baṣra had already been founded as a garrison city for the Muslims in Lower Mesopotamia. The Arabs settled in these two cities, Hīra and Baṣra, which served as frontiers against the Iranians.<sup>4</sup>

The Arabs now advanced to the Khūzistān area. The city of Shūshtar was conquered in 21/641-2 and after that it was the turn of Shūsh (Sūsa) and Jundīshāpūr, so that city by city Khūzistān fell to the Muslims. Yazdigird, the last Sasanian king, decided to equip an army and to make an attempt to rid Iraq of the Arabs. The Nihāvand area was considered suitable for this purpose, due to its strategic location. The two armies faced each other there. The Sasanian forces were defeated by the Muslims and the people of Nihāvand were surrounded and finally submitted in 21-22/641-42.<sup>5</sup>

The victory of Nihāvand, which the Arabs called the “Victory of Victories”, meant that the last stand of the Iranians against the Muslims was smashed. In spite of minor struggles by local rulers, and also Yazdigird’s attempts to gather another army, the collapse of the Sasanian Empire was now final. Thus the four-century-old power which had defied Rome and Byzantium, and kept at bay the threat of the Hephthalites, now fell to the Muslims.

The reasons for this collapse have been much debated. One of the causes was the extreme difference between the classes of society and the lack of co-operation between

them. Another was the weakness of the Sasanian government, both spiritually and physically, especially after many years of aimless war with Rome and the channelling of numerous resources for luxury and ineffective ceremonies by the Sasanian kings. The influence of Islam, however, as a new religion, should not be disregarded, for it provided the unity and the inspiration for the conquest of the new lands.<sup>6</sup>

The conquest of Iran, despite the victory of Nihāvand, was not completed at the time of ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb, and was continued in Umayyad times, which began in 41/661. Kirmānshāh, which was apparently the capital of the Sasanian province of Māh, submitted peacefully. Hamadān, the ancient Ecbātana, was taken after Nihāvand. Rayy was surrounded and conquered by the Arabs after a battle with its Sasanian governor. The exact date of the conquest of Rayy is unclear, but it seems to have occurred between 18/639 and 24/ /644. To punish its governor for his strong resistance, the commander of the Arabs ordered the ancient city of Rayy to be destroyed and he constructed a new city in place of it.<sup>7</sup> When Rayy had fallen, the governor of Damāvand came to terms with Muslims on payment of the *jizya* (poll tax), and was thus rendered immune from their attacks. Qazvīn fell in 24/644-5 after the battle of Nihāvand.<sup>8</sup> The Muslims laid siege to this city and the people of Qazvīn accepted Islam, presumably in order to gain exemption from the *jizya*. The city of Qazvīn, owing to its military strength, became an Arab base against the Dailamites.<sup>9</sup> The province of Gurgān in Caspian area was completely conquered in 98/716-17, however, Ṭabaristān despite several efforts by the Arabs, was not conquered.<sup>10</sup>

The conquest of Azarbāijān likewise began after the battle of Nihāvand. Ardabīl, the centre of the province, was raided by the Arabs and after a stiff resistance this city submitted and accepted the imposition of the *jizya*. The region of Mughān, with part of the lower Aras district, submitted in 22/642. The Sasanian governor of Isfahan peacefully submitted this city in 23/644 and agreed to pay the *jizya*. Fars, the cradle of the Sasanians, being situated strategically on military routes, soon came under attack and fell after several campaigns.<sup>11</sup> As early as 19/640, the *‘amil* of Baḥrain attacked this area from the sea and penetrated as far as Iṣṭakhr. Some four years later, in 23/644, his successor again attacked from Baḥrain and, in a battle near Rāshahr (Bushahr) on the coast, overcame and killed the provincial Sasanian governor (*marzbān*). The Sasanian city of Shiraz (the area is now known as Qaṣr-i Abū Naṣr), Dārābjird, Fasā and some other towns of Fars province were taken. During the Caliph ‘Uthmān’s reign, in 28/648, the city of Iṣṭakhr was seized and a year later Gūr (Firūzābād) was taken.<sup>12</sup>

Iraq, Jibāl and Fars thus came under the domination of the Muslims during the caliphate of ‘Umar and in the early years of ‘Uthmān. However, the Iranians, in various ways and in several regions, frequently seized the opportunity to break ceasefires or terms of surrender which they had made with the Arabs, who were forced once more to renew their attacks and impose themselves again on disobedient areas. This was particularly the case as long as Yazdigird III remained alive.

With the Muslims dominant in Fars, Yazdigird went to Kirman and the Arabs chased him even to this remote area. Sirjān and Jīruft, two major towns in the Kirman area,

were seized in 30/650. The Arabs then invaded Sīstān province in pursuit of Yazdigird and this province was conquered by the Arabs in late 30/651.<sup>13</sup> The Muslims next marched towards the neighbouring area of Khurasan and shortly afterwards the towns of Jām, Bākharz, Juvain, and Baihaq were captured. After taking Khwāf, Isfarā'in and Arghiyān, the important city of Nishapur was surrounded and finally captured. Next it was turn of Abīvard, Nisā and Sarakhs, which fell to the Arabs, while Tūs submitted peacefully.

Yazdigird III was killed in Marv in 31/651 and shortly after his death, the city of Marv surrendered, probably in the year 32/652. Thus, virtually all of Iran had been conquered by the time of the death of the caliph 'Uthmān (36/656).<sup>14</sup>

The conquest of Central Asia continued under the first Umayyad caliph Mu'āwiya I (41-60/661-80). The Arabs then crossed the Oxus and defeated the forces of the local Sogdian ruler of Bukhara and this city was conquered in the second stage of hostilities. The governor of Khurasan conquered Bukhara and Paykand in 88-91/706-9; he built mosques and introduced the practices of Islam into these cities.<sup>15</sup>

After initial victories in Iran, the Arabs settled in strategically important towns to control the lines of communication to the east, in Qazvīn, Qum, Azarbāijān, Khurasan and Sīstān. At the beginning, these newcomers were separately settled in Iran in the interests of greater security. For social and economical reasons, however, the Arabs quickly began to integrate with the native people in each area. In the early 2<sup>nd</sup>/8<sup>th</sup>

century, an Arab administrator established an Islamic garrison approximately six miles to the northwest of Qasr-i Abū Naṣr. People from this Sasanian city slowly relocated there, and the new site grew into the new city of Shiraz. This sequence of events confirms one of two major patterns of early Arab settlement in Iran: the founding of a new base where the Muslims could live safely but separate from the native people.<sup>16</sup> The second pattern was that the Arabs remained in cities, keeping their own Arab and tribal subdivisions in separate districts. However, many outside the cities continued to follow their former way of life, as in the Arabian Peninsula.<sup>17</sup>

The bureaucracy of the Sasanian Empire was imitated by the Muslims in modified form, but was basically a continuation of pre-Islamic traditions. This system of government was especially effective in the formation of the ‘Abbasid court. From the early days of the Islamic conquest the collection of revenue and disbursements out of it depended on the creation of a *dīwān*, a treasury office, and this began in Iraq in the time of Muḡhāira b. Shu‘ba under the direction of an Iranian named Pīrī or Pīrūz.<sup>18</sup> The Arabs allowed the local bureaucracy to continue as previously, but any records for the army or for purely Arab affairs, were written in Arabic. In fact two *dīwāns* or systems of bureaucracy existed in Kūfa and Baṣra, one in Arabic to administer Arab affairs, and another in Pahlavī for matters relating to Iran, though both were under Muslim direction.<sup>19</sup> In the time of ‘Abd al-Malik, Arabic officially replaced Pahlavī, in Iraq in 78/697, and at the same time, ‘Abd al-Malik established a mint in Damascus to produce coins with Arabic inscriptions to replace the previous types. Since the conquest of Iran until this time the currency of Iran had been of Sasanian pattern.<sup>20</sup>

After the conquest of Iran, the conversion of Iranian Zoroastrians to Islam occurred gradually over several centuries in three phases: military, urban and rural.<sup>21</sup> The military phase spanned the years of conquest, but only a few Zoroastrians converted at that time. In the Islamic faith, they found fresh possibilities and so committed themselves to Islam not simply for worship but also as a way of life. The second phase of conversion to Islam related to city-dwellers. This phase was important between the 2<sup>nd</sup> /8<sup>th</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> centuries, and it was chronologically consistent across Iran and Transoxania, though it varied across these broad regions. In this period, conversion also took place in small towns and villages. The migration of rural converts to the cities in the medieval period produced large Islamic cities.<sup>22</sup> The final phase was the conversion of rural Zoroastrians to Islam and the establishment of Muslim settlements throughout Iran and Transoxania.<sup>23</sup>

From the 4<sup>th</sup>/ 10<sup>th</sup> century, increasing numbers of people living in the countryside adopted Islamic tenets. In time, the number of converts rapidly grew in villages. Many areas made this transformation in relative peace, with Islam being spread mainly by missionaries. Acceptance of Islam among villagers was encouraged by the rapid integration of new believers as equals into Muslim culture within the states created within the ‘Abbasid empire.<sup>24</sup> Increasing the number of Muslims inevitably caused the rapid erection of the main religious structure, the mosque, in Iran during the early Islamic period.

The Umayyad period in Iran was spent repressing rebellions, settling Arab tribes, enforcing centralisation and administering the affairs of Iran, however there was apparently no attempt to influence matters of culture, such as architecture. Although there are references to very early mosques in historical sources and some archaeological evidence survives, as at Sūsa<sup>25</sup> (Shūsh), no major physical elements from these very early buildings survive.

After the Umayyad caliphate had ended, a new dynasty, that of the ‘Abbasids, came to power, mostly by the efforts of the Iranians, who were known as the Khurasanian army. The role of Iranians in the victory of the ‘Abbasids, and their attendance in the court of the early caliphs, certainly influenced the practices of this new dynasty. The shifting of the capital from Damascus to Baghdad symbolised the new eastward orientation of the caliphate, and over the next few centuries Iranian material and cultural traditions and influences became increasingly evident in ‘Abbasid culture.

In the second half of the 2<sup>nd</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> century a programme of constructing Friday mosques in Iran was started under the ‘Abbasids. According to the textual sources the Friday mosque at Isfahan was built in the early years of the 3<sup>rd</sup> /9<sup>th</sup> century; however this mosque can be recognized only by archaeological evidence. Another mosque was excavated in Sīrāf, also datable in the early part of the 3<sup>rd</sup>/9<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>26</sup> The only well-preserved mosque of this period, the Tārī Khāna, retains important aspects of its original form.

## 1.2. The Rise of Muslim Iranian Dynasties

The rise of Iranian dynasties in the eastern part of the ‘Abbasid caliphate can be seen as a turning point in early Islamic Iran. The rise of these dynasties was inevitable. The central power in Baghdad was not capable of controlling all of the Islamic empire by that time, and hence the provinces of the caliphate gradually became more independent and were administered by local dynasties, which were at least nominally loyal to Baghdad and ruled in the caliph’s name. From the caliph’s point of view, collecting taxes, suppressing rebellions and providing security were the main tasks of the Iranian local dynasties. However, these dynasties also played a significant role in the revival of Iranian traditions and also in the transformation of Arabic- Islamic culture into a new Iranian-Islamic culture.

### The Ṭāhirids

The Ṭāhirids, who can be regarded as the first Muslim Iranian dynasty, appeared in the early years of the 3<sup>rd</sup> /9<sup>th</sup> century. Ṭāhir b. al-Ḥusayn, the founder of this dynasty, was probably of Persian client (*mawla*) origin, and claimed descent from the aristocratic Arab tribe of Khuzā‘a.<sup>27</sup> Ṭāhir rose to favour under al-Ma’mūn as commander of the latter’s forces in the fratricidal war against al-Amīn in 194/810, and after the fall of Baghdad became governor of that city and of the Jazīra. Finally, he was appointed governor of Khurasan. Shortly before his death, he had started to omit the name of the

caliph from the Friday sermon (*khutba*), and also from the coins he minted. Both these actions can be considered as a declaration of independence.

The Ṭāhirids moved the capital of Khurasan from Marv to Nishapur and ruled these cities as vassals of the ‘Abbasids. The Ṭāhirids may be considered as a virtually autonomous line of governors but not as a separate, independent dynasty, as were their rivals the Ṣaffārids. It would be more accurate to regard them as a transitional step between governors appointed by caliph and independent rulers.

The Ṭāhirids ruled for an unbroken fifty years in Khurasan and their governorship came to an end after Nishapur was captured by Ya‘qūb b. Laith, the founder of the Ṣaffārid dynasty (see below) in 259/873.

The Ṭāhirids were strongly orthodox Sunnīs and the favour they extended towards the established Arab and Persian landed and military classes assured them of top-level support, while they also had a reputation for protecting the interests of the masses, encouraging irrigation and agriculture, and patronising scholars and poets.<sup>28</sup>

### **The Ṣaffārids**

The Ṣaffārid brothers derived their name from their founder Ya‘qūb’s trade of coppersmith (*ṣaffār*). This dynasty rose to power in their native province of Sīstān. At the time of Ya‘qūb, the first ruler of the line, and his brother ‘Amr, this dynasty ruled a

vast area that covered all of Persia except the north-west and the Caspian region and which stretched to the frontiers of India.

This dynasty primarily represented the people of Sīstān province rather than any aristocracy, and it was this popular support that enabled them to rule part, if not the whole, of Sīstān down to the 9<sup>th</sup> /15<sup>th</sup> century and thus become one of the longest-lived dynasties in Islamic history. Whereas the Ṭāhirids and Sāmānids represented the interests of religious orthodoxy, the Ṣaffārīds were popular in origin and proud of it, and they openly declared their disrespect for the ‘Abbasīds. The Ṣaffārīds rather than the Ṭāhirīds might be termed the first Iranian dynasty to separate from the caliphate; certainly they were the first in the east to confront successfully the claim of the Abbasīds to rule the whole of Islam as one political community.<sup>29</sup>

Ya‘qūb was unable to understand Arabic, so Persian poetry was developed in his era. He encouraged Persian poets, who may have been among the first to put Persian into Arabic verse forms.<sup>30</sup>

The Ṣaffārīds, like the Sāmānīds (see below), attempted to encourage a developed New Persian literature in the later part of the 3<sup>rd</sup> /10<sup>th</sup> century, but Ya‘qūb and ‘Amr were continually in the field, so there was not much time or leisure to promote the arts of peace, such as architecture and the development of urbanisation. However, according to the *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, a 4<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> century historical text, several mosques, *ribāṭs* and bridges were built in the time of ‘Amr.<sup>31</sup> Ya‘qūb built the Friday mosque at Shiraz, when this

city was conquered by him in 261-2/875-76;<sup>32</sup> however, only a part of its decorated *mihṛāb* survived into modern times,<sup>33</sup> and even this has now vanished.

### **The Sāmānids**

The founder of the Sāmānid line was Sāmān Khudā, a local landowner (*dihqān*) in the Balkh district of what is now northern Afghanistan, although the dynasty later claimed descent from the pre-Islamic Sāsānid emperors of Iran.<sup>34</sup> Sāmān Khudā accepted Islam in the Umayyad period, and his son Asad served the early ‘Abbasids, while the four sons of Asad were appointed over four cities: Nūḥ over Samarqand, Aḥmad over Farghāna, Yaḥyā over Shāsh (the later Tashkent) and Ilyās over Herat.

The Sāmānid territory was divided into two parts, Transoxiana and Khurasan south of the river Oxus. The branch south of the Oxus did not prosper, but the other branch acquired a good foothold in Transoxiana so that in 263/875 Naṣr b. Aḥmad received from the caliph the governorship of the complete province. This rich region became the core of the Sāmānid empire. The real founder of Sāmānid power, however, was Ismā‘īl b. Aḥmad, his brother. He earned the caliph’s appreciation by defeating and capturing the Ṣaffarid ‘Amr b. al-Layth, and was rewarded with the governorship of Khurasan in succession to the Ṭāhirids and Ṣaffārids in 287/900. Under the Sāmānids central Asia became Muslim, and their model of society and government was imitated by the Saljuq Turks and spread to Anatolia and Syria and indeed all over the eastern Islamic world.

Bukhara, the capital of the Sāmānids, was captured by the Turks in 390/999. The Turkish Qarakhānids and Ghaznavids took over the Sāmānid territories and the last Sāmānid ruler was killed in 395/1005. The downfall of the dynasty meant that all the hitherto Iranian lands north of the Oxus passed under Turkish control.

The Sāmānids were famous for their patronage of the arts and literature. Under the Sāmānids, there was widespread development of urbanization, architecture and the decorative arts. The most well-known building which remains from this period is the Sāmānid mausoleum in Bukhara (c.320s/930s).<sup>35</sup> Another outstanding building of the Sāmānid period is the ‘Arab ‘Atā mausoleum at Tīm (367/977).<sup>36</sup>

### **The Būyids or Buwayhids**

The Būyids were Daylamīs from the Gīlān highlands situated near the south coast of the Caspian Sea. They came from a stock noted for its remarkable toughness and a spirit of fierce independence.<sup>37</sup>

In the mountain fastness of their homeland the Daylamīs had already succeeded in repelling more than a dozen Muslim attacks before the beginning of the 3<sup>rd</sup>/9<sup>th</sup> century, although Shī‘ite (mostly Zaydī) beliefs were being spread in their region.

Among the several Daylamī dynasties which emerged in the Persian world as the ‘Abbasid hold over the other provinces of the caliphate weakened, the Būyids were the

most powerful and ruled the greatest range of territories. Three brothers founded the Būyid dynasty, all of them the sons of Būya - ‘Alī, Ḥasan, and Aḥmad (The caliph al-Mustakfī gave them the titles ‘Imād al-Dawla, Rukn al-Dawla, and Mu‘izz al-Dawla respectively). They began modestly enough as commanders in the army of Mardāwīj b. Ziyār, founder of the Ziyārid dynasty (see below). The eldest of the three sons of Būya, ‘Alī, held Isfahan at the time of assassination of Mardāwīj, and shortly afterwards seized the whole of Fars, while Ḥasan held Jibāl and Aḥmad held Kirman and Khūzistān. In 334/945 Aḥmad entered Baghdad and thereafter the ‘Abbasid caliphs fell under the tutelage of the Būyids for over a century.

In the meantime Rukn al-Dawla recaptured Isfahan, defeated the Ziyārids, and took over Rayy. Thus, a new form of political system was created, with several branches of one family ruling three parts of the Būyid - controlled area: Rayy, Shiraz and Baghdad. The family was to hold the title of *Amīr al-Umarā’* (supreme commander), but beginning with Rukn al-Dawla and his son ‘Aḍud al-Dawla, they were also called *malik* (king).

The outstanding ruler of this dynasty was ‘Aḍud al-Dawla, whose his reign marks the zenith of Būyid power. Under him their empire achieved its greatest power and extent in the third part of the 4<sup>th</sup> /10<sup>th</sup> century. The unity he established, however, disintegrated after his death, and the internal strife among his sons was a sign of initial decline. In the course of his reign ‘Aḍud al-Dawla ordered to be erected numerous public buildings such as bridges, dams, hospitals and mosques, especially in Fars province.

Like most of the Daylamīs, the Būyids were Shīʿite, probably Zaydīs to begin with and then Twelvers or Jaʿfarīs. ʿAḏud al-Dawla appears to have been a Twelver Shīʿite. He restored a number of Shīʿite shrines in Iran.<sup>38</sup> He also restored the shrines of Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) at Najaf and of Imām Ḥusayn (ʿa) at Karbalā. Five surviving wooden plaques mark the date of the Najaf restoration as 363/973-74.<sup>39</sup> He was buried near the shrine of Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) in Najaf. Given this attachment to Shiʿism on the part of the Būyids, it is not surprising that the traditional Shīʿite festivals and practices were introduced into their territories. Shīʿites now had an opportunity to express their beliefs openly and to pay tribute to Shīʿite figures, mostly by erecting shrines and ornamenting mosques. In the Friday mosque at Naʿin (c.350/960) can be seen an inscription band over the *miḥrāb* that ends with God’s blessings on Muḥammad (ḡ) and his pure family, the first time that such a text is found in Iran.<sup>40</sup> Moreover, at this time Shīʿite scholars made an effort to systematise and intellectualise Shīʿite theology and law, which were previously too vague. The domination of Shīʿism in the Būyid territories was accompanied by a wide tolerance of other faiths like Christianity, Judaism, and Zoroastrianism, allowing their communities to flourish and bringing about a lively intellectual ferment in the various Būyid provincial capitals too.

The Būyids were one of several contemporary Shīʿite dynasties that dominated the heartlands of Islam: the Fāṭimids of Egypt, the Ḥamdānids of Syria, the Badrīds of Baṣra, and the Carmathians (or Qaramaṭīs) of Baḥrain. Shīʿite ascendancy on such a scale was unparalleled and indeed was never repeated in Islamic history.

Thus the Būyids and their main rivals to the east, the Sāmānids, were two Iranian dynasties with different approaches to reviving pre-Islamic traditions of Iran. The Sāmānids stimulated Persian literature and were responsible for an Iranian cultural renaissance, while the Būyids supervised the rebirth of an Iranian political ideology. ‘Aḍud al-Dawla, for instance, revived the ancient Persian imperial title *Shāhanshāh* (Arabic: *malik al-mulūk*), transforming the Būyid empire into a true monarchy. The period of the Būyids has been called as an Iranian intermezzo, between the Arab invasion and the ascendancy of the Turks.<sup>41</sup>

The Būyid dynasty actually lasted for six generations. In this time the courts of the Būyid rulers fostered the patronage of science and literature, and owing to the expansion of this humanism, the renaissance of Islam reached its peak in the Būyid age.<sup>42</sup> The Saljuq invasion and their occupation of Baghdad in 447/1055 marked the end of this brilliant period.

Under the Būyids several monuments were built in the Isfahan area, such as the Friday mosque at Isfahan (first half of the 4<sup>th</sup> /10<sup>th</sup> century), the Jurjir Mosque (c.350-75/ c.960-85), the Friday mosque at Na’in and the Friday mosque at Ardistan (375-400/985-1010). Like the other Caspian dynasties, the Būyids built structures over their graves, which were lofty and elaborate. Unfortunately, virtually no remnants of them exist.

### **The Early Ghaznavids**

On the death of the Sāmānid Amīr ‘Abd al-Malik in 350/961, Alptigin, the Turkish slave commander of the Sāmānid army in Khurasan, attempted to manipulate the succession at Bukhara in his own favour. He failed, and was obliged to withdraw with some troops to Ghazna in what is now eastern Afghanistan.<sup>43</sup> He seized this city in 351/962. Here, on the edge of the Sāmānid empire, and facing the pagan subcontinent of India, a series of Turkish commanders followed Alptigin, governing nominally for the Sāmānids. In 366/977, Sebüktegin - one of most trusted supporters of Alptigin - came to power and ruled for twenty years in Ghazna. The foundations of the Ghaznavid dynasty were laid in his reign. Under Sebüktegin, the Ghaznavid tradition of raiding the plains of India in search of treasure and slaves was established. Sebüktegin died in 387/997 and his son Maḥmūd came to power. His reign saw the peak of Ghaznavid power. Maḥmūd’s thirty-two year reign (388-421/998-1030) was one of continual campaigning and warfare over a vast stretch of southern Asia; at his death, the empire was the most extensive and impressive edifice in eastern Islam since the time of Ṣaffārids, and his army was the most effective army of the age.<sup>44</sup> He took over Khurasan and annexed Khwārazm. By acquiring Khurasan, Maḥmūd inherited the Sāmānid achievements and became master of a wealthy and flourishing province. Khurasan had rich agricultural oases, and its towns were centres for local industry and crafts with its textiles and other specialties exported far outside the province; it also benefited by its straddling of the long-distance trade route between Iraq and central Asia. It was also at this time the intellectual and cultural heart of the eastern Islamic world, not only for the traditional Arabic theological, linguistic and legal sciences, but also for the cultivation of New Persian language and literature. Thus the wealth of Khurasan, as much as that of

India, provided the material basis for much of Maḥmūd's imperial achievement.<sup>45</sup> Maḥmūd's empire, however, was an entirely personal creation and consequently brief.

After the death of Maḥmūd in 421/1030, Ghazna passed briefly to his son Muḥammad in accordance with the dead man's wishes. But after a few months, Mas'ūd, the other son of Maḥmūd, came back from Rayy with an army and shortly afterwards became the new ruler. Mas'ūd inherited a vastly over-stretched empire, which was rapidly threatened by the irruption of the Turkmen into Khwārazm and northern Iran, and the emergence of the Saljuqs (an Oghuz clan), who played a decisive role in the downfall of the Ghaznavids. In 430/1040, Mas'ūd's army was defeated by Turkmen and Saljuq forces and Khurasan fell. Shortly afterwards, Mas'ūd was killed and his son Mawdūd came to power. This time marked the end of the early Ghaznavids. The empire survived with reduced territories until its extinction by the Ghūrīds in 582/1186.

The Ghaznavids exemplified the phenomenon of barbarians coming into contact with the higher civilization of the Islamic world and being absorbed by it.<sup>46</sup> The culture of the early Ghaznavids was strongly Perso-Islamic, and much influenced by Iranian civilization, especially Khurasan. Maḥmūd and Mas'ūd both had a traditional Islamic education and were concerned to conform to the norm of traditional Islamic rules that made their courts centres of culture and learning. They attracted poets and scientists from neighbouring territories. As for the court itself, it was organized on traditional Persian lines. The sultans were great builders, and constructed for themselves palaces and gardens in many of major towns of the empire.<sup>47</sup> The surviving ruins at Lashkar-i

Bāzār, in Afghanistan, give some idea of the monumental scale and luxury of these palaces. A domed square building, locally known as the tomb of Ayāz (the lover of Maḥmūd), still stands at Sangbast, near the city of Mashhad. This structure is attributed by local people to the Ghaznavids, but that identification is uncertain.

### **1.3. The Minor Dynasties of Iran**

In addition to the main Iranian dynasties listed above, some other minor princes held power, mainly in the Caspian provinces. The Caspian coastlands of Gīlān and Ṭabaristān (later Mazandaran), are separated by the massive natural barrier of the Alburz mountains from the central plateau of Iran. These provinces have always had a distinct character of their own. This area particularly was a safe place for unusual religious affiliations, languages, scripts and customs which had disappeared from the more accessible and open parts of Iran. The Pahlavī language, Zoroastrianism and also pre-Islamic traditions survived here for some centuries after the conquest of Iran.<sup>48</sup> Islam was late arriving in the Caspian region, and for several centuries after this time various local dynasties remained in power.

#### *The Ziyārids*

This dynasty arose out of the backward and remote highland region of Daylam. The founder of this dynasty, Mardāwīj b. Ziyār, was descended from the royal clan of Gīlān. On the rebellion of the commander Asfār b. Shīrūya, a general in the Sāmānid armies,

Mardāwīj took the opportunity to seize most of northern Iran. His power soon extended as far south as Isfahan and Hamadān, but in 323/935 he was killed and soon after his brief empire fell apart. His brother Wushmgīr retained a foothold in the eastern Caspian provinces, and in the following decades the Ziyārīds were closely involved with their neighbours, the Sāmānīds and Būyīds, for control of northern Persia. After Wushmgīr, his son Bīsūtūn became his successor and in 367/ 978 his brother, Qābūs b. Wushmgīr, who is the most well-known ruler in this dynasty, came to power. He is reputed to have been a cruel dictator. He was, however, a noted scholar, poet and calligrapher, an authority on astrology and a patron of the arts. During his seventeen-year exile in Nishapur, when the Būyīds occupied his lands, he became familiar with the brilliant court culture of the Sāmānīds. After his return to power, he sponsored the important scholars and artists of the day in his capital of Gurgān. Qābūs was Sunnī and he severely limited Shīʿite activities in his territory.<sup>49</sup>

Indeed, a feature which marked out the Ziyārīds from almost all the other Daylamī dynasties of the time is their faithfulness to Sunnī and not Shīʿite beliefs. Qābūs was captured by some chiefs of his army and was finally killed in 403/1012. Qābūs' son, Manūchīhr, succeeded his father. He established his power and was granted the title Falak al-Maʿālī by the caliph. He accepted the overlordship of the Ghaznavīd Sulṭān Maḥmūd and the two families became linked by a marriage alliance. The incoming Saljuqs appeared in Gurgān in 433/1041 and took over the coastlands, but the Ziyārīds survived as vassals of the Saljuqs in the highland regions. One of the last *amīrs*, Kay Kāwūs b. Iskandar, achieved fame as the author of a famous "Mirror for Princes" in

Persian, the *Qābūs-nāma*, named after his illustrious grandfather.

In the time of Qābūs, one of the most famous monuments of eastern Islamic architecture, which is known as Gunbad-i Qābūs, was built by his order in 397/1006-7, as his tomb. This most outstanding tomb tower with its sophisticated design reveals something of the character of its patron. As mentioned above, Qābūs was a Sunnī Muslim and so the erection of a tomb for him is perhaps surprising. The Ziyārids and the branch of the Būyids in Rayy were struggling for decades. It is likely that the idea of constructing a tomb tower was imitated from Būyid practice and that, in fact, this lofty building symbolised the power of Qābūs.

In the reign of Manūchihr, Qūmis was controlled by the Ziyārids. Several structures - two minarets and two tomb towers - survive from this period. The earliest is a minaret outside the Tārī Khāna mosque, which is dated 418/1027. A further minaret, which is datable c.422-25/1031-35, is beside the Friday Mosque at Simnān. The Pīr-i ‘Alamdār tomb tower is another structure of this period in Dāmghān. These three buildings were built by order of Abū Ḥarb Bakhtiyār, the governor of Qūmis. The last building is a further tomb tower which is known as Chihil Dukhtarān in Dāmghān, and is dated 446/1054-55.

### *The Bāwandid Ispahbadhs*

This family was the longest-lived of the minor Caspian dynasties. The complete history

of the dynasty is not clear and can be reconstructed only in part by occasional references in literary sources and by the numismatic evidence. They claimed descent from Bāw and traced their genealogy back beyond this to the Sāsānid emperor Kawādh.<sup>50</sup>

This line divided into three branches. The first line, the Kāwūsiyya, ruled in Ṭabaristān, with their centre in the Firīm area, around the mountain known as Shahriyār Kūh. The documented history of the dynasty begins with the Arab invasion of Ṭabaristān in the early years of the ‘Abbasid caliphate. Māzyār b. Qārin b. Wandād conquered all of Ṭabaristān in 210-24/825-39 and built some mosques in Firīm. This family became Muslim in 240/854. Subsequently, they opposed the Zaydī Imāms in lowland Ṭabaristān and were involved during the 4<sup>th</sup> /10<sup>th</sup> century in the struggles of the Būyids and Ziyārīds for control of northern Persia. Then they became vassals of the Būyids; it seems that the Bāwandīds adhered to Twelve Shī‘ism. A *dirham* of Rustam b. Sharvīn, acknowledging the Būyid ‘Aḏud al-Dawla, and bearing on the obverse the Shī‘ite motto, “‘*Alī walī Allah*”, was struck at Firīm in 367/977-78.<sup>51</sup>

The first line faded out around 466/1047, and its relationship to the subsequent line is not certain. The second line of the Bāwandīds, the Ispahbadhiyya, managed to preserve their local authority as vassals to the Great Saljuqs and gradually expanded their power to south of the Alburz mountains at this time. This line was brought to an end by the Khwārazm Shāhs in the early years of the 7<sup>th</sup> /13<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>52</sup> The Bāwandīds, however, regained power after an interval of three decades in the shape of a collateral branch which reigned until the middle of the 8<sup>th</sup> /14<sup>th</sup> century.

An inscription band with the name of Bāwand and the title of *ispahbadh* still exists on the shaft of a tomb tower at Rādkān West. These two titles indicate that this building was built by the order of a Bāwandid ruler in 418/1028. As in the case of the Būyids, the erection of a tomb tower by a Shī‘ite governor is plausible. Two further tomb towers Lājīm (c.400-25/c.1009-33) and Risgit (c.450/c.1058-59), still exist in this area. Each tomb tower is of cylindrical form and has an inscription band which is written in Arabic and Pahlavī. These inscriptions show the co-existence of Islamic and Zoroastrian culture in this area at the time.

#### *The Mūsafirids or Sallārids*

Muḥammad b. Musāfir is the first member of this line to appear in history. He controlled the strategic fortresses of Ṭārum and Sāmīrān in the Safīd Rūd valley of Daylam, and gradually increased his power at the expense of the older dynasty of the Justānids (another dynasty that ruled in Daylam in the late 2<sup>nd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> / 8<sup>th</sup> -11<sup>th</sup> century).<sup>53</sup> Muḥammad was a cultured man and built up Sāmīrān with spectacular splendour. He, was, however, noted for his cruelty and was imprisoned by his sons, Wahsūdān and Marzbān, in 330/941. After this time the family divided into two branches. Wahsūdān remained in Ṭārum, while his brother Marzbān extended his power northwards and westwards into Azarbāijān, Arrān, some districts of eastern Armenia and as far as Darband on the Caspian coast. A coin minted in the name of Wahsūdān in 341/952-3 shows that he supported the Ismā‘īlī branch of the Shī‘ites,<sup>54</sup> who were spreading their influence in Daylam at this time.

The branch of this family could not expand its domination in Azarbāijān and in the late 4<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> century they were disposed by the Rawwādids of Tabriz. The other line, in Ṭārum, was hard pressed by the Būyids in the second part of the 4<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> century, but finally retrieved their territory. The history of this line is unclear from the late of 4<sup>th</sup> /10<sup>th</sup> century to the first half of the 5<sup>th</sup>/11<sup>th</sup> century. It seems that Mūsafirid rule was ended by the Ismā‘īlīs of Alamūt. The remnants of the stronghold of Ṭārum and a few octagonal tomb towers (datable in the second half of the 4<sup>th</sup> /10<sup>th</sup> century) still remain in this area.

#### *The Ḥasanūyids or Ḥasanawayhids*

Unlike the previously mentioned minor dynasties, this short-lived family ruled in southern Kurdistan, around the Qarmāsīn (the later Kirmānshāh) area. Ḥasanwayh, the founder of this dynasty, was a chief of the Kurdish Barzikanī tribe. He and his son Badr (titled Abu’l-Najm) skilfully maintained their power as vassals of the Būyids by supporting various candidates for power in the struggles between Būyid rulers at that time. After the death of Ḥasanwayh, Badr came to power in 370/980 and was installed with the title of *hājib* as leader of the Barzikanī Kurds in the name of Mu’ayyid al – Dawla.

Badr was a skilful administrator and improved the financial organization of his realm. He also developed mountain roads and markets, and made large grants to secure the

welfare of pilgrims crossing his territory. The remnants of two huge bridges with inscriptions in his name dated 374/984-85 and 399/1008-9 over the Kalhur and Kashkān rivers respectively still remain in Luristān province, in the south-west of Iran.<sup>55</sup> In fact, this family achieved a high contemporary reputation for their just and beneficent rule among the Kurdish people. This line was replaced by a rival family of Kurdish chiefs in 406/1015.<sup>56</sup>

#### *The Kākūyids or Kākawayhids*

These were one of the small Kurdish and Daylamī dynasties of the Zagros region, and were independent leaders of the province of Jibāl in central Iran under the Būyids. Dushmanziyār, the founder of this dynasty, had been in the service of the Būyids of Rayy. The name of the dynasty derives from the word *kāku*, a Daylamī dialect word for maternal uncle, since Dushmanziyār was the maternal uncle of the Būyid Amīr, Majd al-Dawla, and the virtual ruler during his sister's son's minority.<sup>57</sup> Dushmanziyār's own son 'Ala' al-Dawla Abū Ja'far Muḥammad was the real founder of the dynasty; he was appointed governor of Isfahan in 398/1008. Soon he expanded to Ḥamadān and into Kurdistan. The Ghaznavid expansion into Jibāl after 420/1029 forced him temporarily to submit to their power but he managed to retain his territory, and given the Ghaznavid preoccupation with the east, he even occupied Rayy for a while.

'Ala' al-Dawla Muḥammad was succeeded by his son Farāmarz, who was obliged to yield Isfahan to the Saljuq Amīr, Ṭughril, who after 443/1051 made it the Saljuq capital.

He did, however, award Abarkū and Yazd to the Kākūyids in compensation. Under the Saljuqs, the Kākūyids were to be linked through marriage to the line of Turkish Atabegs which succeeded in Yazd until the 7<sup>th</sup> /13<sup>th</sup> century. The city of Yazd developed under Kākūyid rule, and several mosques, canals and ramparts were built in their time. <sup>58</sup>

A well-preserved building, which is locally known as the Davāzdah Imām (429/1038), was built by order of two brothers, both army commanders in the Kākūyid period. The function of this substantial square building is not clear, but it was presumably built as a mausoleum, though it is not certain that it was ever used for this purpose. Another tomb, which is locally known as Pīr-i Hamza Sabzpūsh was built under the Kākūyids in Abarkū. A tomb tower, locally known as Gunbad-i ‘Alī (448/1056-57), was built when Abarkū was in the hands of the Kākūyids. The patron of this building was a former Būyid commander, and he imitated his Shī‘ite ancestors by building a tomb in an isolated spot, on top of a hill.

## **2. A CULTURAL OVERVIEW**

As earlier mentioned, during the conquest of Iran, the Arabs settled in the Khurasan area and from this combination- Arab and local population – there developed a Persian Islamic culture that took both religious and secular expression. Considering the crucial role of Khurasan in establishment of the ‘Abbasid dynasty, the political relationships of Khurasan and its adjacent area, Central Asia, with Baghdad became closer, even with the appearance of Muslim Iranian dynasties. Despite the political and cultural influence of the ‘Abbasids in eastern Iran, pre-Islamic traditions were encouraged by local dynasties. Therefore, cultural life in early Islamic Iran was dominated by two major trends, which together encapsulate political tendencies before the Saljuqs. One trend represented the world of ‘Abbasid Baghdad, which was an international scientific and philosophical centre, with a pronounced Islamic-Arabic identity; the second was specifically Islamic- Iranian, and in these centuries it was trying to revive the pre-Islamic characteristics of Iran, but in Islamic form.

In Western Iran, the cultural dominance of Baghdad was of even longer duration, despite the political and military ascendancy of the Būyids over the caliphate; in fact no fully independent artistic identity appeared before the Saljuqs.

Throughout the two first Islamic centuries there was apparently little attempt to develop cultural affairs. During this time old traditions, in matters of technique and theme alike, continued in the visual arts, but the rise of various Iranian dynasties in the 3<sup>rd</sup>/9<sup>th</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> centuries led to a new Islamic- Iranian culture of a transitional nature, in which pre-Islamic traditions had to adjust to the new conditions. Language, the visual arts and architecture, some of the main elements of the culture of this period, show that Iranians were reasserting their national identity and responding to new requirements in aesthetic style. In fact the emergence of various characteristics of the visual arts together with an enhancement of existing techniques marks the great accomplishment in the visual arts that was achieved in the 4<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> century under the Sāmānids and the Būyids.

Studying the art of early Islamic Iran shows that two processes occurred independently of each other: the gradual decay and transformation of Sasanian modes, and the evolution of new forms of art with no Sasanian ancestors.<sup>59</sup> To understand this evolution better, several media will be discussed, so that its specific achievement becomes clear.

The most common medium, owing to its broad range of application, was pottery, and this was produced in the greatest quantity in Khurasan and Transoxania. The pottery of this period can be divided generally into two main categories: glazed and unglazed. The first category can also be subdivided into several groups, based on the technique that was employed in their production. Glazed earthenware had a long history in Iran. The success with polychrome glazes in Achaemenian times revived in a new form in the early Islamic period.<sup>60</sup> In the 3<sup>rd</sup>/9<sup>th</sup> century, the art of glazing pottery vessels became

very popular on the Iranian plateau and soon after it extended to Khurasan and Transoxania. The main centre of glazed pottery in Khurasan was Nishapur, and in Transoxania, Afrāsiyāb, whose glazed ware was similar in style to that of Nishapur, though they were different in some aspects of technique and theme.<sup>61</sup>

Certain innovations in ceramic forms came in after the Arab conquest, while other forms reflected older traditions. The deep vessel with an open top and a pipe-like spout for pouring, so common in Sasanian times, was replaced by a deep bowl with an open spout furnished with a strap across it, thus continuing the line of the rim to make a complete circle.<sup>62</sup>

The pottery of this period generally was inspired by three main sources. The first one was the art of Sasanians,<sup>63</sup> particularly its themes such as hunting scenes or the cavalryman seated on a horse. The second source of inspiration was ‘Abbasid art in Iraq, especially the pottery of Samarra.<sup>64</sup> This type of pottery included the large interlace composition originally used for lustre ware. The earliest ceramics from Western Iranian sites such as Sīrāf, Susa and Ištakhr resemble those excavated in the Samarra.<sup>65</sup> A third source of Iranian glazed ware was Chinese pottery which arrived by way of Iraq, and which had itself influenced ‘Abbasid pottery.<sup>66</sup>

A significant transformation, both thematically and technically, is to be seen in the pottery of the 3<sup>rd</sup>/9<sup>th</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> centuries in Khurasan and Transoxania. At this time a magnificent group of plates and bowls appeared, made of a buff-coloured body with a fine slip and painted with inscriptions under a colourless transparent glaze. These plates

and bowls were decorated with Kufic inscriptions, in black on a white ground, usually in circular form on the inner walls of bowls and shallow plates.<sup>67</sup> This script often was plaited, difficult to decipher and usually containing proverbs and mottos,<sup>68</sup> but it was occasionally only a repetition of a meaningless word. In comparison to 'Abbasid pottery, the style of epigraphy is very sophisticated and owing to the absence of images in most of these wares epigraphy played a significant role in decoration.

The Sāmānids patronized the new Persian language,<sup>69</sup> but at the same time supported Arabic as the dominant medium of science and literature, so the use of Arabic is not surprising. In addition, the use of the Arabic alphabet in Sāmānid times by the patrons of the Iranian renaissance was possibly motivated by aesthetic preference rather than by religious compulsion. However, it is likely that employing Arabic, the language of the Qur'ān, was a sign of Islamization. The theme of inscriptions frequently contains advice and good-wishes, which probably originated from the nature of Islam as a religious guide. The transformation of birds or animals into decorative elements by their stylized depiction was characteristic of the late 4<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> century and the early 5<sup>th</sup>/11<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>70</sup>

In this period another new type of pottery featuring designs of birds in red, brown and green on a white ground appeared in the Caspian area; this is known as Sari ware.<sup>71</sup> It probably owes something to the existence of a pre-Islamic Iranian style in this area; epigraphy in Arabic had no role in this type of pottery.

In western Iran, potters used various motifs engraved in white slip and then covered

with yellowish lead glaze. This decoration consists mostly of lions, big-breasted birds or hybrid animals, mostly a lion-like animal of intersecting circular form, usually placed against a hatched background.<sup>72</sup> Sasanian themes such as a series of five altars or imitations of a Pahlavī inscription continued without any new interpretation;<sup>73</sup> however, contrary to the situation in the east of Iran, epigraphic decoration was rare. This suggests that the character of Būyid art reflected their political attitudes, particularly in the attempt to revive pre-Islamic Iran.

Most of the metalwork that has survived from early Islamic Iran is made of bronze and brass, in the form of ewers and jars. These vessels are decorated by animal or floral patterns against a plain background. Pre-Islamic Iran produced many silver plates with hunting scenes in relief.<sup>74</sup> The hunter, riding a galloping horse and chasing various animals, was a popular Sasanian theme, which was adopted by Islamic artists in the early Islamic period. The production of these hunting plates in relief continued through many centuries, but the designs gradually became stylised and relief was flattened.

Between the 2<sup>nd</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> century, magnificent silver-gilt artefacts were produced in various shapes and adorned with pre-Islamic motifs comprising of animals, plants and geometrical patterns. Animals formed a major theme in the visual arts and particularly in metalwork. Animal motifs can be traced back to pre-Islamic Iran and played an important role in the formation of Islamic metalwork. Birds, fish and animals related to hunting predominate. In addition to these real animals, considerable numbers of imaginary creatures were produced as decorative elements.<sup>75</sup>

A flat silver-gilt dish, with a design of stylized *senmurvs* (the lion-headed birds of Iranian myth), at centre and rim, clarifies the transitional aesthetic of the late 3<sup>rd</sup>/9<sup>th</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> century. The earlier scenes of royal hunting and feasting have been changed into a pattern of interlaced bands forming circular compartments filled with stylized flowers and animals. The shape has also evolved; the round shape of pre-Islamic dishes has become octagonal.<sup>76</sup>

In Sāmānid times, the use of epigraphic bands on silver vessels, as on pottery, became common in Khurasan and Tansoxania. The inscription bands are hard to read, so they show the decorative role of epigraphy. The text mostly contains the signature of the artist, blessings and good wishes to the anonymous owner or a dedication to him. The presence of the names of artists on metalwork indicates the significance of their social position in this period.

By the early 4<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> century certain animal motifs, popular in the early Islamic centuries, began to be replaced by epigraphic bands; however, animal motifs were applied in narrow bands to embellish the rims of the vessels or to fill the space between the letters of the inscriptions.<sup>77</sup>

Under the Būyids, Sasanian themes were reproduced but with Islamic elements. A bronze mirror that dates from the 4<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> century bears a hunting scene in relief in the central circle of its reverse side. An Arabic inscription band in Kufic contains a pious

phrase, which is repeated four times and encircles the motif.<sup>78</sup> A silver bowl of the early Ghaznavid period (4<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> to early 5<sup>th</sup>/11<sup>th</sup> century), depicting a palace reception, shows a ruler frontally depicted on throne supported by two lions, and two courtiers facing him.<sup>79</sup> This scene is reminiscent of late official Sasanian metalwork,<sup>80</sup> but the iconography of the royal reception was changed and is represented with new elements, which were common in early Islamic time in Iran.

Apart from the surface decoration such as engraving or inlay, the vessels themselves were sometimes wholly made in the shape of an animal or bird, mostly the latter.

Numismatics witnessed a significant transformation in early Islamic Iran. The Arab governors began to imitate the Sasanian silver *drachm*, at first anonymously, later with their names in Pahlavī characters, but always with the addition of a pious legend in Kufic in the outer margin of the obverse.<sup>81</sup> This type of coin is known as Arab-Sasanian, but it was not the dominant standard throughout Iran. A hoard of drachmas of the Dābūyid Ispahbads (local military rulers) and early ‘Abbasid governors in Ṭabaristān shows that figural coins of Sasanian type continued to be struck in this area, from the death of Yazdigird III (31/652) to 175/791. Each coin bears the profile portrait of the Dābūyid ruler inscribed with Pahlavī on the obverse, and a fire altar on the reverse.<sup>82</sup>

A remarkable *dirham*, undated, but probably of the year 75/695, shows a figure, who due to his unusual ornamentation is not a Sasanian ruler, and on the reverse is to be seen a *miḥrāb* and the Prophet’s ‘*anaza* (short spear), with two phrases in Kufic.<sup>83</sup> The

replacement of the fire altar by the Prophet's spear shows a new tendency in Islamic iconography.<sup>84</sup>

In the later Umayyad period, the obverse of coins bore the *shahāda* “(there is no god but Allāh)” and the reverse bears a Qur’anic text (Sura 12), both in legible Kufic. Under the ‘Abbasids, this type was continued, with little difference; but the Qur’anic verses were replaced by the statement “Muhammad is the messenger of Allah” on the obverse.<sup>85</sup>

In the beginning of the 3<sup>rd</sup>/9<sup>th</sup> century, the appearance of Iranian dynasties was reflected in the coinage. For example a Ṭāhirid *dirham* (210/825-6), is completely similar to the ‘Abbasid *dirham*, while the name of Ṭāhir appears beneath the reverse, but the name of the caliph is not mentioned.<sup>86</sup> A further coin struck at the Shiraz mint (297/909-10) shows the main characteristics of Ṣaffārid coins. The name of the Ṣaffarid amīr, al-Laith b. ‘Alī, is beneath the obverse, and the caliph’s name is placed on the reverse, and on the outer margins of both sides there occur several isolated “good luck” words in Arabic, such as frequently appear on Persian glazed pottery.<sup>87</sup>

The vast majority of Būyid coins were of standard type; the name of the Būyid *amīr* appeared on the obverse and the name of caliph on the reverse, but a series of figural medallions, presumably of commemorative character, tell another story. A silver medallion has on one side traditional legends in Kufic, with the name of Rukn al-Dawla, and is dated 351/962, while the other side has a frontal portrait of a ruler, with an inscription band in Pahlavī.<sup>88</sup> A golden medallion with a full-face portrait of a Būyid

*amīr*, ‘Adud al- Dawla (359/969-70), with legends in Pahlavī and Arabic, shows an imitation of Sasanian style, but the garments and accessories of the *amir* have been changed and Arabic characters added. A further gold medallion, probably struck in the second half of the 4<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> century<sup>89</sup> shows a ruler on a throne supported by two affronted lions,<sup>90</sup> with facing courtiers on the obverse, with the reverse showing the king seated on horse, carrying a falcon on one thumb and an eagle on the other, and preparing for the hunt.<sup>91</sup> Another coin from this period displays an eagle with outspread wings seizing a duck on one side, and on the other side an eagle attacking a gazelle.<sup>92</sup> These three examples show a tendency to rework the themes and motifs of pre-Islamic Iran and of adjusting them to the new taste.

Sasanian Iran had large silk industries and this did not change basically after the conquest of Iran, so the use of pre-Islamic decorative motifs continued throughout the early Islamic centuries in Iran.<sup>93</sup> Sasanian textiles were mostly decorated with symbolic or mythological themes, cavaliers, and hunting scenes or circular and geometrical patterns. A decorative motif on a caftan comprises a right-facing *senmurv*, inside a medallion surrounded by beading and palmettes, and dates back to the 3<sup>rd</sup> /9<sup>th</sup> century. This shows the influence of Sasanian motifs in the early Islamic centuries.<sup>94</sup>

Decorative textiles of the time were in use in many areas of life, such as clothing, saddle - cloths, interior decoration and carpets. Islamic textiles known as *tiraz* were inscribed with a historical text. The name *tiraz* derives from the Persian *tirzidan*, “to embroider”. This fabric was produced in ‘Abbasid times and very soon become widespread in the

Islamic empire. The typical surviving *tiraz* fragment is inscribed with a single line of Arabic text that offers good wishes and blessing to the caliph, whose titles may be added. Sometime the text also names the vizier who ordered the piece, the place of production and the date. In the 4<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> century, the text of *tiraz* fabrics became longer and more elaborate and gave additional information and also full titles,<sup>95</sup> which makes them more useful sources of information than other contemporary media such as pottery and metalwork.

Two pieces of *tiraz* silk, dating from the middle of the 4<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> century show the evolution of this type of fabric, and also the transformation of the iconography of the period. This is the so-called St. Josse silk. The border shows a series of two-humped camels, with a rooster set in the corner, and two affronted elephants with dragons between their feet. An inscription underneath the elephants' feet, which is upside down,<sup>96</sup> invokes glory and prosperity for the commander, Abū Manṣūr Bakhtikīn, a Turkish commander in Khurasan, who was killed in 350/961.<sup>97</sup> The elephant was used by the Sasanian army and was a symbol of power. The roosters and flying scarves on the camels are motifs that had been used in pre-Islamic Iran, while the dragon is a Chinese motif and two-humped camels are indigenous to Central Asia. The Arabic text is a new element that has appeared as an Islamic symbol.

Two double-cloth fabrics that were probably woven in Rayy in the 4<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> century<sup>98</sup> are important here. The first one shows an eagle with outspread wings inside a circle,<sup>99</sup> while the second one illustrates a further eagle inside a square form. Each one is

encircled by a Kufic inscription band.<sup>100</sup> Each text contains a motto and a prayer (*du'ā*).<sup>101</sup> The eagle was a pre-Islamic symbol, but the Arabic inscription band was of course a sign of Islam. A further fragment of silk textile is decorated with a large medallion, in which lion-clawed griffins rampant are placed at the sides of the tree of life, symmetrically repeated, inside a medallion that is framed by a two-line Kufic inscription.<sup>102</sup> Such a combination of both pre-Islamic and Islamic symbols is a sign of the transitional nature of the visual arts in this period.

The official, religious and literary language of the Sasanians was Pahlavī or Parsī (Middle Persian). In the first Islamic century, Pahlavī was replaced by Arabic and that became the official written language, but numerous dialects of Pahlavī continued to be spoken in Iran.<sup>103</sup>

From the 2<sup>nd</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> century onward, however, the dominant language for writing and literature became Arabic and educated Iranians used this language, so the ancient books of history, wisdom, science, stories and myths had to be translated from Pahlavī into Arabic.<sup>104</sup>

The 3<sup>rd</sup>/ 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> centuries witnessed an enormous growth in literature, particularly poetry. Owing to the lesser influence of Arabic language and culture in the east and the flourishing of Middle Persian in Fars and in the west of Iran, the new Persian language found its most congenial home in the east of Iran, Sīstān, Khurasan and Transoxania. In addition, the role of the Sāmānids in reviving ancient Iranian

culture is noteworthy. The appearance of the new Persian language was a significant sign of the birth of a new Islamic- Iranian culture. The Sāmānids were orthodox Muslims, but at the same time they wanted to honour pre-Islamic Iranian traditions. They found a satisfactory compromise in the New Persian language, which was written in Arabic characters but which had adapted the old culture into contemporary Islamic models. The word “transformation” describes this process more accurately than the word “renaissance”. In fact pre-Islamic culture was altered to respond to the new Islamic conditions. The appearance of the New Persian language and its literature under Sāmānid rule created an environment that permitted Firdāwsī to begin his poetic version of the Persian national epic, the *Shāh-nāma*. Indeed, in the Sāmānid renaissance, it was not so much classical philosophy and science that were accorded a rebirth as the pre-Islamic Iranian heritage.<sup>105</sup>

The new Persian language, which is known as *farsī-i dari* or *darī*, appeared in the 3<sup>rd</sup>/9<sup>th</sup> century after a two-century decline in Iranian history. This language was linguistically a continuation of Middle Persian (Pahlavī), which itself was a continuance of Old Persian, the language of the Achaemenids.<sup>106</sup> At this period *darī* was used only in speech, but it gradually became a cultural language and made spectacular strides from the 3<sup>rd</sup>/9<sup>th</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup>/12<sup>th</sup> century.

The new Persian language started with poetry, and a large number of poets such as Rūdakī (d. 330/941), Daqīqī (d.367/977) and - the best known - Firdawsī (d.c.413/1020) date from this period. The poetry of this period can be subdivided into three categories;

lyrical, narrative and epic. The most important type of Iranian poetry is epic, which consists of the recital in verse of the whole history, factual or imaginary, of Iran from the creation of the world to the end of the Sasanian dynasty.<sup>107</sup>

Firdawsī, the pre-eminent poet of the epic style, wrote his heroic *Shāh-nāma* in this period. He skilfully revised the previous written sources such as the Sasanian historical record, the Khwadāy-nāmag (Book of Kings), and Manṣūr Balkhī's *Shāh-nāma*, in his own way and expressed for the people of the time their heroic past and tried to provoke a sense of national sentiment. The *Shāh-nāma* was not only a simple narrative story, but was also the essence of pre-Islamic Iranian national memories.

The poetry of this period is important as an effective medium to transfer the culture of pre-Islamic Iran to the Islamic period. This modern language also provided a base for the medieval Iranian figurative art that was to appear in the following centuries.

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<sup>1</sup>Zarrīnkūb, *CHr* IV, p.11.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p.12.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p.13.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p.14.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p.16.

<sup>6</sup> Frye, *Golden Age*, p.55.

<sup>7</sup> Zarrīnkūb, p.19.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p.20.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

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- <sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p.21.
- <sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p.22.
- <sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p.24.
- <sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p.26.
- <sup>15</sup> Bosworth, *History of Civilization IV*, pt. 1, p. 24.
- <sup>16</sup> Choksy, *Conflict*, p.21.
- <sup>17</sup> Zarrīnkūb, p.28. for Arab settlement in Iran see also Daniel, *EIr* II, pp.210-14.
- <sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p.46.
- <sup>19</sup> Frye, p.106.
- <sup>20</sup> Zarrīnkūb, p.28.
- <sup>21</sup> Choksy, p. 106.
- <sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p.107.
- <sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>25</sup> Ghirshman, “Une Mosquée”, *Bulletin d’Etudes Orientales* XII (1947-8), pp.77-79.
- <sup>26</sup> Whitehouse, *Congregational Mosque*, p.9.
- <sup>27</sup> Bosworth, *New Islamic*, p.169.
- <sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.105-6.
- <sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p.173.
- <sup>30</sup> Frye, p.199.
- <sup>31</sup> Bosworth, *CHI* IV, p.128.
- <sup>32</sup> *SPA* III, pp. 939-40.
- <sup>33</sup> *SPA* VIII, pl.259 a, b.
- <sup>34</sup> Bosworth, *New Islamic*, p.170.
- <sup>35</sup> Blair, *Monumental* , p.25.
- <sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.47.
- <sup>37</sup> Kramer, *Humanism*, p.32.
- <sup>38</sup> Blair, p.44.

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- <sup>39</sup>*Ibid.*, pp.41-2.
- <sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.38-9.
- <sup>41</sup> *EI* I, p.1350.
- <sup>42</sup> Kramer, p.285.
- <sup>43</sup> Bosworth, *New Islamic*, p.297
- <sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>45</sup> Bosworth, *CHI* IV, p.171.
- <sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p 196.
- <sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p.184.
- <sup>48</sup> Bosworth, *New Islamic*, p.162.
- <sup>49</sup> Madelung, *CHI* IV, p.215.
- <sup>50</sup> Bosworth, *New Islamic*, p.165.
- <sup>51</sup>Miles, *CHI* IV, p. 373.
- <sup>52</sup> Bosworth, *New Islamic*, p.165.
- <sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.148-49
- <sup>54</sup>Madelung , p.225.
- <sup>55</sup> Blair, p. 49 and p. 66.
- <sup>56</sup> Bosworth, *New Islamic*, p.158.
- <sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p.160.
- <sup>58</sup> A part of the old wall of the city is still surviving.
- <sup>59</sup> Hillenbrand, “Islamic Re-working”, *Sifting Sands*, p.217.
- <sup>60</sup> Wilkinson, *Iranian Ceramic*, p.4.
- <sup>61</sup> Hakimov, Novgorodova and Dani , “Arts and Crafts”, *History of Civilization* IV, Pt. 2, p.416.
- <sup>62</sup> Wilkinson, p.4.
- <sup>63</sup> Ettinghausen and Grabar, *Art and Architecture*, p.225.
- <sup>64</sup> *Ibid.* p.227.
- <sup>65</sup> Soucek, *Elr* II, p.605.
- <sup>66</sup> Ettinghausen and Grabar, p.229.

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- <sup>67</sup> Blair and Bloom, “Iraq, Iran and Egypt”, *IAA*, p.122.
- <sup>68</sup> For more information see Quchanī , *Katībihā-yi Sūfal Nishapur*.
- <sup>69</sup> Volov, “Plaited Kufic”, *AO VI*, p.108. See also Frye, p.200.
- <sup>70</sup> Hakimov, Novgorodova and Dani, p.415.
- <sup>71</sup> Ettinghausen and Grabar, p. 232 and fig. 243.
- <sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, p.231.
- <sup>73</sup> *Ibid.* p.132.
- <sup>74</sup> Blair and Bloom, p.123.
- <sup>75</sup> Bear, *Metalwork*, p.155.
- <sup>76</sup> Blair and Bloom, p.123.
- <sup>77</sup> Baer, p.154.
- <sup>78</sup> Loukonine and Ivanov, *Lost Treasures*, p.130.
- <sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 118.
- <sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, p.103, Cat.75.
- <sup>81</sup> Miles, *CHI IV*, p.364.
- <sup>82</sup> Malik, “ A Hoard Group”, *The Numismatics Chronicle* 156 (1996) pp.176-91.
- <sup>83</sup> These two words are “Commander of the Faithful” and “Caliph of Allah”.
- <sup>84</sup> Miles, “Mihrab and ‘Anazah”, *Archaeologica Orientalia*, pp.156-71.
- <sup>85</sup> Miles, *CHIr IV*, p.367.
- <sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, p.372.
- <sup>87</sup> Lazard, *CHI IV*, p.598.
- <sup>88</sup> Miles, “A Portrait”, *ANSMN XI* (1964), pp. 283-93.
- <sup>89</sup> The date of this coin is in dispute. See Atil, Chase and Jett, *Islamic Metal Work*, pp. 266-67, fig. 43.8.
- <sup>90</sup> The Lion was a Sasanian symbol of kingship and was related in literary traditional to ‘Adud al-Dula’s supposed ancestor, Bahrām Gūr; see Kramer, pp.44-5.
- <sup>91</sup> Bahrāmī, “A gold Medal”, *Archaeologica Orientalia*, pp.5-21.
- <sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, p.376, fig. 28/4.
- <sup>93</sup> Rogers, “The Influence”, *Early Islamic Textiles*, p.33.

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<sup>94</sup> Loukonine and Ivanov, p.108, Cat.83, and p.110. For a parallel in the Sasanian period, see Godard, *Art of Iran*, p.193, pl. III.

<sup>95</sup> Bloom and Blair, p.119.

<sup>96</sup> This cloth was possibly a part of a saddle, so its inscription was legible for horseman.

<sup>97</sup> Blair, Bloom and Wardwell, "Revaluating the Date", *AO XXII* (1992), p.7.

<sup>98</sup> The date of silks of Rayy is in dispute. See Blair, Bloom and Wardwell, pp.1-41.

<sup>99</sup> *SPA* XI, pl. 989.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>101</sup> Ruhfar, "Naqsh-i U'qāb", *Majalla-yi Bastanshinasī va Tarīkh* II (1367/1988). pp.25-6.

<sup>102</sup> Loukonine, p.118, Cat.97.

<sup>103</sup> Lazard, *CHI* IV, p.599.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, p.603.

<sup>105</sup> Kramer, p. 45.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, p.596.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, p.624.

## II

### LEGACY OF SASANIAN ARCHITECTURE

#### **1. Sasanian Architecture: an Overview**

The Sasanian dynasty (224-651 A.D) was the last Iranian empire before the Islamic period. Under this dynasty Iran witnessed great achievements of civilization and culture, whose influence can be traced in the Islamic era. The Sasanian dynasty, like that of the Achaemenids, originated in the province of Fars. In reviving the glories of the Achaemenid past, after the Hellenistic and Parthian interlude, the Sasanians were no mere imitators; they created an art which in some respects was essential in the formation of Islamic art.

Since there are relatively few surviving monuments from this period, a comprehensive study that reveals all aspects of Sasanian architecture is very difficult to write. In addition, insufficient excavation at the major Sasanian sites explains certain ambiguities

about the structures of this period. The well-known contribution of Oscar Reuther in *A Survey of Persia Art* is not sufficiently supported by field studies and by an actual examination of all the monuments, so it is somewhat inadequate. A closely-focused study by Lionel Bier suggests a date in the early Islamic period for a key building in Sarvistān.<sup>1</sup> The reconstruction drawing by Dieulafoy of the Īwān-i Karkha, which in fact is based only on the remains of a brick wall, seems imaginary. Bier argues in favour of a date in the Islamic period for this wall.<sup>2</sup> The recent excavation at ‘Imārat-i Khusraw or Qaṣr-i Shīrīn by ICHTO (1384-5/2005-6) shows that the reconstructed plan of this building by Reuther is not accurate (Fig.II.1) and also suggests a date in the Islamic period for this monument.<sup>3</sup> The removal of these examples from the list of Sasanian monuments makes a re-examination of previous knowledge about Sasanian architecture is necessary.

The earliest monument of the period is the palace of Ardashīr (224-41 A.D), the founder of the dynasty, at Firūzābād. This building was erected just before Ardashīr’s kingship (c.224 A.D), so it even predates the Sasanian era. The building represents a style and technique of construction that had evolved in Fars on a more modest scale in earlier centuries. It already embodies all the basic elements of Sasanian architecture, which remained in place until the end of this period and also in the early Islamic architecture of Iran (see below). The basic concept of design owed much to the principles of palace architecture developed under the Achaemenids, notably in the combination of two separate but adjoining architectural complexes – the official and public palace and the attached residential (or private) quarters.<sup>4</sup>

The plan of the building is designed along a longitudinal axis of symmetry.<sup>5</sup> The public part, on the north side of the building, comprises three square rooms of the same size. The middle one apparently served as the throne room and is covered by a dome, whose transition zone contains four conical squinches. Each squinch contains several elliptical arches, one over the other. The throne room is preceded by a deep *īwān* (a single large vaulted hall walled on three sides and opening directly to the outside on the fourth)<sup>6</sup> open to the north and facing a pool. This *īwān* with its barrel-vaulted roof is flanked by lateral rooms and, unlike its Parthian prototype, serves as a vestibule or entrance hall to the dome chamber.<sup>7</sup> A further *īwān* of smaller size symmetrically connected the throne room to the courtyard on the south side. The courtyard was surrounded by rectangular rooms, covered by barrel vaults; this was the private part of the building. The palace at Firūzābād is built of indigenous material - rubble masonry and plaster (gypsum) mortar. There is no trace of the interior decoration of the main *īwān*,<sup>8</sup> but in the lateral room can be seen a series of niches akin to the lower ones of the main (northern) façade. All the walls of the building are coated by plaster. The only applied decoration is of archivolt around the arches of the doors and niches, and elaborate cornices that imitate stone prototypes at Perspolis.<sup>9</sup>

In the Qal‘a-yi Dukhtar nearby,<sup>10</sup> which is a simplified version of the palace at Firūzābād, the throne room is preceded by a deep *īwān*, but unlike that of Firūzābād the *īwān* opens to a terrace, which faces a courtyard and its surrounding rooms, set at a lower level. In fact the courtyard is a unifying element that connects the public and private areas of the palace. There is no trace of any interior decoration. The building, like that of Firūzābād,

is built of rubble masonry and plaster mortar. The exteriors of these palaces at Firūzābād and Qal‘a-yi Dukhtar were decorated by blind arches.

The development of the essential features of the Firūzābād plan and structure- the *īwān* and doomed room - was abandoned in the middle of Sasanian era, as shown by a palace at Ctesiphon and another one at Bishāpūr.<sup>11</sup>

The Parthian royal city of Ctesiphon was chosen by Ardashir as the capital of the Sasanian empire and a palace, which is known as Ṭāq-i Kisrā (or Īwān-i Khusraw),<sup>12</sup> was built later in this city. The date of construction of the building is uncertain;<sup>13</sup> however, this building is one of the most impressive structures of the Sasanian era and also of Iranian architecture as a whole. The original structure of the *īwān* has unfortunately fallen into ruin and now only a fragment of the *īwān* and part of the main façade still stand. This monument consists of a lofty *īwān* (c.35 m. high, c.43.50 m. deep and c. 25.50 m. wide), roofed by a barrel vault. Unlike the previous palace at Firūzābād, the *īwān* opened to an enclosed courtyard across which it was probably faced by a symmetrical structure. The main façade, which is symmetrically extended on both sides of the *īwān*, comprises six storeys of niches and blind arches carried on engaged columns.<sup>14</sup> This façade is not incorporated into the structure behind it and it seems that the builder aimed only to glorify the *īwān*.

A further structure, probably a palace, at Bishāpūr in Fars province shows another type of construction. This building was erected by Shāpūr I (241-72 A.D) after his victory over the Romans. The cruciform plan of this palace comprises a great hall, flanked by four triple-vaulted *īwāns* (or niches). This plan is akin to that of the courtyards surrounded by

four *īwāns* at Nysa and Assūr.<sup>15</sup> The large courtyard to the east of the great hall is paved with mosaic panels, which show the influence of Roman styles. In addition, elaborate decorative motifs borrowed from Graeco-Roman sources- the Greek key, dentils, leaf scrolls and acanthus motifs – have preserved traces of their original brilliant black, red and yellow paint.<sup>16</sup> A further building that is known as the temple of Anāhītā (the goddess of water in ancient Iran), is adjacent to the palace; however, its function is disputed.<sup>17</sup> This building comprises a square courtyard that is lower than the ground level, so steps lead down to it.<sup>18</sup> The courtyard is surrounded by four connected corridors that are covered with flat roofs. This temple is built of ashlar masonry and plaster mortar.

Two later palaces at Damghan<sup>19</sup> and Kīsh (in Mesopotamia)<sup>20</sup> can be categorised as structures with triple-aisled halls, showing the structural role of piers and massive walls. In the building at Damghan, a square room is preceded by a triple-aisled vestibule, which comprises wide columns (each column is about 1.80 m. in diameter). The central aisle was possibly covered by a longitudinal barrel vault. The traditional square room beyond this *īwān* was probably domed and was surrounded by four large open arches, and a passageway enclosed the domed room. Palace II at Kīsh had a columned hall that may have been vaulted as at Damghan. An innovation in these two buildings was the differentiation between the height of the main aisle and that of the flanking aisles which emphasised the main aisle. The two buildings at Damghan and Kīsh were of baked brick covered with stucco, which shows a remarkable development in the decorated revetment of the walls, columns and archivolts. Apart from their surface treatment, there is little evidence about the proportions of Sasanian columns, but in most case it seems that they were squat and baseless.<sup>21</sup> There is no column preserved to its full height, but the capitals

of Bīsūtūn show the use of the abacus capital in this period.<sup>22</sup>

The fire temple (*atashgāh*) is a further surviving type of Sasanian building. This building generally comprised a square domed room, whose dome was on squinches carried on four piers connected by arches. The room was surrounded by a narrow passageway or ambulatory, subsidiary rooms or *īwāns*. The domed square room is typologically known as *chāhār ṭāq* (literally four vaults), and usually has four axial arched doors. The name *chāhār ṭāq* characterises the system of construction of the building. The adjacent additions of the scattered *chāhār ṭāqs* in Iran have disappeared, so a free-standing *chāhār ṭāq* has become nearly synonymous with the term “fire temple”. However, there is no archaeological evidence that a canopy *chāhār ṭāq* existed in the Sasanian period.<sup>23</sup> This type of building is frequently of rubble masonry and plaster mortar. The first fully developed *chāhār ṭāq* is perhaps the now ruined Takht-i Nishin in Fars with arched bays on the interior between the piers, and with a cruciform ground plan.<sup>24</sup> This building comprises a square ground plan with walls of cut stone, a brick dome and projecting *īwān* or additional chamber. Two isolated *chāhār ṭāqs*, one in Khurasan (Ribāṭ-i Safīd)<sup>25</sup> and another one at Niyāsar,<sup>26</sup> near Kashan, are well-known examples of this type.

Takht-i Sulaimān,<sup>27</sup> which was known as Shīz in Sasanian times, was the place of one of the most sacred fires of Zoroastrian Iran, Atur Gushasp. The basic element of the complex was a fire temple in form of a *chāhār ṭāq*, which was set within an enclosing wall. The domed chamber of the fire temple was preceded by an *īwān*. As at Firūzābād, the monument faces a pool, and arcades define the courtyard of the complex. The remains of a huge *īwān* (10 m. wide and 27 m. deep), which is not on the same axis as the fire temple, can be seen on the north-west side of the complex, and was probably built

later by Khusraw I. The dimensions of the *īwān* and its lateral halls show its importance as the audience hall in this complex. The fire temple and the building around it at Takht-i Sulaimān are of baked brick. The surrounding wall of the complex is of rubble masonry and fortified by regularly spaced semi-circular towers.

The commemorating or advertising of an event by cutting a sculpture on a cliff was common in the Sasanian era. However, it was already an old tradition in Iran. What is new about Sasanian rock reliefs is their scale and number.<sup>28</sup> Apart from nearly thirty rock relief in Fars province, there are three additional rock-cut monuments of the 4<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> century A.D at Tāq-i Bustān, as well as an atypical early relief near the city of Salmās. The major themes of these rock reliefs are the investiture of the king by a deity, usually Ahurā Mazda, or the king's triumph over his enemies.<sup>29</sup>

The main characteristics of Sasanian architecture can be highlighted as follows:

### **Building Materials**

Rubble masonry with plaster (gypsum) mortar are the principal materials particularly in such durable and solid buildings as the palace of Ardashīr and Qal'a-yi Dukhtar, both at Firūzābād, scattered *chāhār tāqs* or the piers of bridges. Mud brick remained a most important building material and was used in buildings such as Damghan, Kīsh, the buildings that were excavated at Ctesiphon and Bandīān.<sup>30</sup> Large baked bricks were frequently used for vaults and domes, although some buildings were made entirely of baked brick such as Ctesiphon and Takht-i Sulaimān. The size of baked brick and mud brick was sometimes particularly large (30-40 cm. x 30-40 cm. x 10-12 cm, as at

Ctesiphon, Kīsh and Damghan). Ashlar stone appears in some buildings such as Bishāpūr, Firūzābād and Tāq-i Garrā.

### **Construction Techniques and Structural Types**

Sasanian architecture is characterised by the widespread use of mortar masonry and vaulting.<sup>31</sup> The development of the Sasanian vaulting without centering succeeded thanks to the rapid setting of plaster mortar. Barrel vaults were the most common type, and were built with an elliptical cross-section, without centering. In this type of vault vertical semi-circular courses, inclined from the back wall, are used with a narrow strip of centering for the first courses, and the following ones are successively echeloned outwards from the back wall. The standard unit of the rectangular barrel-vaulted room was often enlarged by vaulted bays.

Carrying a dome on squinches (arches set across the corners of a cube, and thus forming a transition zone) was perhaps the most significant architectural innovation of the Sasanian period. The conical squinches at each corner of a square plan provide an octagonal base for erecting a domes. The experimental form of this system distinguished the construction of Persian dome from the concept of domes on pendentives as in Byzantine architecture.<sup>32</sup> The period of the creation of the squinch is uncertain, but it possibly originated from eastern Iran.<sup>33</sup> The dome (*gunbad*) at Firūzābād, shows an early stage of this system; here the *gunbad* proper does not have a perfect circular base but rises on a fairly well rounded octagon; however it was not until the Islamic period that a perfect octagon was achieved. The building at Firūzābād and other later examples show

that a domed room comprises three horizontal levels: a massive wall with a central door or arches on each side, a transitional zone including the corner squinches and usually windows between them on the main axis, and finally the dome, set over the transition zone. The addition of an *īwān*, with a barrel vault, at the four sides of the square courtyard, as at Parthian Ashūr, creates a four *īwān*-plan, which was later used widely in the Islamic architecture of Iran.

Three basic types of arches occur in the Sasanian period. Those of the first type spring smoothly from door jambs or walls. The second type is set back, so that its diameter is greater than the width of the doorway or niche it covers. A third type is the outset arch. All these arches can be erected without centering, provided that the stones are structural elements and that rapidly setting mortar is used as a binder.<sup>34</sup> With the introduction of wide-spanning vaults, the use of columns as a constructive element was abandoned, but in a group of buildings with triple-aisled halls covered by longitudinal or transversal barrel vaults,<sup>35</sup> columns and massive walls played the main role in construction. The use of rubble masonry and baked brick in the foundations of a building was common. Baked bricks were also used in upright courses with gypsum mortar.<sup>36</sup> The construction of columns with alternating vertical and horizontal courses of brick, as in Parthian Ashūr,<sup>37</sup> continued in the Sasanian period.<sup>38</sup>

### **Types of Buildings**

As mentioned above, owing to the dearth of surviving monuments, providing information about all types of buildings in this period is difficult. The main types of buildings can be classified as palaces and religious structures. Commemorative rock reliefs are

noteworthy, but cannot count as architecture.

The palaces of the early Sasanian era are characterised by an axis of symmetry, featuring a domed room that is preceded by a deep *īwān* as a reception area with lateral rooms. The central dome also has subsidiary halls, which are covered by barrel vaults. A courtyard in front of or behind the reception area is regarded as the private quarters. In the late Sasanian epoch, a lofty *īwān*, without a dome chamber behind it (e.g. Ṭāq-i Kisrā and the eastern *īwān* at Takht-i Sulaimān) become the principal element of the architecture. The tripled-aisle buildings of Damghan, Kīsh, Chāl Ṭarkhān and Tepe Mīl are other type of palaces formed in this period.

The standard Sasanian fortification type is of rubble masonry and comprises a ditch, massive walls surmounted by stepped battlements, corridors or rooms inside the wall and semi-circular towers projecting from the face of the wall.<sup>39</sup> The gate is flanked by two semi-circular towers. The remains of a gigantic building at Sarpul-i Dhahāb, in west Iran, which was possibly a fort, bear most of these features.<sup>40</sup> In some cases such as Ctesiphon and Iṣṭakhr, the enclosure wall is of mud brick.

Owing to the ban on burying corpses in the Zoroastrian religion, there is no funerary structure except the *ustudān* (a free-standing enclosed space for preserving bones), in this period (e.g. those of Rayy and outside of Yazd, Kirman and at Sīrāf). Some commemorative or triumphal monuments have been identified by inscription such as the twin columns at Bishāpūr.<sup>41</sup> The late Sasanian Ṭāq-i Garra, a small *īwān* with archivolt and the square tower at the centre of the city of Ardashir Khurra can also be considered as the commemorative buildings. Two late Sasanian *īwāns* with their significant rock

reliefs at Tāq-i Bustān<sup>42</sup> are further examples of this type of structure.

A building that is known as Caravansarai-yi Pāfāq, near Qaṣr-i Shīrīn could be a Sasanian structure.<sup>43</sup> This building is of rubble masonry and roofed by barrel vault. This structure has no courtyard and is not fortified. The remains of a caravansarai at Dair-i Gachīn suggest a date for the original building in Sasanian times, but the structure could have been built in the early Islamic period.<sup>44</sup>

### **Decoration**

Ornament is one of the major characteristics of Sasanian architecture. It was used to embellish the massive walls and piers with moulded or carved stucco. This type of decoration appeared at Bishāpūr, while stucco in relief was found at Chāl Tarkhān<sup>45</sup>, Ctesiphon, Ḥajjābād<sup>46</sup> and Kīsh. The findings of Sasanian sites show animal figures set in roundels, human busts, and geometric and floral motifs. The geometrical patterns frequently comprise abstract compositions of both straight and curved lines, cruciform patterns, swastikas (either single or combined with lotus and palmette, continuous parallel zigzags, various forms of lozenge grids with trefoils and quatrefoils and concentric spirals or circles.<sup>47</sup>

Floral and vegetal motifs accounted for the major patterns of stucco decoration, and include leaves of lotus and acanthus, rosettes, oak leaves and pomegranates, as well as palmettes. However, some of these patterns were created in imaginary forms. Combinations of the ends of leaves formed reciprocal patterns. The animal figures used in stucco ornament include camels, deer, lions, eagles, and other birds, which were employed to decorate empty spaces. Most of these patterns are set in roundels or square

frames and usually accompanied floral motifs.

The partly surviving plaster decoration at Bandiān (datable to the 5<sup>th</sup> century A.D) shows war and hunt scenes, figures flanking an altar, and sitting and standing persons in relief. The stucco finds from this site also yielded inscriptions on plaster, which were possibly more common in the Sasanian period than is normally thought.<sup>48</sup> In the palace at Kīsh, human busts decorated the arch of the palace and the columned room was painted, parts in polychrome and the rest in either plain red or yellow. Similar stucco decoration was found in the ruins of a group private houses, or villas, excavated at Ctesiphon. Similarly, fragmentary stucco from Bishāpūr and Chāl Tarkhān shows that the interior walls of these sites were painted.

Wall niches are a common feature of Sasanian palace architecture (Firūzābād and Bishāpūr).<sup>49</sup> The niche is mainly to be seen in a rectangular framer with arched head and or it is semi-circular with a semi-dome half hood.<sup>50</sup> The semi-circular niches at Bishāpūr are elaborately decorated with carved stucco mouldings. In Ardishīr's palace at Firūzābād, the large niches are elaborated with stucco impost moldings and rectangular frames surmounted by foliated cavetto moldings.

The articulation of large wall surfaces by arched niches, blind arcades and engaged columns -with base or capital- was a common practice in Parthian times<sup>51</sup> that became a characteristic of Sasanian palace architecture too (as at Firūzābād, Tāq-i Kisrā and Bishāpūr). The floors of buildings were frequently coated with plaster or stone, but at Bishāpūr, where Roman elements can be detected, some of the floors were decorated with mosaic, showing ladies of leisure, a musician and busts.<sup>52</sup>

## 2. The Influence of Sasanian Architecture in early Islamic Iran

The continuation of an earlier architectural legacy in the following period is unsurprising. Some of the main Sasanian architectural characteristics evolved further in early Islamic Iran and achieved full maturity in the Islamic period. To better understand the transformation of the old and the creation of the new, the main features of the Sasanian architecture are discussed below. Among these features, the dome and *īwān* are the most important, so they precede the others.

### **Dome** (*gunbad*)

The setting of a dome over a transition zone was an impressive feature of Sasanian architecture which was further developed in the early Islamic period. The use of lighter materials such as baked brick for the dome itself caused some changes such as the creation of a decorative transition zone and applying a pointed arch profile. Most surviving Sasanian domes are those over *chāhār ṭāqs*, so it is difficult to separate the history of the dome chamber in general from that of the *chāhār ṭāq* form in particular.<sup>53</sup> Owing to the key role of this type of construction in both religious and palatial architecture, it is the most predominant element in traditional Iranian architecture after the *īwān*. The *chāhār ṭāq* form - as distinct from its religious function - can be seen in four major forms in the Islamic era: the mausoleum, the mosque, the palace and the garden pavilion.<sup>54</sup>

Only a few mosques in *chāhār ṭāq* form survive in early Islamic Iran (as at Qirva);<sup>55</sup> the significance of the domed chamber became more important and common in the Saljuq period, with the insertion of a dome chamber, into the hypostyle plan of the Friday mosque at Isfahan (479-80/1086-87). The appearance of this layout in Isfahan is not clear. Blair says that the dome chamber at Isfahan (479-80/ 1086-87) was probably intended as a *maqṣūra*, or area reserved for the sultan and his court, and was built in imitation of the great dome that Malik Shah had seen in the mosque at Damascus during his visit in the autumn of 1086.<sup>56</sup> This statement can be disputed. First, according to an inscription band below the dome at Damascus, Malik Shāh ordered the reconstruction of the dome of this mosque in 475/1082-83,<sup>57</sup> so the date of Malik Shāh's visit is uncertain.<sup>58</sup> Second, the huge size of the dome at Isfahan and its constructional features shows that it was not only intended as a *maqṣūra*.<sup>59</sup> In addition, the dome of Damascus was built over existing piers, while that of Isfahan was free-standing and replaced several piers. It is noteworthy at this time, Isfahan was the capital city of the great Saljuqs, and Khwaja Nizām al-Mulk, the chief *vazīr* of Malik Shāh, was trying to develop this city as the capital of the Islamic world. It is not surprising that Khwaja Nizām al-Mulk as an Iranian nationalist revived the *chāhār ṭāq*, a traditional architectural form, to create such a great dome chamber in Isfahan. In fact this addition was a prologue to signify the power and independence of the Saljuqs. The concept of this addition was shortly expanded into other mosques such as those of Ardistan and Sāva.

The presence of a dome chamber on the *qibla* side became standard right up to the present time in Iranian architecture. The free-standing dome chamber mosque also became popular in the Saljuq period and was widespread all over Iran from the late years

of the 5<sup>th</sup>/11<sup>th</sup> century onward.<sup>60</sup> Major progress was achieved with the construction of doubled-shell dome (see next chapter), as at the tomb tower at Samiran, and those of Kharraqān (dated 1067-68 and 1093). The double dome later developed still further, a process which led to spectacular domes in the Timurid period.

By the 4<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> century the appearance of the domed mausoleum further underlined the importance of the dome in the architecture of early Islamic Iran. Two early mausoleums in Transoxiana, the Sāmānid tomb in Bukhara (first half of the 4<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> century) and ‘Aṭa (c. 367/977-78) at Tīm, show the development of the transition zone in this period (see next chapter). The mausoleum of the Sāmānids in Bukhara, with its hemispherical dome, four axial entrances, engaged columns at the exterior corners and upper decorative gallery, revives the idea of the Sasanian *chāhār ṭāq*, but in Islamic form.<sup>61</sup> Other early Islamic mausoleums such as Sangbast, Davāzdah Imām and Pīr-i Hamza-i Sabzpūsh, also show the use of the *chāhār ṭāq* form. The cruciform type found at Bishāpūr was developed for mausoleums in the Timurid period; these were of moderate size only.<sup>62</sup>

The *chāhār ṭāq* form is also to be found in other types of buildings such as garden pavilions and palaces. The earliest known building of this type is the *Dār al-‘Imāra* (government house) at Marv (ca. 132/750), which had a domed chamber with four doors, each leading to an *īwān*.<sup>63</sup> The Kūshk-i Raḥīmābād at Bam reveals the scheme of the earliest surviving garden pavilion in the Islamic era. This building, like that of Marv, comprises a square plan, which has a central dome chamber with four axial doorways, each leading to an *īwān*. The identical plan is to be seen in a palace at Lashkar-i Bāzār

(5<sup>th</sup>/11<sup>th</sup> century), in Afghanistan.<sup>64</sup> Although no surviving garden pavilion is known in later medieval Iranian architecture, Safavid palaces preserved the echo of a dome chamber around a central pool (*hauḍ*) connected to four *īwāns*, in this period (e.g. Bāgh-i Fīn in Kashan or Hasht Bihisht in Isfahan).

## **Īwān**

The most prominent element of Sasanian architecture was the *īwān*, which strongly influenced Iranian architecture in the Islamic era. The combination of *īwān* and dome chamber in Sasanian times remained a most significant feature of Iranian architecture. In the Islamic era, the *īwān* itself was associated in various forms with the mosque, mausoleum, *madrasa* and caravansarai, garden pavilion and palace.

The *qibla* area of the Tarī Khāna mosque shows the imitation of the Sasanian tradition in a new form. The main aisle, which ends the *miḥrāb* - with a possible dome chamber, which is now vanished - is wider than the flanking bays. A similar plan in the Friday mosque at Na'in suggests an axial design in which a deep aisle ends in a decorative vault over the *miḥrāb*, which reminds one of the Sasanian traditions of a major feature at the end of the *īwān* or aisle. The Masjid-i Malik at Kirman and the Friday mosque at Nīrīz show a deep *qibla* *īwān*. This concept of a huge *qibla* *īwān* even continued to the Ilkhanid period in the Masjid-i 'Alī Shāh, which is locally known as the Arg (c.722/1322), at Tabriz with its huge proportions. It was built to rival the Ṭāq-i Kīsrā. The Friday mosque at Nishapur (899/1493-4) was built on the four-*īwān* plan, but its deep *qibla* *īwān* possibly echoes the same idea.

The addition of domed chamber to a hypostyle plan (and later the addition of courtyard *īwāns*) can be noted as the main legacy of the Sasanian *chāhār ṭāq* in the Islamic world.<sup>65</sup> The appearance of an *īwān* on the *qibla* side incorporated into the dome chambers in the Friday mosque at Isfahan and Ardistan, revived the Sasanian tradition. A further development occurred in the Friday mosque at Zavāra. This mosque was built with four *īwāns* around a central courtyard. This form, with a stress on the *qibla* *īwān* became a standard feature in the Iranian architecture right up to the present time. The other common pattern consists of two *īwāns*, the major one on the *qibla* side and a further smaller one directly opposite, a type found mainly in Khurasan, as at the Friday mosques at Firdaws,<sup>66</sup> Farumad (both in the 6<sup>th</sup>/12<sup>th</sup> century), Gunābād (7<sup>th</sup> /13<sup>th</sup> century). The Friday mosque at Nishapur (899/1493-4) presents another contribution of the *īwān* idea to Islamic architecture in Iran. The *īwān*-like entrance as the main decorative element in mosque façades became a common feature, and appeared in the Ilkhanid period (e.g. the Friday mosques at Ushturjān, Varāmīn and Yazd),<sup>67</sup> and this feature characterises the exterior façade of mosques to the present day.

However, this idea found earlier expression in mausolea. The domed square mausoleum of ‘Arab ‘Aṭā at Tīm is the earliest existing monument to incorporate a *pīshṭāq* (an arched portal projecting from a façade, usually higher than the roof and adjacent walls), which is reminiscent of a shallow *īwān*, and is richly decorated. A similar feature probably existed once at the mausoleum at Sangbast. The *pīshṭāq* developed later and a decorative *īwān*-like entrance (as at the Hārūniya at Tus and Bābā Luqmān at Sarakhs, probably both of

the early 6<sup>th</sup>/ early 12<sup>th</sup> century) became a major feature in the exterior façade of mausoleums and shrines in later centuries.

The location of the *īwān* at the main core of palaces in the Sasanian era (such as those of Firūzābād and Ctesiphon) was repeated in the early Islamic period at Abū Muslim's *Dār al-Imāra* at Marv and the palace at Lashkar-i Bāzār, but now the scheme of a single axis recurred in four-fold symmetry.<sup>68</sup> Kūshk-i Raḥīmābād uses the same plan and shows the vital role of the *īwān* in formation of the garden pavilion, which continued to the Safavid period. Akin to the mosque, the scheme of surviving early caravansarais; such as Ribāṭ-i Karīm, Muḥammadābād and Ribāṭ-i Anūshīrvān at Āhuvān, reveal the four-*īwān* pattern, which virtually became the standard type of construction of caravansarais in Islamic Iran. In the layout of caravansarais, the *īwān*, which is alongside the entrance, facing the courtyard, and the other one on the opposite side, are frequently distinguished by greater height or elaboration.

Certain features of Sasanian fortification were used in such palaces as Takht-i Sulaimān and became standard in the design of palaces and caravansarais in Iran. This pattern was also imitated in the construction of the Umayyad and 'Abbasid palaces.<sup>69</sup>

Rock reliefs were not continued in the Islamic era for over a thousand years, but in the early Qajar period some rock relief were executed by the order of Fath 'Alī Shāh in commemoration of him.<sup>70</sup>

The use of barrel vaults continued in early Islamic Iran as a main type of vaults and the simplest of all (as at the caravansarais at Muḥammadābād, Āhuvān, Dair-i Gachīn, Ribāṭ-i Karīm, Qal‘a-yi Ramūk, Raḥīmābād , and the mosques at Damghan, Fahraj and Firdaws). Owing to the use of the lighter material of brick, the barrel vault was built with a pointed arch profile over an extensive space, while narrow ribs of brick or plaster were used as centering alongside the vault. This kind of vault was widely used in the construction of the roof of a building (for instance in the *qibla īwān* at Nīrīz and those of the Friday mosques at Gunābād and Firdaws). This type of vault became popular much later in construction of bazaars in Iran (Isfahan and Kashan).

The axial *īwān* scheme of building continued in various forms - single, double and four-fold. The presence of arcades around a central courtyard, as at Takht-i Sulaimān, influenced very early Islamic mosques, as the Friday mosque at Kufa and afterwards became a major factor in the plan of the mosque in early Islamic Iran (as at the Tārī Khāna, Fahraj and Na’in).

During the early Islamic period the Sasanian tradition of using stucco- carved, moulded and painted- continued. However, unlike the moulded stucco of Sasanian times, Islamic stucco was mostly carved by hand. The influence of Sasanian ornament is also to be seen in such Umayyad palaces as Khirbāt al-Mafjar and Qaṣr al-Ḥayr al-Gharbī.<sup>71</sup>

In the early Islamic period stucco was often of great beauty, as seen in the scrolling vine pattern in the intrados of an arch at the Friday mosque at Shiraz (2<sup>nd</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> century).<sup>72</sup>

Floral, abstract, vegetal and geometrical motifs were used as the main patterns in the creation of stucco decoration (as at Na'in), but human busts and animal figures, owing to the Islamic prohibition of such motifs in a religious context, were abandoned. The Sasanian use of inscriptions in plaster continued in the in the early Islamic period, but the most significant progress was the use of stucco for inscription friezes as an ornamental element (see next chapter). Painted wall panels continued to be produced in the early Islamic period and various types (as at Nishapur) are known. These panels are completely flat in movement and scale, and are related to the development of carved stucco. Moulded stucco is also to be seen, for example in the decoration of tomb towers such as Risgit. The surviving fragments of decorative stucco from the 4<sup>th</sup> /10<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>/11<sup>th</sup> centuries were coloured and painted (as in the Davāzdah Imām).

All these examples show that the traditions of Sasanian architecture were extended in the following centuries and played a key role in the formation of Islamic architecture in Iran.

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<sup>1</sup> Bier, *Sarvistan*, pp.48-53.

<sup>2</sup> Bier, pp. 35-36.

<sup>3</sup> The present writer visited this site in 1385/2006. According the supervisor of the excavation, Mr. Morādī, a thermoluminescence-based examination of the building materials, and the sherds found on the site, suggest an Islamic date, probably 'Abbasid.

<sup>4</sup> Shepherd, *CHI* 3(2), p.1058.

<sup>5</sup> Reuther, *SPA* II, p.535, fig.150.

<sup>6</sup> Grabar, *EIr* IV, p. 153.

<sup>7</sup> Shepherd, pp.1058-59.

<sup>8</sup> This *īwān* was almost totally ruined, but was largely reconstructed by the ICHO in 1374/1995.

<sup>9</sup> Reuther, p.497, fig. 127.

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- <sup>10</sup> Huff, *EIr* II, p.332, fig. 12.
- <sup>11</sup> Shepherd, p.1062.
- <sup>12</sup> Reuther, pp.516-18 and p. 544, fig. 155.
- <sup>13</sup> The date of this building is uncertain, but is usually attributed to Khusraw I (531-79 CE).
- <sup>14</sup> *SPA* VII, pl. 149.
- <sup>15</sup> Ghirshman, *Iran*, p. 140.
- <sup>16</sup> Shepherd, p. 1064.
- <sup>17</sup> Huff, *EIr* II, p.332.
- <sup>18</sup> For the plan of this building see Ghirshman, p.149, fig. 191.
- <sup>19</sup> Kimball, *SPA* II, pp.579-83.
- <sup>20</sup> Watelin, *SPA* II, pp.584-92.
- <sup>21</sup> Kimball, *SPA* I, p.580 and fig. 167a, b.
- <sup>22</sup> *SPA* IV, pl.153 A, B.
- <sup>23</sup> Huff, *EIr* IV, p.637.
- <sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 636 and fig. 33.
- <sup>25</sup> The squinches of this building include a wooden corbel. This device was commonly used in conjunction with small domes of mud brick, especially in the region of Yazd and Kirman. For a plan of this building see Reuther, *SPA* II, p.522.
- <sup>26</sup> Godard, p.181, fig 155 and. p. 183, fig. 157.
- <sup>27</sup> For this complex see Naumann, *Die Ruinen*.
- <sup>28</sup> Herrmann, “Art”, *Arts of Persia*, p.63.
- <sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>30</sup> Rahbar, “Mu ‘arifī-ya Adrīyān”, *DKTMSI*, vol. II, p.322, and see also Rahbar, “Découverte”, *SI* 27 (1998), pp. 213-50.
- <sup>31</sup> Huff, *EIr* II, p.329.
- <sup>32</sup> Huff, *ibid.*
- <sup>33</sup> Huff, *EIr* IV, p.635.
- <sup>34</sup> Reuther, p.498.

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- <sup>35</sup> Such as Chāl Tarkhān, Kīsh, Damghan and Tepe Mīl.
- <sup>36</sup> *SPA* II, p. 498.
- <sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, and *SPA* I, p.423, fig. 99 a, b. See also Kleiss, “Qal‘a Zohak”, *AMI* (1973). pp. 163-88.
- <sup>38</sup> Such as the building at Damghan.
- <sup>39</sup> Huff, *EIr* II, p.333.
- <sup>40</sup> Kleiss, “Festung Qaleh”, *AMI* VII (1974), pp.215-221. The present writer visited this building in 2006.
- <sup>41</sup> Ghirshman, p.151, fig.194.
- <sup>42</sup> Herrmann, p.74, fig 23.
- <sup>43</sup> See Kleiss, “Strassenstationen”, *AMI* VII (1974), p.234. fig. 4.
- <sup>44</sup> Features like the large size of bricks, elliptical squinches, a fortified enclosing wall and two semi-circular towers flanking the gateway are to be seen in the early Islamic structures.
- <sup>45</sup> For this site see Thompson, *Stucco*, pl. IV, figs. 1-4.
- <sup>46</sup> Āzarnūsh, “Excavations”, *Iranica Antiqua* XVIII ( 1984), pp.172-76.
- <sup>47</sup> For ornament on Sasanian buildings see Baltrusaitis, *SPA*, pp.602-617.
- <sup>48</sup> Rahbar, “Mu‘arifī-ya Ādrīyān,” p.327.
- <sup>49</sup> Ghirshman, *Iran*, p.124, fig. 162 and p.140, fig.179.
- <sup>50</sup> Bier, Sarvistān, p. 46.
- <sup>51</sup> Keall, *EIr* II, p.328 and see also Ghirshman, p.32, fig.44.
- <sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.140-47, figs. 180-86.
- <sup>53</sup> O’Kane, *EIr* IV, p.639.
- <sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>55</sup> Qirva should not be confused with Qurva (or Qorva). The first one is a village near Qazvīn and the latter is a town in the west of Iran. For the mosque at Qirva see Hillenbrand, “Saljuq Monuments”, *Oriental Art* XVIII, No. 1 (1972), pp. 64-77.
- <sup>56</sup> Blair, *Monumental*, p. 162.
- <sup>57</sup> Creswell, *EMA* I, pt.1, p.167.
- <sup>58</sup> Blair quotes Ibn al-Athir’s statement that Malik Shāh set out on his conquest Syria in 1086, but it is possible that Malik Shāh never made this journey.

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<sup>59</sup> The term *maqṣūra*, is to be seen in the dome chamber of Friday mosque at Qazvin (see Sourdel-Thomine, “Inscriptions Seljoukides”, *Revue des Etudes Islamiques* 42 (1974), p.5). However, this dome chamber in another inscription, inside the building is named *qubba*, like the south dome chamber at Isfahan.

<sup>60</sup> Such as Marand, Barsīyan, Gulpāygān, Simnan, Qirva, Sujās, Urūmīya (former Riḍa’iya), and Burūjird.

<sup>61</sup> Hillenbrand, *Islamic*, p.290.

<sup>62</sup> See O’Kane, *Timurid*, figs. 25.1, 14.3 and 24.3.

<sup>63</sup> This plan is to be seen in the ‘Abbasid palaces in Sāmarrā, such as Balkuwārā. See Hillenbrand, p.575, fig.7.74.

<sup>64</sup> Schlumberger, *Lashkari Bazar*, pl. 31.

<sup>65</sup> O’Kane, *Elr* IV, p.641.

<sup>66</sup> In the course of restoration in 1384/2006, the remains of a second *īwān*, on the side opposite the *qibla* *īwān*, were found by the local office of the ICHO in this mosque.

<sup>67</sup> Wilber, *Architecture*, pls. 91, 131, 135.

<sup>68</sup> Hillenbrand, *Islamic*, p.409.

<sup>69</sup> Such as Mshaṭṭā, Qaṣr Kharāna , Qaṣr al-Ḥair West and Ukhiḍir. See Hillenbrand, p.568, figs. 7.11, 7.14, 7.15 and p.574, fig. 7.65.

<sup>70</sup> For a list of these rock reliefs see Luft, “Qajar”, *IS* 34/1 (2001), pp.31-49.

<sup>71</sup> Thompson, p.64.

<sup>72</sup> Pope, *Persian*, p. 148.

# III

## MAJOR FEATURES OF ARCHITECTURE AND CONSTRUCTION

### **I. Architectural Features**

A true picture of the architecture of early Islamic Iran cannot be comprehensively revealed by the few surviving buildings. Unfortunately many remarkable monuments of the period have vanished. In addition, the original features of most existing buildings have changed. So it is vital to undertake a short review of this architecture through the eyes of contemporary documents, though ideally such a review needs separate research.<sup>1</sup> This kind of information can identify different types of buildings and the approximate date of their appearance in architecture of early Islamic Iran. For instance when Faḍl, son of Yaḥyā the Barmakid, served as Governor of Khurasan (179/795), he built large

reservoirs and mosques and caravansarais. However there is no surviving caravansarai earlier than the 4<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> century in Islamic Iran. <sup>2</sup>

As Pope correctly points out, travellers like Ibn Ḥawqal (367/978), Muqaddasī (375/985) and Nāṣir-i Khusraw (438/1047) were familiar with the greatest splendours of Baghdad, Damascus and Cairo, and when they praise numerous Friday mosques, these monuments must indeed have been admirable.<sup>3</sup> Muqaddasī, who was himself an architect, often gives precise and reliable descriptions. He says that the great mosque at Fasā, built of baked brick with a double court (perhaps inspired by the development of the great mosque at Baghdad in the 2<sup>nd</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> century), was comparable with the great mosque of Damascus.<sup>4</sup> The description of the mosque at Nishapur with its marble columns, gold tiles and walls and roof ornamented with rich carving, all of which suggests a beauty which was incomparable at that time. <sup>5</sup> The admirable audience hall at Marv had a brick dome 55 cubits (c.25 m.) in diameter.<sup>6</sup> According to Ibn al-Balkhī, in Firūzābād there was a great hospital and a very fine library, the equal of which could be found in no other place. The great palace of ‘Aḏud al-Dawla in Shiraz had 360 apartments on two floors - equal in number to the days of the year- and each day the king gave audience in a different apartment. These apartments were in various colours; one like Chinese porcelain, another of stone colour, the third of marble and the fourth decorated with painting and gilding.<sup>7</sup> It is possible that this information - in some aspects - has been embroidered, but it indicates a magnificent architecture, of which not a trace remains. This palace had a great library, which was in the form of a long corridor, vaulted with arcades; it was on a large scale with two stories filled on all sides with very valuable books. The treasures of the library were kept in little cases about 3.12 m. wide and the height of a man. They were made of

wood, with a door that came down from the top.<sup>8</sup>

Some specific details of the Ghaznavid palace style are indicated in other accounts. Maḥmūd's brother Yūsuf had in his palace a hall with a raised niche on each side, and the four doors opened out to the garden. This four-door scheme, which corresponds to the *chāhār bāgh* in gardens, expresses the idea of a four-quartered universe. Yūsuf's great room had white walls, which combined cinnabar red, jasper and marble revetments. The floor was of pearly white plaster (*sārūj*) and the ceiling was finished with wood, which could imply that the centre hall was a columnar structure.<sup>9</sup> In Maḥmūd's palace in Balkh the alcoves (*ṣuffa*) were decorated with mural painting, some with abstract or floral ornament which could be compared to Chinese silk, some with illustrative designs, including portraits of the king himself, in one place in battle with a spear in hand, in another feasting, glass in hand. Rayy, with its blue-tiled houses and 2700 minarets and numerous tombs set in high places must have been, at least to some degree, impressive.<sup>10</sup>

These literary sources mention various types of buildings such as mosques, palaces, hospitals, libraries, fortifications, bridges and so on. The combination of these descriptions with the evidence of surviving monuments and archaeological findings can serve to illustrate the story of architecture in early Islamic Iran; however, this story in most cases lacks physical evidence. In this chapter physical evidence will be used for the discussion of the main features of architecture and construction.

## **Types of Buildings**

The surviving buildings of the period can be divided into two main groups, religious and secular; however, in comparison to the number of the religious monuments, fewer secular building remains.

Religious buildings can be subdivided into two groups: the mosque and the mausoleum. Secular buildings are associated with further forms such as the garden pavilion (*kūshk*), the caravansarai, bridges, fortifications, residential dwellings, baths and other type of structure.

## **The Mosque**

The plan of most early Islamic mosques in Iran, like most other mosques elsewhere, was of Arab derivation. This square or rectangular plan comprises a walled enclosure with an open courtyard and a covered area – sanctuary – on the *qibla* side. This sanctuary, or *shabistān*, comprises multiple columns supporting a flat roof, or arcades supporting a pitched roof. The emphasis on regularly spaced supports placed fairly close together has led to this type of mosque being called “hypostyle”.<sup>11</sup> In ‘Abbasid times it became standard practice – though that custom was known earlier, for example in the Umayyad mosque of Damascus - to place a columned arcade (*riwāq*), set continuously around the courtyard, to this type of mosque. By a natural development, the covered space was

enlarged by increasing the number and the depth of the arcades around the other three sides of the courtyard. Thus, all the elements of this plan – enclosing walls, sanctuary, central courtyard and *riwāq* – remained the standard formula; however, this plan was constructed in other lands according to the local traditions of architecture.

The large cities of Iran, such as those of Nishapur, Bukhara, Qum, and Shiraz, were all provided with a Friday mosque (*Masjid-i Jāmi'*) but all are known only from historical texts.<sup>12</sup> Thus the size and form of the earliest mosques in Iran is unclear. The surviving traces of some mosques, such as those of Sūsa (Sūs), Iṣṭakhr, Sīrāf, Isfahan, Jay,<sup>13</sup> Samarqand<sup>14</sup> Dasht-i Deh<sup>15</sup> and Yazd and all the mosques in the catalogue of this thesis except the Masjid-i Malik in Kirman and the Kūshk mosque in Firdaws, show that the hypostyle was the dominant plan, but there are several variations of the basic design. In addition, some key features of mosque architecture, such as size, material, and decoration, varied from one town or village to another.

Most mosques have a rectangular form, with the *qibla* on the shorter side (Tarī Khāna, Sīrāf, Ardistan, Na'in, Bishāpūr and Tālish), while those of Shūshtar and Firdaws favour a horizontal form with the *qibla* on the longer side. Other mosques are quite square in plan (Fahraj and Iṣṭakhr). The size of the central courtyard differs from mosque to mosque. The ratio of the open courtyard to the covered area is highly varied; the smallest ratio is that of Yazd (1:6) with Na'in (1:4) some way behind; and the largest are those of Sīrāf and Isfahan (c.1:1), while in other mosques the ratio is between ca. 1:2 (Tarī Khāna and Fahraj) to c. 1:3 (Sūsa and Iṣṭakhr).<sup>16</sup> The Friday mosques at Shūshtar and the earliest part of Simnan were probably built with a columnar hall only and no courtyard.<sup>17</sup> The various forms of the mosque and the size of the courtyard in Iran may have depended on

local conditions such as the limitation of land use, the provincial role of the mosque, the tradition of architecture, the climatic conditions, the existence of an earlier structure on the site,<sup>18</sup> and the available financial resources.

The arcade (*riwāq*) around the central courtyard was a main feature in the plan of these mosques, but the design of this *riwāq* varied from building to building. The arches of the arcades around the courtyard frequently follow the four-centred pointed arch type, but sometimes the arch has an elliptical form with a slight point (Fahraj). The arcades of some mosques (as at Tarī Khāna, Isfahan and Iṣṭakhr) comprise a series of columns around the courtyard, while other arcades comprise rectangular piers (Sīrāf, Fahraj, Na'in, Ardistan and Ṭālish). Sometimes the façade of the arcade is decorated (Fahraj, Na'in and Ṭālish). The courtyard arcades of some mosques have equal spans between the arches (Sūsa, Yazd, Iṣṭakhr, Sīrāf); however, in several mosques the middle span in the *qibla* direction is wider than the others (Tarī Khāna, Fahraj and Na'in). Owing to the desire to create a wider aisle in the middle, the arcade close to the *qibla* area of Fahraj is unequal in its number of supports vis-à-vis the number of supports on the opposite side. The hypostyle plan can be easily expanded by adding rows of piers; however, with the exception of the Friday mosque at Sīrāf the plans of most early mosques do not show any expansion during the early Islamic period.<sup>19</sup>

The central aisle of the *qibla* façade is normally wider than the others (Tarī Khāna, Fahraj, Na'in, Bishāpūr) and sometimes higher at roof level, such as at Tarī Khāna, Na'in. In the latter this aisle is further marked by a rectangular frame. The central aisle in Bishāpūr is notably deep and wide and presumably such a wide aisle is a prologue to the emergence of the *qibla iwān*.

Every early mosque was provided with a *mihrāb* (see next chapter) in the *qibla* wall. In the standard hypostyle plan, the covered area on the *qibla* side is deeper than on the other sides so as to stress the *qibla* direction. The exterior façade of the mosque is generally simple, but sometimes the outer walls are buttressed at regular intervals (Sūsa) or are fortified with rounded buttresses (Bishāpūr). The mosque has several entrances (e.g. Tarī Khāna, Fahraj and Na'in), which open to the *riwāq* around the courtyard. Sometimes the entrances were placed opposite the *mihrāb* but not on the same axis (Tariī Khāna, Fahraj and Na'in). Unlike many early Islamic mosques outside Iran,<sup>20</sup> which have several entrances placed on the outer walls of the covered area, the prayer hall of the Iranian mosque is frequently accessible from entrances in the outer walls enclosing the courtyard. Thus the prayer hall can be reached only from the courtyard.

The entrance of some early mosques was frequently a simple arched doorway (Tarī Khāna, Fahraj, Na'in), but from the 4<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> century onwards, the decorative portal appeared in Iranian architecture. The earliest surviving example in Iran is the Masjid-i Jūrjūr at Isfahan, which shows the value of the entrance portal in the design of the mosque. The construction of such an elaborate portal indicates a long tradition. A frontispiece of a Qur'ān (datable in the 2<sup>nd</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> century) found in the Yemen shows three elaborate doorways, which support this theory.<sup>21</sup> The earliest surviving monumental entrances in Islamic lands are those of the Great Mosque of Cordoba (Gate of San Esteban dateable by inscription to 241/855-6) and the mosque of Mahdīya (304/916).<sup>22</sup> In a less elaborate version, the doorways of the White Mosque at Tālish are placed in a simple projecting pointed arch frame.

To build a minaret adjacent to a mosque was common practice, and the medieval sources

mention numerous mosques with a minaret in pre-Saljuq Iran.<sup>23</sup> The existing minarets adjacent to mosques show that they were originally free-standing, and were not built as an integral part of the mosque (Damghan and Simnan). A minaret is attached to the exterior of the mosques of Sūsa and Fahraj; but in each case it dates from a later time. Unlike the ‘Abbasid mosques at Samarra, the minaret of the standard early Iranian mosque was not placed on the axis of the *mihrāb*. The remains of two square bases at Sīrāf and Damghan probably indicate the existence of minarets in these early mosques, but their form and proportions are uncertain. At Sīrāf, the minaret is axially placed opposite the *qibla* side (though not aligned to the *mihrāb*), attached to a doorway, while at Damghan, the minaret is on the north-west outside the mosque. The minaret at Sīrāf shows the influence of certain ‘Abbasid mosques (Qaīrawān), in which the minaret is related only to the mosque and has no relationship with surrounding environment,<sup>24</sup> while the free-standing minaret in Iran (e.g. Damghan), is itself associated to surrounding urban background. The plan of a mosque at Chihilburj, in Turkmenistan (4<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> century), shows a cylindrical minaret attached at its northern corner, outside the mosque.<sup>25</sup> The minaret of the time is frequently cylindrical (Damghan, Simnan), but the minaret at Na’in shows a stylish form, in which the base of the minaret is square and its shaft is octagonal, but it ends in a cylinder. A similar composition is to be seen in the minaret at Tirmidh (dated 423/1031-32) in Uzbekistan.<sup>26</sup> In Central Asia, other free-standing minarets, such as those of Mesturīan (395-6/1004-5) and Kunya Urganj (402/1011),<sup>27</sup> were built in cylindrical form. Unlike those of Damghan and Simnan, the shaft of the minaret at Na’in is plain, but it is decorated with a decorative foliated band of stucco, beneath the cornice of the minaret.

Another type of mosque is an enclosed multi-domed structure, which is known as the nine-bay (Nuh Gunbad) plan.<sup>28</sup> There are at least three important early surviving examples in the eastern Iranian world; the Nuh Gunbad or Ḥājjī Pīyāda Mosque at Balkh,<sup>29</sup> the Chār Sutūn Mosque at Tirmidh<sup>30</sup> and the Masjid-i Diggarān at Hazāra, near Bukhara.<sup>31</sup> All are based on a nine-bay plan, and each bay has a dome. The plan of these mosques may be derived from the local *kūshk* or manor house of pre-Islamic times, in which a central dome chamber or triple bay was surrounded or flanked by other dome chambers which in elevation are separated from each other by partition walls, though the central bays communicated with each other, forming a clear spatial corridor.<sup>32</sup> In Hazāra the central bay is larger than the others and a smaller dome is set at each corner. The origin of this scheme is unclear. The quincunx layout, which was a standard model of Byzantine churches at that time, is a possible candidate; however any link to Central Asia in the 5<sup>th</sup>/11<sup>th</sup> century is very hard to prove.<sup>33</sup> This scheme also recalls the plan of a fire temple (*ātashkada*), of the kind in which a central *chāhār ṭāq* is surrounded by a passageway.<sup>34</sup> It is also possible that the builder attempted to create a wide aisle on the *miḥrāb* axis to emphasise the direction of the *miḥrāb*, so that the arrangement at Hazāra could even be a local architectural innovation. Other versions of the nine-bay type are represented in Qairawān, Sūsa, Toledo and Cairo, mainly dating from the 4<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>35</sup> The earliest part of the Masjid-i Malik in Kirman, which is known as Shabistān-i Imām Ḥasan ('a), was built on the nine-bay plan. A further vanished structure, which was once built in this form, stood on the roof of the previous *shabistān*.<sup>36</sup> The plan of the Friday mosque at Nihāvand also shows a variation of this type (Fig.III.1). This plan has four massive piers and nine bays. Each bay of the central aisle is covered

by a dome,<sup>37</sup> whose flanking bays are roofed by barrel vaults perpendicular to the main aisle. The closest parallel to this plan is the Maghak-i ‘Aṭṭārī mosque (4<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> century) at Bukhara.<sup>38</sup> The plan of Nihāvand recalls the remains of a ruined mosque at Būzān in Isfahan (of the pre-Saljuq period) and one can suggest a similar plan for this latter building. The mosque at Būzān was possibly roofed by three barrel vaults parallel to the *qibla* wall. A similar type of roofing is to be found at the Kūshk mosque at Firdaws, which comprises two massive piers and barrel vaults parallel to the *qibla* wall. A further parallel for this mosque is to be seen in a mosque at the Ribāṭ-i Zīyārat village near Khāwf (Pl.III.1).<sup>39</sup>

A free-standing *qibla īwān* that served as a mosque (a kind of *īwān*-mosque), was claimed by Godard as a further type of mosque in early Islamic Iran.<sup>40</sup> He mentions a small free-standing *īwān* as a mosque in Bāmiyān, but without giving any specific date, and adds some other examples such as the monuments at Zūzan, Nishapur, Farūmad and Sabzavār.<sup>41</sup> Basing himself on a date in the *mihrāb* of the *qibla īwān* in the Friday mosque of Nīrīz, he concluded that the *īwān* was built in the early Islamic period. However, the present *qibla īwān* and its *mihrāb* at Nīrīz were probably constructed later (see catalogue 15). Nevertheless, it seems that Godard’s theory about the *īwān*-mosque is still acceptable. The Friday mosque at Raqqa,<sup>42</sup> which was mentioned as a fine mosque by Nāṣar-i Khusraw in 444/1052,<sup>43</sup> shows a rare feature. The façade of the *qibla īwān* of the mosque has an elliptical arch and the *īwān* – measuring 7.45 m. high, 3.84 m. wide and 12.28 m. deep - is roofed by a groined vault (Pl.III.2).<sup>44</sup> The *mihrāb* is not in the centre of the *qibla* wall, but slightly to the left side (as at Tārī Khāna). In its present form this mosque is of four-*īwān* plan, but the other *īwāns* are later additions (Fig.III.2). This

mosque is possibly one of the earliest surviving examples of the *īwān*-mosque in Iran. The present evidence suggests that the free-standing *qibla īwān* perhaps originated in Khurasan; it can be seen at the Masjid-i Malik, and a *qibla īwān* was added to the hypostyle plan of other mosques, such as may have existed at Nīrīz and certainly existed at Arg-i Bam.<sup>45</sup>

A domed square building, like a *chāhār ṭāq* form, is a further type of the mosque, though few examples survive. The buildings at Yazd-i Khwast, ‘Aqdā, Abarkū (Masjid-i Bīrūn) and Qirva are well-known examples of this type.<sup>46</sup> Except for the last one, whose inscription confirms its function as a mosque, the others perhaps were not originally built as mosques. It is noteworthy that the conversion of people to Islam in Iran first happened in cities and then in villages, so urban mosques started to be built earlier. The conversion of fire temples - in *chāhār ṭāq* form - into mosques in cities in the early Islamic period has been disputed; first, according to historical sources the right of Zoroastrians to continue using their places of worship in towns was guaranteed by Muslims on the payment of *jizya* by them. Moreover, a small dome chamber was not able to accommodate large crowds of people for Friday prayers.<sup>47</sup> In addition, to build a mosque even of small size was necessary in newly-conquered cities as a symbol of victory. By contrast, in villages the traditional form of place of worship, a *chāhār ṭāq* form, was imitated by newly-converted Muslims, whose small numbers were fitting for this size of building. Furthermore, converting fire temples into mosques after their abandonment by local people is also plausible. The ways in which the *chāhār ṭāq* form was used in early Islamic times are not clear. In particular, quite apart the issue of converting a *chāhār ṭāq* into a mosque, there is the issue of extending this space laterally or in depth. The

‘Alāqbandī mosque at Fahraj and the Masjid-i Sar-i Kūcha at Muḥammadīya (469/1076-77),<sup>48</sup> with a dome chamber flanked by small barrel-vaulted halls are two possible candidates; however, both of them are problematic.<sup>49</sup> The recent excavation (1384/2006) by ICHO in the ‘Alāqbandī mosque shows that there is no trace of a grave inside the building and also that the *mihrāb* of the building is original. The investigation of this mosque by the present writer also shows that this building was originally a free-standing dome chamber. In addition some similarities such as decoration and details of the construction technique of this building and other mosques in the Yazd area (such as Masjid-i Mihrābād near Abarkū, 6<sup>th</sup>/12<sup>th</sup> century)<sup>50</sup> suggest that its function as a mosque is plausible. A recently discovered *mihrāb*,<sup>51</sup> which is partly behind a pier of the dome chamber,<sup>52</sup> immediately to the south-west of the dome chamber of Masjid-i Sar-i Kūcha may suggest that the dome chamber is a later addition to an earlier mosque, which has now vanished. The mosque at Lashkar-i Bāzār, comprises a dome chamber- in front of the *mihrāb* area- flanked by two large columnar halls, and this arrangement is possibly one of the earliest examples of a domed mosque developing horizontally along the *qibla* direction.<sup>53</sup> A further square domed building, which is locally known as the Mazār-i Shīr Kabīr, and is datable in the second half of the 4<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> century, is to be seen at Dihistān, in Southern Turkmenistan. Despite the name of the building, it seems that it was originally built as a mosque.<sup>54</sup> The Masjid-i Chārjū near Bukhara, datable to the 4<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> century, is a further domed square mosque in Central Asia.<sup>55</sup>

Sīrāf and Nishapur have the remains of the simplest form of this type- a single chamber – with one, two, or several piers supporting transverse arcades. The latter could be seen either as elaborations of the single square room or as a reduction of the hypostyle plan, a

classification that would also apply to those monuments which they most recall, the small mosques of the Ḍarb Zubaida way-stations.<sup>56</sup>

Except at the Friday mosque at Sīrāf, the ablutions area of the mosque is not clear. Sometimes a well or cistern is to be found inside the courtyard (Sīrāf, Simnan and Ṭālish).<sup>57</sup> Owing to use of the courtyard for praying, especially for Friday prayer, the courtyard of the mosque is frequently treeless.

Thus, to summarise, the main architectural elements that characterise the mosque in the pre-Saljuq period are: hypostyle hall, main aisle, *riwāq*, dome and central courtyard.

### **The Mausoleum**

After the mosque, the mausoleum is the most common type of religious building. It took two main forms: domed building and tomb tower.

#### *The dome chamber*

The dome chamber can be subdivided into two forms: the domed square and the domed octagon. As earlier mentioned, the domed square was possibly inspired from the Sasanian *chāhār ṭāq*. The date of construction of the earliest dome chamber is unclear. Oleg Grabar cites the *Tārīkh-i Qum*, a late 4<sup>th</sup> /10<sup>th</sup> century text, which mentions the tomb of Fāṭima (‘a), the sister of Imām Riḍā (‘a), at Qum as the earliest *qubba* in Islamic Iran.<sup>58</sup> She died c.202-3/817-8 and her tomb first received a mat and then a *qubba* in the late 3<sup>rd</sup>/9<sup>th</sup> or early 4<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>59</sup> But it is possible that the earliest mausoleum was that of

Hārūn al-Rashīd, the ‘Abbasid caliph, (d.193/809) at the village of Sanābād, in the area of Ṭūs.<sup>60</sup> Grabar says that Imām Riḍā was buried in the tomb of Hārūn al-Rashīd.<sup>61</sup> This same structure, after the burial of the Imām Riḍā inside it (c.202/817), by order of al-Ma’mūn the son and successor of Hārūn al-Rashīd, eventually became the Imām Riḍā’s mausoleum (*rawḍa*) at present-day Mashhad (literally place of martyrdom).<sup>62</sup> This mausoleum was built of *china* (clay); its walls were some two meters thick and the building was roofed by a cloister vault, not a dome.<sup>63</sup> The tomb was destroyed later by order of Nāṣr al-Dawla Sabuktigīn (r.366-387/977-997) and only 2 m. of its walls left intact. The building was then rebuilt by the order of Sabuktigīn, son of Sultan Maḥmūd, in 400/1009. The new mausoleum incorporated the remnants of the original structure, using bricks in its walls and was covered by a low pointed dome.<sup>64</sup> Afterwards, Abu’l-Faḍl Sūrī b. Mu’tazz, the contemporary governor of Nishapur, donated a flourishing village as an endowment and built a minaret.<sup>65</sup> The idea of constructing a free-standing minaret beside a mausoleum was to be imitated later at Sangbast. These are the first examples of this combination, which stress the foundation of mausoleum as pilgrimage.

The Sāmānid mausolea at Bukhara and ‘Arab ‘Aṭā show remarkable progress in the construction of the domed square. The first is a square domed building with four axial doorways; it was constructed and decorated with baked brick, the material which launched the brick style in early Islamic Iranian architecture and was developed by the Saljuqs in the following centuries. The ‘Arab ‘Aṭā mausoleum at Tīm is single domed building, square in plan, with a single entrance behind a high decorative portal (*pīshṭāq*). It is the first appearance of such a portal in the architecture of Islamic Iran and was to be widely imitated in the following centuries.

The square domed building at Sangbast with four doorways, and possibly a later portal, shows the echo of Sāmānid traditions in the Khurasan area. The dome of Sangbast, unlike that of the two earlier mausolea, is placed on a fairly high octagonal drum and creates a remarkable triple elevation. Such an elevation emphasises that this is an imposing building, of a kind appropriate for a commemorative structure.

The interior of the Davāzdah Imām mausoleum at Yazd is lavishly decorated. The Davāzdah Imām possesses three doorways, and on the *qibla* side is a *mihrāb*, which makes it the first documented funerary structure with its original *mihrāb*. Placing a rectangular frame above a doorway opposite the *mihrāb* signifies that this is the main entrance of building. This axial design later became standard in other domed funerary monuments in Iranian architecture. The exterior of the Yazd tomb is articulated by several rectangular recessed frames. The articulation of the exterior façade of a mausoleum is to be seen in earlier buildings, such as the mausoleum of ‘Alambardār, datable c. 396/1005, in Central Asia,<sup>66</sup> and those of Abu’l Faḍl and Abū Sa‘īd Miḥna, both in the Sarakhs area in Turkmenistan.<sup>67</sup>

The domed octagon is a further type of mausoleum that appeared in Iran in the 4<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> century. The octagonal form, however, had long been familiar in Islamic architecture. Apart from the well-known Dome of Rock, the earliest surviving octagonal mausoleum is possibly the Qubbat al-Ṣulaibiya (c.248/862) at Samarra.<sup>68</sup> The reason behind the emergence of this form is not clear. Providing more space for circumambulation than the square form does is a possible reason, but the increased role of the transition zone and the

need to provide sufficient surfaces for decoration seem more likely factors for using this form. The domed octagon at Naṭanz (389/998-9), which is the first dated dome in central Iran,<sup>69</sup> and the Gunbad-i Jabaliya at Kirman, datable in the Būyid period (probably 4<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> century),<sup>70</sup> are two examples of this type. The dome of the latter building is of baked brick, while its walls are of rubble masonry, which is a rare material in the Kirman area. The Jabaliya has eight arched doorways and its exterior is lavishly articulated. The octagonal interior of the building is spacious and the transition zone is decorated with stucco. These features show a funerary structure of a kind apt for pilgrimage. The octagonal building at Naṭanz, with the possibly open ambulatory around it, recalls the Qubbat al-Şulaibiya;<sup>71</sup> however there is no parallel for the ambulatory, in early Islamic Iran. The interior of the domed building is generally more elaborate than that of the tomb towers. This might suggest that a domed building was built to be visited by pilgrims.

### *The tomb tower*

The second major type of mausoleum is the tomb tower, whose main characteristic is its emphasis on height. The origin of this type is unclear, but it is an Iranian innovation in Islamic architecture. The tomb tower frequently perches on an isolated spot (Rādkān West, Lajīm, Risgit, Samīrān and Abarkū) or its site is carefully chosen to emphasise the height of the building (Gunbad-i Qābūs). There is no trace of a grave inside the tomb towers of the Caspian area. An anonymous tomb can be seen inside each of the tomb towers at Damghan. A crypt without a tomb is to be seen at Abarkū, while burials were found in that of Samīrān (see catalogue 8).

The plans of tomb towers fall into two main forms: circular and octagonal. Most surviving tomb towers of the period were of cylindrical form (Gunbad-i Qābus, Rādkān West, Lajīm, Risgit, Pīr-i ‘Alamdār and Chihil Dukhtarān). The paramount example of this type is the Gunbad-i Qābus, whose cylindrical shaft is broken by ten huge triangular flanges that start from the plinth and rise to the corbelled cornice supporting the conical roof. These triangular flanges show the role of the structural element as decoration, and they create a new type, characterised by the so-called star-shaped shaft, like those of Mihmandūst (490/1096-7) and Rayy (6<sup>th</sup>/12<sup>th</sup> century). Two identical separate inscription bands on the shaft of Gunbad-i Qābus make it the earliest dated tomb tower.

Except for the Pīr-i ‘Alamdār, the tomb towers usually have a plain interior and a decorated exterior. The corbelled cornice of the roof and around the entrance of the tomb tower is ornamented with decorative patterns and inscriptions. The tomb towers frequently have conical roof (Gunbad-i Qābus and Rādkān West), sometimes conico-spherical (Lajīm and Risgit),<sup>72</sup> semi-conical (Chihil Dukhtarān) or a low-pointed dome (Pīr-i ‘Alamdār and Gunbad-i ‘Alī). Employing a conical roof, which increases the height of the building and protects the structure in the rainy conditions of the Caspian area, is an apt solution. This form of roof became particularly popular in the construction of Shī‘ite mausolea in Iran.<sup>73</sup>

The specific features of two tomb towers at Damghan may refer to local traditions, such as the form of the roof, the magnificent brick decoration, the decorated entrance, the urban location, and the presence of a grave inside each building. All these features distinguish them from the towers of the Caspian area.

The octagonal plan was perhaps the most durable and popular type. The essential difference between an octagonal tomb tower and a domed octagon is the ratio of width to height which is usually in the range 1: 3.5 - 1: 5.5.<sup>74</sup> The octagonal tomb towers at Samīrān and Abarkū exemplify this type. These two tomb towers are placed on a rocky outcrop and, unlike the other surviving tomb towers, both are built of rubble masonry. The exterior façade at Samīrān is articulated and buttressed at the corners, while the corbelled cornice of the roof and above the doorway of the Gunbad-i ‘Alī is ornamented with decorative patterns and a band of inscriptions. The building at Samīrān is badly damaged and its roof has vanished, but it is likely that its cornice, like that of other tomb towers, was decorated. Inside, both octagonal buildings are plain and there is no trace of decoration. The trace of a staircase inside the tomb tower at Samīrān suggests that the roof of the building had a double shell, which was imitated later in the two remarkable tomb towers at Kharraqān (460/1067 and 486/1093).

### **The garden pavilion (*kūshk*) and palaces**

There is little information about the garden architecture of the time. A square building with a central *chāhār ṭāq* with four axial doorways, each leading to an *īwān*, is a major feature of the earliest surviving garden pavilion, which is known as Kūshk-i Raḥīmābād and is near Bam. The main elements of the building-courtyard, *īwān* and dome chamber - show a hierarchy in design: open space, semi-closed and closed space. The other subsidiary spaces are placed between the dome chamber and each *īwān*. The axial design

creates a balanced plan, with an identical exterior façade on each side; all this combines to create an ideal solution for an architectural monument in the middle of a garden. The same plan is to be seen in palaces such as Abū Muslim's *Dār al-'Imāra* at Marv (129/747) and Lashkar-i Bāzār (5<sup>th</sup>/11<sup>th</sup> century),<sup>75</sup> in Afghanistan. It seems that this cruciform plan with a central dome chamber and four-fold symmetry was a standard form of garden pavilion in Iran at that time.

Little physical evidence is to be found for early Islamic palaces in Iran. The remains of a building of four-*iwan* plan at Lashkar-i Bāzār<sup>76</sup> reveal the use of this type in the construction of a palace in the first half of the 5<sup>th</sup>/11<sup>th</sup> century. Several fortified buildings with a round tower at each corner, with a central courtyard and a *riwāq* around it, represent the main character of palace and manor house in central Asia in the 3<sup>rd</sup> -5<sup>th</sup> /8<sup>th</sup> - 10<sup>th</sup> century (as in the palace at Khulbūk,<sup>77</sup> Sayot to the south of the Khulbūk area, in Tajikistan, a manor house at Khātlun<sup>78</sup> and a building at Akīr Tash<sup>79</sup> in Kazakhstan).

### **The Caravansarai**

The three surviving caravansarais, namely those of at Ribāṭ-i Karīm, Āhuvān and Muḥammadābād, show a common method of design, but differ in details. The typical caravansarai of the time is characterised by a central courtyard, a series of rooms (*hujra*) around it, four *īwāns* – one on the middle of each side of the courtyard - and a monumental fortified entrance. A square building, 75x75 m., was excavated in the route of Paikand to Bukhara.<sup>80</sup> This building comprises small corner towers and a central courtyard giving on to ranges of rooms, either single or in apartments of three.<sup>81</sup> There

were also storage rooms and stables. This building has two entrances, placed opposite each other. The building - datable to the 2<sup>nd</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> century – may represent one of the earliest versions of the caravansarai or *ribāṭ* in the Iranian world in early Islamic times.

The caravansarai is the first type of building in Islamic Iran that was built on the four-*iwan* plan, which affected palatial and mosque architecture respectively. This type of plan emerged later in other caravansarais, such as Dāya Khātūn in Turkmenistan (5<sup>th</sup>/11<sup>th</sup> century) and the caravansarai at Miṣriyān (late 5<sup>th</sup>/11<sup>th</sup> century).<sup>82</sup> Placing an *īwān* at the centre of each interior side allows the building to subdivide the interior sides and breaks the monotonous façade of the courtyard. Owing to the similar function of the palace and caravansarai, possibly the main form of a caravansarai, namely a fairly fortified square plan with a central courtyard and a *riwāq* on two floors, was possibly inspired by such Umayyad palaces as Kharāna, Usaïs and Qaṣr al-Hair West. This form is also to be seen in other monuments such as those of Sūsa and Monastir (both datable to the 2<sup>nd</sup> /8<sup>th</sup> century, and both in Tunisia) and Dārzīn in the Kirman area.

These caravansarais are of rubble masonry. A continuous arcade around the courtyard created a private space and the door of each room opens into it. The *riwāq* was later replaced by an *īwān*, incorporated into each room. Instead of the diagonal design of the stables in Ribāṭ-i Karīm, a private residential space – mostly of cruciform plan – occupied each corner of the building. The exception is Ribāṭ-i Karīm, where a cruciform structure with a crypt is to be seen in the middle of the courtyard; there is no trace of any structure in the centre of other caravansarais. The function of this structure at Ribāṭ-i Karīm is uncertain, but it was possibly a private residential space. The spacious central courtyard at Muḥammadābād shows that a large number of animals and goods could be

accommodated. An additional courtyard in front of the building is another solution for lodging more animals. The idea of a double courtyard on a longitudinal axis was developed later in the north-east, as at Akcha Qal ‘a (or Kālā), datable to the 5<sup>th</sup> -6<sup>th</sup> /11<sup>th</sup> -12<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>83</sup> Ribāṭ-i Sharaf and Ribāṭ-i Malik (both in the 6<sup>th</sup>/12<sup>th</sup> century). A small nine-bay caravansarai, dated 3<sup>rd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup>/9<sup>th</sup> -10<sup>th</sup> century, is also to be found in this period in the area of Khwarazm.<sup>84</sup>

## **Bridges**

To construct a bridge was a public service provided by the local dynasties of the time. There are several historic bridges using the same style of construction in south-west Iran, but the date of some of them is unclear. Among these bridges, those of Kalhur (374/984-85) and Kashkān (399/1008-9) are dated by their inscriptions. The Kashkān Bridge is quite well preserved and shows the typical feature of the other bridges of the time: rubble piers compound vaults of rubble masonry and baked brick, and hollow spaces over piers and between the spans.

According to Muqaddasī and Ibn al-Balkhī a dam was built by ‘Aḍud al-Dawla over the Kur River in the Marvdasht area near Shiraz.<sup>85</sup> A passageway on top of the dam connected the two sides of the river. This is locally known as Pul-i Band-i Amīr. The open span between the piers of the bridge controls the flooding of the dam. The location of this dam and its method of construction show a sophisticated engineering design that allows both the dam and the bridge still to be used. The dam is built of rubble masonry. The architectural features of the bridge are the same as those of previous bridges, but they

are of smaller size and without any inscription.<sup>86</sup>

### **Fortifications**

Military architecture in some aspects is similar to the caravansarai. Both of these building types were intended to accommodate humans and animals and to protect them, but their size and interior layout are dissimilar. The Qal‘a-yi Ramūk and those of Dārzīn,<sup>87</sup> both in the Kirman area, show similar features - multiple storeys, arrow slits, and entrance gateways similar to those found in early Islamic palaces and forts. The use of mud brick and elliptical arches are other similarities, which refer to local traditions. The remains of a keep with round corner towers at Ṭamīsha in Mazandaran may suggest a fortification in the Sāmānid period.<sup>88</sup>

The small building near Rayy that is known as Zindān-i Hārūn was possibly a military station and shows yet other characteristics. This cubical building, like those of at Darzīn and Qal‘a-yi Ramūk in Shahdād, is built in two storeys but follows a cruciform plan. It is small in size and lacks a courtyard and window. Zindān-i Harūn, unlike the buildings of the Kirman area, is built of mostly rubble masonry but with a squinch zone in brick. The closest parallel for Zindān-i Harūn is part of a ruined fort in Girdkūh, near Damghan.<sup>89</sup> This building has a cruciform plan and is of rubble masonry, but unlike the Zindān-i Harūn is of a rectangular plan and a single storey. This windowless building is locally known as *zindān*. By contrast to the outward- looking garden pavilion, such an enclosed cruciform plan looking inward is a feature of military architecture.

### **Residential dwellings, baths and other types of buildings**

The excavations at Sīrāf revealed some features of the houses in this period.<sup>90</sup> The houses frequently had central open courtyards with up to fourteen rooms grouped around them. Stairs led to an upper storey, which possibly had a gallery overlooking the courtyard or street. Sometimes, reflecting the function of the *īwān* in public buildings, a room at the centre of each ground floor side opened into the courtyard. The rooms on the ground floor were windowless and were possibly used for storage or perhaps even rented to the poorer classes.<sup>91</sup> At Sīrāf building space was unusually limited and people preferred to repair houses rather than to construct new ones. In Sīrāf the configuration of the streets showed the urban planning grid of the city,<sup>92</sup> while an unsystematic layout of private housing was found in contemporary Sūsa.<sup>93</sup> The streets of Sīrāf were unpaved and earthenware pipes drained rainwater from roofs into stone-lined holes in the ground, while Nishapur had ample underground water channels tapped by *āb-ānbārs* (cisterns) and wells.<sup>94</sup>

At Takht-i Suliymān, the type of house common in ‘Abbasid times had a cruciform central chamber with workrooms in the corners.<sup>95</sup> In some quarters of 4<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> Nishapur and 5<sup>th</sup>/11<sup>th</sup> century Sīrāf, houses were built of rubble and mud, floors were of trampled earth, and the walls had no stucco decoration. At Rayy one house revealed by excavation contained an octagonal chamber of some luxury, furnished with an octagonal pool and wall revetments of glazed tile work, while in homes at Nishapur and Dasht-i Dih respectively fine lustre and Chinese pottery were displayed. All the wealthier houses at

Nishapur had plastered walls and floors.

At Sīrāf the better houses had panels of carved stucco set above doorways, windows, or niches, while rooms with high ceilings sometimes had carved stucco cornices and friezes with Kufic inscriptions, probably of 4<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> - century date. Very elaborate residences, perhaps palaces, were found at Sīrjān, and are datable to the Būyid period.<sup>96</sup> A complex comprising several buildings of rubble masonry was found in Tashān in north-east Bihbahān.<sup>97</sup> Some of these buildings have been attributed to the Būyid and early Saljuq period; however, the architectural and constructional features of these buildings suggest a date as late as the Safavid period.

At Nishapur, excavations revealed that each manor house had a sunken fireplace of a kind that was peculiar to Khurasan in the 3<sup>rd</sup>/9<sup>th</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>98</sup> Many inner rooms were furnished with a central hearth, which was enclosed by a rectangular plaster frame about 2-2.5 feet long and two feet wide rising slightly above the level of the floor. This sunken fireplace in the inner rooms was also used for cooking. In Sabzpūshān, each house had one or more vaulted underground rooms well built of baked brick.<sup>99</sup> All the houses in Nishapur were supplied throughout the whole of their existence with wells for fresh water, with latrines and cesspools, and with drains for open courts. In the Sāmānid period, at least, there were small square rooms for bathing, usually with rectangular basins for people to stand in while water was thrown over them. This was all drained into a system of pipes through small holes in the floor.<sup>100</sup>

In the course of excavation in Sūsa, a manor house was discovered.<sup>101</sup> This house had a single storey and an open courtyard which was surrounded by a group of rooms. On the

north side of the courtyard was an *īwān*, and a further one was placed opposite it on the south side. This house was drained throughout by a system of pipes which fed into the urban sewage system.

The remains of a manor house were excavated in the Darra Shahr area south-west Iran, by ICHO in 1375-76/1998-99.<sup>102</sup> This square building, measuring 35x35 m., was built of rubble masonry and plaster mortar. The house had a central courtyard – 12x15 m. - with a group of rooms around it. The building could be accessed only from a single entrance on the north side. The remains of stairs at the north-western corner indicate that this building was built with two storeys; however the upper storey has now vanished.<sup>103</sup> The walls of each room had plaster revetment and the floor was paved with cobblestones and a layer of plaster. The rooms of the building are windowless and are roofed by barrel vaults. A system of drainpipes is to be found in the building. This house, thanks to literary sources and shred finds is datable in the 3<sup>rd</sup>/9<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>104</sup> however further archaeological research may revise this date.

The remains of three *ḥammāms* (public baths) were found in Kangāvar,<sup>105</sup> Sūsa<sup>106</sup> and Sīrāf.<sup>107</sup> In addition, in the course of recent archaeological investigation (1375-77/1996-98) in Bishāpūr by ICHO, the remains of three additional *ḥammāms* were identified (Pl.III.4).<sup>108</sup> This information clarifies the main features of the *ḥammām* at this time: rectangular plan, and mortared rubble plastered internally with waterproof *sārūj*. The *ḥammām* comprises a vestibule, an undressing room, and cold, warm and hot rooms. These *ḥammāms* were equipped with covered drain, stone basin, boiler and furnace.

The uncovered area of the bazaar near the Great Mosque in Sīrāf shows that the shops

were all very small - the largest measured scarcely 3 x 2 m. internally. Some of them had ovens. In the course of several excavations certain other types of buildings, such as a sugar refinery at Susa, a glassmaking and iron smelting installation at Sīrjān and an extensive ironworking industry at Dasht-i Dih were found,<sup>109</sup> but owing to lack of information, further interpretation of these structures is difficult.

The study on Isfahan clarified the role of the *chāhār sū* (the crossroads at the centre of a bazaar), the *ḥammām*, the mosque and the bazaar, in defining each local community, since the sitting of these key buildings at the intersections of certain streets helped to establish their catchment area.<sup>110</sup>

The remains of some fortress-like buildings, locally known as *kūshk* (manor house), are to be seen in the Marv oasis. These buildings were built on various scales in the early Islamic period.<sup>111</sup> The *kūshk* is frequently built of mud brick, with an exterior wall articulated by semi-cylindrical buttresses in two storeys. The lower level comprises several vaulted rooms lit by narrow windows, which served as storage space. Some of these *kūshks* were built on a cruciform plan with a central dome, like Garam Kūshk and Kyzkālā near Kelte Minār.<sup>112</sup> A building in Tirmidh, which is known as Kirz - Kīz, with a cruciform plan and a central dome chamber in two storeys, shows another type of *kūshk*.<sup>113</sup> Unlike garden pavilions, this building is fortified and looks inward. It provided more space for living quarters, while the pavilion was reserved for shorter periods of residence.

## II. Types of construction methods

The construction methods of the time generally continued the Sasanian tradition. The use of a barrel vault, round piers, a dome on squinches, large mud bricks and rubble masonry continued in this period. However, the technique of construction gradually developed.

### *Dome and vault*

The dome of the time can be classified into three forms: single-shell, conical and double-shell. The most common form is the single-shell dome. The Sāmānid mausoleum at Bukhara shows a significant achievement in the construction of the dome. Unlike the conical form of Sasanian squinches, each squinch of the Sāmānid building is framed within an octagonal flat arcade and each squinch consists of two arches parallel to each other and buttressed by a perpendicular half-arch (or rib) which lies alongside the arcade. These positions of ribs create open spaces to light the inside of the building. Above these octagonal flat arcades is set a narrow sixteen-sided decorative zone, which provided the base for the erection of the dome. It is possible that brick fretwork was placed within each open arch.

At the ‘Arab ‘Aḩā mausoleum the zone of transition features trilobed squinches of large *muqarnas* form (see below), and separated by trilobed arches. The trilobed arch is a development of the pointed arch with a cusp at the haunches. The cusp acts as a springing point for the subsidiary arched elements of the squinch. The trilobed arch is self-supporting and is associated with both a structural and a decorative role.<sup>114</sup> A similar form at the Davāzdah Imām tomb at Yazd shows a further development of this feature. The dome of this building is placed on a zone of blind pointed arches. There are four

squinces; each contains a trilobed arch within another four-pointed arch spanning the corners. This form is locally called *patkāna*<sup>115</sup> in Persian; *kana* means *ṭāqcha* (small niche) and *patkāna* is also called *ṭāqcha-bandī*.<sup>116</sup> The earliest *patkāna* is to be seen above the doorway of the Gunbad-i Qābus. The *patkāna* is essentially a *muqarnas* form, but it is solid throughout. The typical later *muqarnas* hangs from the ceiling, but the *patkāna* is a freestanding element.<sup>117</sup> The *muqarnas* is built from the top to the bottom, but in the *patkāna*, the first niche has to be in place before the next one is placed over it.<sup>118</sup>

In the other type of squinch which was widely used in Islamic Iran, the cone is replaced by two segments of barrel vaults that arch forward from the supporting walls, intersecting in the corner at an angle that gradually ends in a rounded hood at the top (as at Sangbast and Sarvistān). This type of squinch is called *sikunj* in Persian.<sup>119</sup> A further decorative type of squinch, which comprises a series of multi-stepped recessed courses of bricks, is to be seen in the Zindān-i Harūn at Rayy (Pl.III.5). This form is popular in the Qūmis area and can be seen in Imāmzāda Ja‘far (Pl.III.6) and the Gunbad-i Zangūla (Pl.III.7) at Damghan.<sup>120</sup> An unusual form comprising a multi-recessed rectangle serving as a squinch is to be seen in Lashkar-i Bāzār.<sup>121</sup> The quadripartite lanceolate vault is a further type, which is to be found in the Marv oasis. This type of vault was used to roof rectangular spaces.<sup>122</sup> This vault curves inwards from each of the four walls to create a self-supporting structure with four bays or compartments.

The cylindrical or polygonal shaft of tomb towers decreases the importance of the transition zone, while the outer corbelled cornice of the building supports the roof. The dome of the tomb tower was mostly of conical form. The bricks of the conical roof were vertically laid in courses, with each course corbelled slightly out further out than the course below, so as to create a high elliptical inner roof enclosed by the external conical roof.

The transition zone of the surviving octagonal buildings, such as Samīrān and the Jabaliya, comprises a series of identical blind pointed arches. At each corner sits pointed arch, each one within a rectangular frame, to support the construction of the dome. Another method can be seen in the Gunbadi-i ‘Alī at Abarkū. Here there are eight blind inset arches; each is placed within a rectangular frame, below the transition zone, while over them eight simple, hemispherical, round-backed squinches are placed at the corners, beneath the dome.

Iranian domes are usually built without any centring. To construct a dome, after the erection of four squinches, a string that is attached to a high wooden bar, which is placed in the centre of the dome chamber, directs the builder to lay horizontally the courses of brick. Several starting courses of brick are set vertically to minimize the horizontal thrust. The thickness of the brick courses decreases gradually from the bottom to the top. This method of construction structurally reduces the weight of the dome and makes its erection easier. This style creates a stepped surface, and another shell usually covers it. This, then, is an early version of the double-shell dome, in which the outer shell lies on

part of the interior shell.<sup>123</sup> The outer shell is separated from the inner shell by a thin space, c. 10-30 cm., which broadens out near the top (as at Sangbast). The space between these two shells is sometimes wide enough for them to be completely separate (Raḥīmābād and possibly Samīrān). The double-shell dome probably emerged in the second half of the 4<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> century. There is no surviving double-shell dome of this period, but some evidence suggests that the buildings at Samīrān, Raḥīmābād and probably Sangbast were built on this pattern. Protecting the interior shell of the dome, increasing the height of the building without substantially raising the weight of the dome and providing a lower interior roof for decoration, are possibly the main reasons for the appearance of the double-shell dome. The earliest surviving double-shell dome in which the shells are completely separate from each other can be seen in the mausolea of Abu'l Faḍl and Abū Sa'īd. Both are attributed to the first quarter of the 5<sup>th</sup>/11<sup>th</sup> century.

The elliptical Sasanian arch was replaced by the pointed arch, which presents a profile struck from four centres.<sup>124</sup> The pointed arch originated, it seems, and developed in Syria in the course of the 2<sup>nd</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>125</sup> though the question of origins is still very controversial. It is noteworthy that the earliest example of the systematic and exclusive employment of the free-standing pointed arch is to be found in a cistern in Ramla (172/789).<sup>126</sup> This type of arch first appeared in undeveloped form in Tārī-Khāna at Damghan and later at Fahraj. The ideal shape of arch for most ordinary loading is closer to the rounded Sasanian and early Islamic form than the pointed arch of the later medieval period.<sup>127</sup> However, for both aesthetic and structural reasons, the pointed arch became more popular in the Islamic period. The pointed arch can be categorised into two

forms: low-pointed and high-pointed shapes. The latter form is frequently more stable than the first one, given the same span. Stilted arches are also known. A stilted arch reduces horizontal thrust. It is noteworthy that traditional builders (*ūstāds*), draw this arch as the intersection of two elliptical forms rather than in a geometrically more accurate way.<sup>128</sup>

The barrel vault, a continuation of the elliptical arch, was a popular form of roofing, and was frequently used to roof a rectangular area. This vault is easily erected without centering and even without a transverse arch.<sup>129</sup> This vault could also be built by using a cloister vault at one or both ends of the barrel vault. In the construction of this vault, bricks can be laid in two different ways: in the first, the bricks are laid vertically, parallel to the length of the vault (Fahraj, Firdaws, Sāva), while in the second the bricks are horizontally laid broadside on. The first method offers strong protection against sliding, and so makes for a more solid vault than does the second method.

The basement of the south-eastern *shabistān* of the Friday mosque at Simnan is roofed by quadripartite vaults, which can be easily covered with a flat surface. This kind of vault is called *chāhār bakhshī* (literally, “four sections”) in Persian and is especially popular for roofing.<sup>130</sup>

A series of half-domes (semi-domes), each provided with two small double elliptical squinches, can be seen in the north arcades of the courtyard at Fahraj. These half-domes were erected with mud bricks laid in horizontal courses, each course slightly corbelled

out beyond the course below. This type of vault is frequently used to cover a square or relatively square area. The squinches help to transfer the thrust from above to either side of the corner. Additional examples which show half dome squinches are to be found at Sarvistān<sup>131</sup> and Būzān.<sup>132</sup> The half-dome in more elaborate form is to be seen at Ukhaiḍir and Qaṣr Kharāna.<sup>133</sup>

Unlike the wooden roof carried on arcades as found in early mosques in the Arab lands (as at Damascus, Ba‘labbak and Ḥarrān), the early Iranian mosques were roofed by barrel vaults, made of baked or mud brick and set at right angles to the courtyard. This type of vaulting raised the inner height of the sanctuary, gave it extra visual impact, and stressed the *qibla* direction. In addition the barrel vault improved the monotonous inner ambience of the mosque better than a flat or pitched roof could. According to the literary sources, the Friday mosque at Shūshtar was roofed in wood, but this was later replaced by a domical roof.

### *Piers*

The use of the squat Sasanian column without a defined base continued in early Islamic Iran. The piers were simply coated with plaster (as at Tarī Khāna, Fahraj, Firdaws, and Shiraz) or they were sometimes decorated (Isfahan, Ardistan, Na’in and Balkh). The column of pre-Islamic type, with alternating courses of horizontal and vertical bricks, can be seen in certain monuments (Tarī Khāna, Naṭanz, Simnan and Hazāra). A series of columns of baked brick was found in the course of excavation by the ICHO in 1369-

71/1989-92 inside the large *īwān* at Zūzan (Pl.III.8).<sup>134</sup> It seems that these columns belonged to an earlier building, which was replaced by the present *īwān*. The sources relate (as in the cases of Sīrāf and Samarqand) that wooden columns were used, but there is no trace of them at this time. Sometimes the column is converted to a rectangular pier to secure extra stability (as at Na'in).

The massive rectangular (or square) form is the one most commonly used for piers. Sometimes these piers are decorated by an engaged column at each corner (Fahraj, Firdaws and Maybud). This kind of pier can be seen in the mosques of Aḥmad b. Ṭūlūn<sup>135</sup> and al-Ḥākīm<sup>136</sup> in Cairo. The remains of polylobed columns were found in the Friday mosque at Isfahan.<sup>137</sup> It seems that here the decorative role was more important than the structural one. A further group of columns and multi-lobed columns of baked brick, from a ruined building, were unearthed near the Hārūniya at Ṭūs (Pl.III.8).<sup>138</sup> The octagonal pier at Shūshtar, however, is not early and indeed may date from Safavid times. The column, like its Sasanian prototype, is frequently surmounted by a square capital (Tarī Khāna and Na'in).

### **Building materials**

The choice of building material was based on local tradition and the financial resources of the patron. The most common building materials of the time are brick and rubble masonry.

## *Brick*

Brick is used both as baked brick and as mud brick. Baked brick was normally of square form, but sometimes it was of rectangular shape (Ardistan and Naṭanz). The size of the bricks in the earlier buildings is frequently larger than in those of later times. The size of baked bricks at Tarī Khāna is about 34 x 34 x 7-7.5 cm. while at Ardistan it is 42 x 24 x 8 cm., while those at the Davāzdah Imām (27 x 27 x 4 cm.), Ṭālīsh (24 x 24 x 6 cm.) and Sangbast (31x31x 7-7.5 cm.) show a smaller though varied size. The baked bricks of tomb towers show a range from 23-25 cm. in length and from 4-6 cm. in depth. The baked brick sizes in the shafts of minarets have a fairly similar size which is ca. 23 x 23 x 4.5 cm. (Na'in, Damghan and Simnan).

Several monuments of the time are entirely built of mud brick (Qal'a-yi Ramūk, Kūshk-i Raḥīmābād, Pīr-i Ḥamza Sabzpūsh). For reasons of speed, economy and easy construction, mud brick became a popular material. The common form of mud brick is square; the most frequent size is 33-38 cm. in length (or breadth) and 7-9 cm. in depth.

A rhomboid brick is to be found in the roof of Gunbad-i Qābūs.<sup>139</sup> This kind of brick was used to cover the roofs of other monuments like Rādkān West and Sulṭāniya in later centuries. This brick is of wedge shape and comes in different sizes. The narrow end of it is completely anchored in the plaster mortar and this causes the bricks to be attached very strongly to the roof. This technique also creates a smooth and tough surface. The size of

the brick depends on the place where it is used; it increases in size from the top to the bottom.

### *Rubble masonry and stone*

Some of the monuments of the time owe their durability to the fact that they were of rubble masonry. Rubble masonry was used in two main ways. In the first, the entire structure was built of rubble masonry (as at Kashkān, Ribāṭ-i Karīm, Muḥammadābād, Āhuvān, Gunbad-i ‘Alī), while in the second a compound of rubble masonry and baked brick was used to roof buildings (as at Bishāpūr, Jabaliya and Samīrān). A timber beam to ensure more stability can be seen inside the rubble wall at Samīrān and the piers of the Kashkān bridge. Rubble masonry was laid in courses which vary from ca. 40-130 cm., with differences from building to building but also in the successive courses of each building. Owing to the coarse nature of rubble masonry, walls made of this material are not bonded to each other, and structurally are set beside each other.

Owing to the durable nature of this material, it was also frequently employed for foundations, though its depth varies in each monument. Rubble laid in plaster or mud is to be seen in the foundations of certain building (Sīrāf, Raḥīmābād, Ṭālish). The dressed stone at Shūshtar dates back to Safavid times. The reuse of a pre-Islamic stone column is to be seen in the mosque at Iṣṭakhr.

## *Mortar*

Plaster (gypsum) was the most common mortar used in building in construction. The use of plaster permitted a rapid set in the erection of vaults and its stickiness in construction of walls made it a preferred material. Plaster was sometimes mixed with clay and sand, however the portion of the mixture varied from one building to the next. In structures of mud brick, clay (mud) with a mixture of small sand and straw was also used (Fahraj, Raḥīmābād). A mixture of clay, lime and ash (*sārūj*) as a waterproof mortar was used in the construction of buildings in Sīrāf and the foundation of the Gunbad-i Qābūs.

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<sup>1</sup>Pope mentions several examples of these descriptions. See Pope *SPA* III, pp. 975-80. Barbara Finster gives a comprehensive list of mosques from literary sources in her books. See Finster, *Frū.he*, pp.261-96.

<sup>2</sup> Pope, p. 975.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> Muqddasī, *Ahsan al-Taqāsīm*, p. 382,

<sup>5</sup> Le.Strange, *Lands*, p. 385.

<sup>6</sup> Pope, p.976. This information is given by C. Schefer, but he gives no reference to the source(s) he used. It is to be found in Appendix I to his translation, a section that deals with Marv (II deals with Nishapur). See C. Schefer, *Relation du voyage de Nassir Khosrau* (Paris, 1881), p.274.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*,

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p.978-9.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p.979.

<sup>11</sup> Hillenbrand, *Islamic Architecture*, p.66.

<sup>12</sup> A minor exception is Shiraz, where a fragment of stucco survived into modern times in the *miḥrab* of the

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mosque. See *SPA* III, p.941 and pl.259 a,b.

<sup>13</sup> The remains of a hypostyle mosque were excavated at Jay in the suburbs of Isfahan in 1354/1976. This mosque had a courtyard and a possible minaret outside the mosque. This mosque had a columnar sanctuary. Each column of the mosque was 90 cm. in diameter. This mosque possibly was built in early Islamic times. For the report of this excavation see Mīrfatāh, “Āthār”, *Majalla Barasīhā-yi Tarīkhī* VI (1355/1977), pp.23-31.

<sup>14</sup> Chmelnizkij, *IAA*, p.356.

<sup>15</sup> Williamson, “Yahya Project”, *Iran* X (1972), 177-8.

<sup>16</sup> The ‘Abbasid mosque outside Iran followed a fairly similar standard of design, for instance the ratio of the width to length of the Great Mosque at Sāmarrā and Abu Dulaf is 2:3. The ration of the courtyard to the covered area in ‘Abbasid mosques outside Iran shows a smaller ratio; 1:1.3 (Qairawān), 1:2 (Abū Dulaf) and 1:1 (Ibn Ṭūlūn).

<sup>17</sup>The available information about these two mosques does not show the trace of a courtyard, but further excavations may produce new evidence.

<sup>18</sup> Such as the Friday mosque at Sīrāf that was built over a large Sasanian building.

<sup>19</sup> The expansion of the Friday mosque at Na’in dates from the Ilkhanid period.

<sup>20</sup> Such as the mosque at Kūfa (16/637), and the Great Mosques of Samarra and Abū Dulaf (both dated 233-47/847-61).

<sup>21</sup> Grabar, *Mediation*, p. 158, fig. 127.

<sup>22</sup> For Cordoba and Mahdiya respectively see *IAA*, p.221 and p. 144.

<sup>23</sup> Bloom, *Minaret*, pp. 147-50.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, *Minaret*, pp.61-2.

<sup>25</sup> Khmel’ nitski, *Mezhdu Arabami*, p.67.

<sup>26</sup> Blair, *Monumental*, p.101.

<sup>27</sup>For these minarets see Khmel’ nitski, *Mezhdu Samanidami*, pt. I, p. 130 and pp.147-48.

<sup>28</sup> For the most recent research on this type of mosque see O’Kane, “Origin”, *SPA* XVIII, pp. 189-244.

<sup>29</sup> Golombek, “ ‘Abbasid Mosque”, *Oriental Art* XV (1969), pp.173-89.

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- <sup>30</sup> Khmel'nitski, *Mezhdū Arabami*, p.81.
- <sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.77-78.
- <sup>32</sup> Hillenbrand, “‘Abbasid”, *Rivista di Studi Orientali* LIX (1985), p.202.
- <sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.204-5.
- <sup>34</sup> Huff, *EIr* IV, p. 637, fig. 36.
- <sup>35</sup> Hillenbrand, *Islamic Architecture*, p.78, and also see O’Kane, “Origin,” pp.204 – 211.
- <sup>36</sup> Anisi, “Majid-i Malik”, *Iran* XLII (2004), p.143.
- <sup>37</sup> It is likely that the main aisle was originally covered by a barrel vault and that the present domes are later additions.
- <sup>38</sup> This rectangular mosque in its first phase had four pillars in the interior rather than the present six. See Khmel'nitski, *Mezhdū Samanidami*, pt. 1, p.123, fig 106.
- <sup>39</sup> The present writer visited the building in 1385/2006 after its restoration and the evacuation of debris. Unfortunately the original plan of this building has not yet been published. For initial report of this building see Labāf, “Masjid-i Ribāṭ-i Ziyārat”, *Athar* XV (1367/1987), pp. 164-72.
- <sup>40</sup> For the *īwān*- mosque see Godard, *Art*, pp.279-282.
- <sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>42</sup> This city is in south-west Khurasan, near the city of Firdaws.
- <sup>43</sup> Nāṣir-i Khusraw says that the Friday mosque is surrounded by numerous well-irrigated gardens (Le Strange, *Lands*, p.361). Surprisingly, at the time of the present writer’s visit in 1384/2005, the mosque was in self-same situation.
- <sup>44</sup> The ratio of the width to the depth of the *qibla īwān* at Raqqa is 1: 3.5 and that of Nīrīz is 1: 2.5.
- <sup>45</sup> The recent excavation by ICHO in 1384-85/2005-6 shows that this mosque was originally built according to a hypostyle plan and that a lofty *qibla īwān* was added later.
- <sup>46</sup> Other examples are Kuhpāya, Marand and Qihī, but they may date from Saljuq times.
- <sup>47</sup> O’Kane, “Iran”, *Mosque*, p.119.
- <sup>48</sup> Quchanī, “Barisi-yi Katībihā”, *Athar* XXVI (1375/1996), p.140.
- <sup>49</sup> O’Kane, “Iran”, p.120.

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- <sup>50</sup> For a short description of this building see Afshar, *Yādgārhā-yi Yazd* I, p. 365 and p.614-15, pl.223.
- <sup>51</sup> This *mihṛāb* is of mud brick, measuring 25 cm deep, 82 cm wide and 155 cm high.
- <sup>52</sup> Blair, *Monumental*, p.280, pl.146, and see also Finster, *Frühe*, p.298, fig.97.
- <sup>53</sup> Schlumberger, *Lashkari Bazar*, pl. 23.
- <sup>54</sup> Khmel'nitski, *Mezhdū Arabami*, pp.87-91. Blair treats this building as a mausoleum; see Blair, *Monumental*, pp.56-57.
- <sup>55</sup> Khmel'nitski, *Mezhdū Arabami*, p.99.
- <sup>56</sup> O'Kane, "Iran", p.120.
- <sup>57</sup> It is noteworthy that mosques in cities were frequently built on the line of a *qanāt* (an underground stream of water), so as to provide ablution facilities.
- <sup>58</sup> Grabar, "Earliest", *AO IV* (1966), p.15.
- <sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>60</sup> Mūlawī, "Astan-e", *EIr* II, p.826. This tomb was probably built not later than 200/815.
- <sup>61</sup> Grabar, p.19.
- <sup>62</sup> *Ibid.* p.827.
- <sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>64</sup> According to Mūlawī the new mausoleum was roofed by a barrel vault "as in the contemporary tomb of Arslān Jādhib governor of Ṭūs, near the village of Sangbast". Text also mentions the architectural similarities between two buildings, such as the placing of squinches over the corners, and in having four arched doorways in the middle of the original four walls. These other similarities suggest that the tomb of Imām Riḍā was covered by a low-pointed dome, as at Sangbast, rather than a barrel vault as is suggested by Mūlawī.
- <sup>65</sup> Mūlawī, p.827. This vanished minaret has been confused by Mūlawī with the present minaret with its gold decoration.
- <sup>66</sup> Khmel'nitski, *Mezhdū Samanidami*, pt. 1, p.195, figs. 198, 199.
- <sup>67</sup> Pribytkova, *Pamyatniki Arkhitektury*, pp.6-21; and see also Khmel'nitski, *Mezhdū*, pt. I, p.197, fig. 200 and p.199, fig 202.

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<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p.254.

<sup>69</sup> Blair, *Monumental*, p.58.

<sup>70</sup> O’Kane, “The Gunbad-i Jabaliyya”, *Arab and Islamic Studies*, pp.6-7, see also Afḍal al-Dīn Kirmānī, ‘*Aqd al-‘Alā*, p.67.

<sup>71</sup> New research claims that this building was originally built as a model of Ka‘ba, but was later converted to a tomb. See Northedge, “Qubbat al-Ṣulaybiyya”, *Sifting sands, Reading signs*, p.79.

<sup>72</sup> The recent examination by the ICHO local office in Mazandaran revealed that the original roofs of Lājīm and Risgit have been deformed in the course of restoration; these building were possibly covered by conical roofs originally.

<sup>73</sup> Such as those of Qum, Kashan, Mazandaran and Isfahan.

<sup>74</sup> Hillenbrand., *Islamic Architecture*, p.282.

<sup>75</sup> Schlumberger, *Lashkari Bazar*, pl. 31.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, pl. 4.

<sup>77</sup> Khmel’nitski, *Mezhdu Arabami*, p.217.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p.245.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, p.214.

<sup>80</sup> Semenov, “Excavation”, *The Art and Archaeology of Ancient Iran*, p.118.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, p.109, Fig.7.

<sup>82</sup> Khmel’nitski, *Mezhdu Samanidami*, p. 301, fig. 323.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 293 and fig.315. This building is 80 km. northeast of Marv.

<sup>84</sup> Khmel’nitski, *Mezhdu Arabami*, p.202.

<sup>85</sup> Wulff, *Traditional*, pp.246-47, and figs. 331,332; see also L.Strange, p.65.

<sup>86</sup> This bridge comprises thirteen spans and is about 120 m. long. For details of this bridge see Mukhliṣī, “Pul-i Band-i Amīr”, *Majalla-yi Mīrath-i Farhangī I* (1369/1988), pp.46-49.

<sup>87</sup> For the monuments at Dārzīn see Shokoohy, “Monuments”, *JRAS* (1980), pp.3-20.

<sup>88</sup> Hillenbrand, *Elr II*, p.321.

<sup>89</sup> Kleiss, “Mittelalterliche Burgen”, *AMI XV*(1982), p.257, fig. 22.

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- <sup>90</sup> Whitehouse, “Excavation”, *Iran* IX (1971), pp. 6-10.
- <sup>91</sup> Hillenbrand, Archaeology, *EIr* II, p.320.
- <sup>92</sup> Whitehouse, “Excavation”, p.10.
- <sup>93</sup> Hillenbrand, *EIr* II, p.320.
- <sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, p.321
- <sup>97</sup> Bakhtīār, “Newly reported”, *the Vth International Congress of Iranian Art and Archaeology*, p.10.
- <sup>98</sup> Wilkinson, “Heating”, *BMMA*, N.S. 2 (1943-4), p.284.
- <sup>99</sup> Wilkinson, “Iranian Expedition”, *BMMA*, XXXIII, No.11 (1938), pp. 8-9.
- <sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>101</sup> Kervran M. and A. Rougeulle, *Cahiers de la D. A. F. I*, vol. XIV, p. 134.
- <sup>102</sup> Lakpūr, “Mu‘arifi-ya Khāna”, *DKTMSI*, Vol. I, p.187.
- <sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, p.202.
- <sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, p.208.
- <sup>105</sup> Kāmbakshfar, “Kāvushhāy-i ‘Imī”, *Majall-yi Bāstānshināsī va Hunar Iran IX-X (1351/1972)*, pp.14-15.
- <sup>106</sup> Hillenbrand, *EIr* II, p. 321.
- <sup>107</sup> Whitehouse, “Excavations”, *Iran* IX (1971), pp.11-12, fig.5.
- <sup>108</sup> Shāhmuḥammadpūr, “Ḥammāmhā-yi Bishapūr”, *DKTMSI*, Vol. 3, pp.146-47.
- <sup>109</sup> Hillenbrand, “Archaeology”, *EIr* II, p.320.
- <sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, p.320.
- <sup>111</sup> Herrmann, *Monuments*, p.81.
- <sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, p.153 and p.161.
- <sup>113</sup> Hillenbrand, *Islamic*, fig. 7.107.
- <sup>114</sup> For the trilobed arch see C. Edwards and D.Edwards, “Evolution”, *Architectural History* XXIV (1999), pp.68-95.
- <sup>115</sup> Pīrmiyā, “Gunbad ”, *Athar* XX (1370/1992), pp.38-9.

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- <sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>119</sup> Bier , *Sarvistan*, p.42, and Pīrniyā, p. 22.
- <sup>120</sup> It is likely that the original structure of the Imāmzāda Ja‘far , was built in early Islamic period, but it was extended in the Timurid period. The Gunbad-i Zangūla is a ruined mausoleum, which possibly dates back to the Ilkhanid period.
- <sup>121</sup> Schlumberger, *Lashkari Bazar* III, pls. 115.d and 37.c.
- <sup>122</sup> Herrmann, p.57, fig 52.
- <sup>123</sup> Pīrniya, “Gunbad”, pp.63-4.
- <sup>124</sup> Wilber, *Architecture*, p.68.
- <sup>125</sup> Creswell, *EMA* I, pt. 2, p.443.
- <sup>126</sup> Creswell and Allan, *Short account*, p.285 and fig.180.
- <sup>127</sup> Gye, “Arches”, *Iran* XXVI (1988), p.140.
- <sup>128</sup> Pīrniya , “Chifdhā va Ṭāqḥā”, *Athar* XXIV (1373/ 1994), pp.14-15.
- <sup>129</sup> This vault can also be built by using a cloister vault at one end or both ends of the barrel vault.
- <sup>130</sup> Pīrniya , “Chifdha va Ṭāqḥā”, p.83.
- <sup>131</sup> Bier, p.40.
- <sup>132</sup> Smith, “Imam Zade Karrar”, *AMI* VII (1934), p.66. fig. I.
- <sup>133</sup> For Ukhaīdir see Creswell, *EMA* I, part 2, pl.19 a,c and for Qaṣr Kharāna see Creswell, *EMA* II, fig. 330.
- <sup>134</sup> Labbāf, “Sair-i Tahavvūl”, *Mi ‘marī-yi Masjid* , pp.565-89.
- <sup>135</sup> Creswell, *EMA* II, pls. 99,100.
- <sup>136</sup> Creswell, *MAE* I, Pl. 20/a.
- <sup>137</sup> The polylobed column was used in the Parthian palaces. See Ghirshman, *Iran*, p.28, fig 37.
- <sup>138</sup> These columns were found during an excavation by the ICHO local office in Khurasan in 1383/2004.
- <sup>139</sup> Mishkāfī, “Jurjān”, *Hunar va Mardum* 51(1345/1966), p.37.

## IV

### DECORATION AND INSCRIPTIONS

#### **I. Decoration**

The few surviving buildings of the time and some fragmentary findings of archaeological excavations cannot give a comprehensive picture of the architectural decoration of the period. Decorative patterns of the time were mostly influenced by the Samarra styles and some can be traced back to the Sasanian tradition. Patterns of ornament can be thematically classified as vegetal, geometrical, epigraphic and figural or a combination of two or more of these elements. One of the most significant features of the decoration (especially vegetal design) is symmetry, which usually occurs around a vertical axis. The attempt to create overall decorative surfaces, avoiding blank space, and to give a significant role to epigraphy are the other characteristics of decoration. The main materials of decoration are brick and plaster; the first dominates in external surfaces and

the second in internal surfaces.

## **Brick**

Apart from the use of brick as a major structural material, it had an important role in the decoration of buildings in the architecture of early Islamic Iran.

A plain brick exterior in common bond is to be seen in many buildings of baked brick (such as the Tarī Khāna and Gunbad-i Qābūs), while the exterior of early tomb towers is adorned with vertical impressed joints (Rādkān, Lājīm, Risgit, Pīr-i ‘Alamdār, Chihil Dukhtarān). To articulate a plain brick exterior façade by various blind niches (Davāzdah Imām) is a further type of decoration, however this method also has the structural advantage of lightening the wall and saving material.

The earliest surviving decorative patterns of brick in Islamic lands are to be seen in the palace of Ukhaiḍir (second half of the 2<sup>nd</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> century).<sup>1</sup> The use of baked brick in the early years of the 4<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> century and thereafter led to a distinctive style of brick decoration in early Islamic Iran. The pre-eminent example of this type is the tomb of the Sāmānids at Bukhara (early 4<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> century), which shows that there is no clear division between decoration and construction. This type of baked brick decoration was richly used in later monuments.

In the early years of the 5<sup>th</sup>/11<sup>th</sup> century the motif of a decorative band of baked brick, which was frequently used above or to sandwich an inscription band, appeared below the roof of tomb towers. Such decorative bands frequently consist of geometrical patterns, such as the lozenge, star, triangle, circle, swastika, and sometimes there is a double wave shape of brick within a bracket (as at Pīr-i ‘Alamdār, Lājīm, Risgit and Chihil Dukhtarān). The exterior façade of the building in this time was decorated with inscription bands of cut brick. This innovation first appeared in the portal of the ‘Arab ‘Aṭā mausoleum at Tīm and was often used in later monuments (such as Gunbad-i Qābūs, Pīr-i ‘Alamdār and Chihil Dukhtarān). The inscription band of cut brick set in relief against the brick masonry as a decoration is also to be seen in this period (as at Sangbast).

Small bricks were used in the Isfahan area in the Būyid period in the decoration of various monuments. In the remarkable portal of the Jūrjūr mosque,<sup>2</sup> small bricks that are laid in recessed and projecting forms created a masterpiece of brickwork, comprising geometrical and vegetal patterns. In addition, these bricks were used for a series of decorative arches, including a polylobed arch over the doorway and mushroom-shaped arches crowning the niches that flank the entrance.

The innovation of using bricks laid in recessed and projecting geometric patterns such as zigzags, diagonal strips, herringbone and lozenges to decorate the piers of some monuments that date to the 4<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> century is to be found in the Isfahan area (as in the Friday mosques of Isfahan, Ardistan and Na’in).

The building of piers with courses of baked brick set horizontally and vertically in alternation (as at the Tarī Khāna, Naṭanz and Hazāra), was a common method of construction and decoration. Engaged columns of various sizes were standard decorative elements that first appeared in the tomb of the Sāmānids. This element was later used at the corner of piers (Fahraj and Firdaws) and flanks the entrance of several monuments (Jūrjūr, Pīr-i ‘Alamdār, Chihil Dukhtarān).

Double stretchers and vertically impressed joints as a decorative element are to be seen in several monuments of the time such as Nishapur,<sup>3</sup> Rādkān, Pīr-i ‘Alamdār, Lājīm, and Risgit. In addition, moulded bricks forming circular and slotted crosses were found in Tepe Madrasa at Nishapur<sup>4</sup> and reveal the influence of Central Asian traditions.

The monument at Sangbast shows a notable interior decoration of baked brick that might reflect - the influence of the Central Asia tradition. Inside, the dome of the building is ornamented with a herringbone pattern in cut brick, which is the earliest surviving example of brick decoration applied to the inner dome in the history of Iranian architecture. Geometric patterns of brick of numerous varieties were mostly used in exterior surfaces (such as those on the minarets at Simnan and Damghan and the tomb towers in Damghan). The geometric patterns of the monuments at Simnan comprise two major forms; linear and polygonal. In the linear style the lines are all set at right angles or at an angle of 45° (diagonal) to one another. The polygonal design which is so widely encountered is based on interlocking or adjoining square and octagonal forms. This style

was widely used in the decoration of minarets in the Saljuq period. It is noteworthy that the minaret at Na'in is of plain baked brick and has only an upper decorative band of plaster.

The exterior of surviving buildings of mud brick is normally coated with *sīmgil* or *kāhgil* (Fahraj, Ramūk, Sāva, Firdaws, Raḥīmābād and Pīr-i Ḥamza Sabzpūsh), while the interiors of these monuments were frequently coated with a revetment of plaster. The buildings in mud brick were sometimes adorned with some decorative patterns, such as blind lobed arches with an ogee or a pointed apex in the courtyard façade, as at Fahraj, or arrow-slit windows as at Ramūk.

### **Plaster**

The main material of interior decoration was plaster. This can be categorised as plain, carved, painted and moulded.

Plain plaster was frequently used to coat the extensive interior surface of monuments; however, sometimes the exterior decoration of brick and inscription bands was coated with a layer of plaster so as to reflect delicately the underlying pattern (as at the Jūrjūr Mosque and the Gunbad-i Qābūs).<sup>5</sup> When unlimited finance was available the brick exterior was covered with plaster (as at Samīrān). Plain plaster was also employed to create vertical impressed joints.

The earliest painted plaster decoration appeared in the Friday mosque at Fahraj. Painted plaster was frequently used to adorn interior surfaces, such as inscription bands (Davāzdah Imām, Pīr-i ‘Alamdār), geometrical motifs (Fahraj, Nishapur and Sangbast) and curved niche shapes (Nishapur). The three decorative false doors of painted plaster in red found at Fahraj are unique in this period.

Wall paintings, which appeared in palaces or manor houses, mostly contain thematic figural compositions. The remains of Sogdian mural painting in pre-Islamic times mainly comprise banquets and battle scenes.<sup>6</sup> The earliest surviving example at Panjikent<sup>7</sup> shows a royal reception (2<sup>nd</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> century). The wall paintings in Nishapur indicate that the earliest surviving examples - mainly datable in the 3<sup>rd</sup> - 4<sup>th</sup>/9<sup>th</sup> - 10<sup>th</sup> century - reveal a long tradition of this kind of ornament in the Iranian world,<sup>8</sup> which possibly reflects the influence of the Sogdian tradition of epic mural painting.<sup>9</sup> The secular and heroic subject matter of Sogdian painting were to find ready acceptance among the artists of the Islamic world.<sup>10</sup> The best explanation for their appearance in Islamic Iran is the rebirth of the Persian language under the Sāmānids and its use for heroic expression as a common theme in mural painting at Nishapur. The dadoes of buildings at Nishapur are decorated with moulded carved stucco while the wall itself is also painted. This combination of carved stucco and wall painting reminds one of the architectural decorations at Samarra. Numerous fragments of wall painting, both polychrome and black and white, were found in Nishapur. Among the fragmentary and scattered wall paintings, the picture of a horseman outlined in black on a white ground at Nishapur (4<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> century)<sup>11</sup> recalls a Sasanian royal hunting scene.<sup>12</sup> Polychrome images of full-length figures of warriors and

guardsmen depicted on a wall at Lashkar-i Bāzār (5<sup>th</sup>/11<sup>th</sup> century)<sup>13</sup> show further developments in this style of decoration. Despite the stylistic relationship between the Lashkar-i Bazar murals and Sogdian paintings of the pre-Islamic period, the purely courtly and ceremonial content of the Ghaznavid murals place them strictly within the cultural and socio-political context of the early Islamic world.<sup>14</sup>

The remains of painted plaster in several monuments in Iran ( e.g. Nishapur, Fahraj, Pīr-i ‘Alamdār, Davāzdah Imām, and Sangbast) show that green, blue, white, black, red, gold, red-brown, yellow, buff and yellow-ochre are the main colours that were used in this period.

Several decorative patterns in plaster, comprising a multi-lobed arch, stepped designs, and cusps that create a rayed effect, are to be seen in the Friday mosque at Fahraj. The high relief decoration in the portal of the Jūrjūr Mosque is rare in the decoration of buildings of this time. These patterns and the three painted false doors show an imitation of other motifs to decorate a provincial building.

Numerous decorative patterns -vegetal and geometric- and also inscription bands in carved plaster signify the popularity of this method of decoration. Plain scrolling foliate motifs were used as a decorative design (as at Shiraz) and are sometimes combined with geometric motifs to create a new decorative pattern, which is known as the arabesque. The arabesque appeared in its fully geometricised form by the middle of the 4<sup>th</sup> /10<sup>th</sup>

century (as at Na'in), when foliated motifs such as the vine or acanthus scroll began to be interlaced with geometric frameworks, which they transformed into something organic.<sup>15</sup> Carved plaster was applied inside buildings mostly on the *mihrāb*, the dado (Davāzdah Imām and Nishapur) and columns (Isfahan, Balkh, Na'in). Only at Sangbast was carved plaster in herringbone form that mimics brick employed to cover a large part of the inner walls. In addition, the enclosing arch of each squinch of this building has false brickwork painted in white on yellow.

Moulded plaster of floral and geometric design appeared below the exterior cornices of some tomb towers (as at Rādkān West, Lājīm and Risgit) and in interior friezes (as at Būzān).

The types of vegetal ornament comprise vine, rosette, palmette, lotus, pomegranate, acanthus leaves and the pine cone. The vine, rosette and palmette are dominant.

The use of geometric patterns creates an overall unity which can extend also to smaller sub-units and even individual motifs. Geometric patterns typically comprise star and cross units (Na'in), while multi-lobed motifs and eight- and six-pointed stars were also employed in geometric decoration (Nishapur). Polygonal designs appeared in interlocking or adjoining squares, as well as in octagonal and hexagonal forms. A panel of carved plaster from Nishapur shows a variant of this style in the 4<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>16</sup> This panel, composed of interlacing hexagonal forms combined with interstitial leaves, displays between these hexagons create on the central axis a six-pointed star, and

elsewhere the intersections of these hexagons a lozenge, both within the hexagons and as sub-units.

One decorative panel of polychromed carved plaster at Nishapur (datable to the 4<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> century) displays six-lobed medallions filled with half-palmettes, whose curving, anticlockwise-rotating stems were transformed into bird heads which revolved round a central circle.<sup>17</sup> The other panel contains a series of adjacent eight-pointed stars. A medallion is placed inside each star. Each medallion is filled with a rotating roundel of a pair of half-palmettes, which appears to move in the same direction. Bird-headed palmette figures are thrust onto the points of the star, and seem to mimic circular movement.<sup>18</sup> This design shows a type of wheel ornament, which is also to be found in other media of the time.<sup>19</sup>

The recently discovered carved plaster in the dado of the Davāzdah Imām mausoleum shows a development which belongs in the second Samarra style. In these patterns, the field is divided by a series of adjoining hexagons, which contain abstracted leaves and scrolling tendrils producing blooms. The spaces between the hexagons are filled with a large pattern that mostly comprises spindle forms and star figures. The whole panel of decoration is set within a rectangular border. A similar pattern is to be seen in the dado of the Pīr-i Ḥamza Sabzpūsh tomb.

Lime was employed only at Tālīsh, where both the interior and exterior façades of the building were coated with lime plaster. The floral pattern in the dado of this building is known from the third style of Samarra.

Rubble is difficult to be adapted to decorative form, but the exterior of buildings of rubble were decorated in various ways. The most striking is three tiers of rubble in arched niches of *muqarnas* shape set in relief around the shaft of the Gunbad-i ‘Alī. The trilobed arch of rubble with a plaster skin on the exterior of a tomb tower at Samīrān, and the recessed niches on the exterior façade of the Gunbad-i Jabaliya, illustrate other methods of adorning buildings made of rubble.

### *Mihrāb*

The *mihrāb* was the most important decorative element in the mosque in early Islamic Iran. The *mihrāb* is of rectangular plan,<sup>20</sup> rather than the semicircular plan which was characteristic of Mesopotamia.<sup>21</sup>

With the exception of the Tarī Khāna and the Friday mosque at Raqqa, the *mihrāb* was placed in the centre of the *qibla* wall. The form of the *mihrāb* frequently comprises a simple recession with a rectangular framed arch that is placed in the *qibla* wall. The remains of some small mosques at Sīrāf and the mausoleum of Davāzdah Imām show projecting *mihrābs*. However, this feature is rare in the early Islamic architecture of Iran. The arch of the *mihrāb* has different forms; a simple pointed arch, a round arch (Tepe

Madrasa at Nishapur),<sup>22</sup> and a trilobed arch in three dimensions forming a scalloped design – as in the mosques of Qirva,<sup>23</sup> Shāhpūrābād<sup>24</sup> and Shīr Kabīr.<sup>25</sup> The pointed arched niche of the *mihrāb* at Fahraj is framed by two knotted columns of mud brick, while a multi-lobed blind arch in plaster is placed above the rectangular frame of the *mihrāb*.

In the 4<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> century, the form of the *mihrāb* in the Friday mosque at Na'in comprises two niches, an outer and an inner one, and four engaged columns with projecting capitals, established a new standard type of *mihrāb* in Iranian architecture, which was used widely in the following centuries.<sup>26</sup> However, the decorative *mihrāb* consisting of a single niche continued, mostly in small or provincial buildings.

The use of engaged columns was possibly not a new element in design of the *mihrāb* in Iran in the 4<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> century. Two engaged columns are to be seen in the *mihrāb* of the Masjid-i 'Atīq in Shiraz (3<sup>rd</sup>/9<sup>th</sup> century).<sup>27</sup> Wilber says that these engaged columns were a later addition,<sup>28</sup> but it is possible that they replaced the original ones. In addition the *mihrāb* with engaged columns became common in the western Islamic lands in the 3<sup>rd</sup>/9<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>29</sup>

The *mihrāb* of Na'in is the earliest surviving *mihrāb* that it is richly adorned with vegetal and geometric patterns; these can be traced back to Samarra. The most important part of the *mihrāb* was its tympanum, which was frequently adorned with floral or vegetal motifs that may symbolise paradise.<sup>30</sup> In the *mihrāb* of the Davāzdah Imām, an arched bay is

placed within another pointed arched frame, while a panel of curvilinear plaster in relief containing a painted scrolling arabesque in the Samarra II style<sup>31</sup> adorns the tympanum above the *mihrāb*.<sup>32</sup> The remains of a *mihrāb* in the Friday mosque at Tabriz,<sup>33</sup> datable in the second half of the 4<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> century, shows that this *mihrāb* is entirely adorned with vegetal motifs and an illegible inscription band of Kufic (Pl.IV.1).

A remarkable flat *mihrāb* of carved plaster, datable to the 3<sup>rd</sup>/9<sup>th</sup> century that was found in Rayy shows the use of this type of *mihrāb* in Iran (Pl.IV.2). The *mihrāb* comprises a low pointed arch resting on two columns and the flat surface of *mihrāb* is covered by floral patterns.<sup>34</sup>

A *mihrāb* of plaster, which is datable in the late of the 4<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> century, is attached to a pier in the Friday mosque at Sāva. This is decorated with several Qur'ānic inscription bands in Kufic. This *mihrāb* and that of Tabriz – are possibly the earliest appearance of inscription bands on *mihrābs* known to survive in Iran.

A wooden *mihrāb* at Iskodār in Tajikistan, datable c. 400/1010,<sup>35</sup> which consists of a deep arched niche- with a pointed ogee arch above and a semicircular arch with a high stilt- that is surmounted by a tympanum with geometric interlacing around a large boss, reveals the variety of material employed in the construction of *mihrābs*.<sup>36</sup>

## II. Inscriptions

Monumental inscriptions as a royal tradition in rock-cut form existed in pre-Islamic Iran; however, epigraphy had no role in architectural ornament. Inscriptions in different sizes, texts and materials as a new vehicle of communication and decoration appeared in both secular and religious buildings in early Islamic Iran.

The architectural and commemorative inscriptions of Iran and Transoxiana that survive from the first five Islamic centuries have been described in detail by Sheila Blair.<sup>37</sup> So in this section of the present thesis only the main characteristics of the inscriptions of the period, especially those of the catalogue, will be discussed.

Whether there is a single inscription band or several depends on the preference of the patron. Inscription bands appeared in a variety of locations: below the transition zone, around the base of the dome, over niches or the doorway, in the dado and on wooden columns. Inscriptions are also to be found on the shafts of minarets and on the exterior of tomb towers; below their cornices; above the doorway; and on the courtyard façade of mosques. Sometimes the inscription band is placed on a stone slab (Ḥasanwayhid cistern; Kalhur and Kashkān bridges) or an iron plaque (Khaṭīr gate at Yazd;<sup>38</sup> minaret at Gurganj)<sup>39</sup>. Durability and legibility were important in epigraphy, so the location and the size of script were carefully chosen to be visible. The earliest monumental inscription in early Islamic Iran to appear in a rectangular frame surrounding an arch or niche is to be seen in the portal of the ‘Arab ‘Aṭā mausoleum at Tīm (367/977).<sup>40</sup> This form was to become common in the portals of later monuments in Iran.

Monumental inscriptions can be thematically divided into historical and religious categories. Historical inscriptions frequently give information about the foundation of a building and usually start with the name of God (*bismillāh*), the object of the work and the name of the patron; they end with the date of construction. In addition, sometimes the foundation inscription gives the name of the builder (*bannā'*), wood-carver (*najjār*) or ironworker (*ḥaddād*). The name of the deceased was frequently mentioned in the inscription bands of tomb towers.

Religious inscriptions contain Qur'ānic texts, pious phrases and *ḥadīths* (sayings traditionally attributed to Muḥammad (s), the prophet of Islam). Qur'ānic texts are to be seen in various types of building, but principally in mosques. Various verses of the Qur'ān are to be seen in the mosque throughout the Islamic world; Qur'ān 9:18, which mentions the word *masjid*, is the most popular text of all.<sup>41</sup> This text was used at Na'in and Ṭālish. The most popular Qur'ānic text found in surviving monuments from early Islamic Iran was Qur'ān 3:16-18, and this appears on several monuments – such as the Jūrjūr mosque, the mosque of Shīr Kabīr, the octagonal building at Naṭanz and the minaret at Tirmidh. In mausolea the following Qur'ānic text about death appears: 21:36 in Risgit and 39: 53-54 inside the Pīr-i 'Alamdār; this stresses mercy and forgiveness. Thus, in these two cases there is a clear connection between Qur'ānic text chosen and the function of the building.

The earliest pious phrase is to be seen in the Friday mosque in Baylaqān (308/920-21).<sup>42</sup> The pious phrase at Na'in ends with "God's blessings on Muḥammad (ṣ), the prophet and his pure family", which is well known as a Shī'ite slogan and was inscribed under a Būyid patron. One of the most popular phrases is *al-mulk l'illāh*, "Dominion belongs to God". This phrase is to be found over the doorways of the two tomb towers at Damghan and the monument at Shīr Kabīr (second half of the 4<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> century) at Dihistān.<sup>43</sup> *Ḥadīths* were rarely used in this period and the sole surviving example is to be seen in the wooden *mihrāb* from the mosque at Iskodar (400/1010). However, the use of *ḥadīths* became popular later in monumental inscriptions in Iran. In summary, it might be suggested - because of the few surviving buildings - that in pre-Saljuq period the use of Qur'ānic and other religious inscriptions was still at an early stage.

Historical texts frequently start with *bismillāh al-raḥmān al-raḥīm* ("in the name of God the Merciful, the Compassionate"), and sometimes owing to limitations of space in a shorter form, *bismillāh* ("in the name of God"). The use of adjectives, names and titles in the inscriptions shows that the role of historical texts was primarily to express the dignity and power of the patron or the deceased. The most common formula in foundation inscriptions was '*amara bi binā*' ("ordered the building of"). In the inscription of the Kashkān bridge- and the monuments that were built by the Ḥasanwayhid *amīr* - the phrase *hādḥā mā 'amara bi binā*' ("this is what Badr ordered to be built") follows the *bismillāh*.

Foundation inscriptions of the period mostly include a term that refers to the function of the building. Several words imply the function of funerary structures; such as *qaṣr* (palace), in the Gunbad-i Qābūs, Rādkān and the Pīr-i ‘Alamdār, *mashhad* (memorial and place of pilgrimage), in Rādkān, and *qubba* (domed structure) in Lājīm, Pīr-i ‘Alamdār, Davāzdah Imām, Chihil Dukhtarān and Risgit, and the term *turba* (tomb) in Gunbad-i ‘Alī. The tomb of ‘Alī (‘a), the first Shī‘ite Imām at Kūfa, is called *buq‘a*, which became common in Iran, especially for the tomb of a holy man.<sup>44</sup>

The use of a particular term can imply something about a patron. For instance, in the Gunbad-i Qābūs, the term *qaṣr* can possibly refer a lofty tomb tower, but it can also indicate the high position of Qābūs, as with the ‘Abbasid caliph. Most of the ‘Abbasid Caliphs even to the middle of the 4<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> century were traditionally buried in their palaces,<sup>45</sup> so the use of term *qaṣr* can connote Qābūs’ high position. The term *turba* appears only in the inscription of the Gunbad-i ‘Alī. The term *turba*<sup>46</sup> was used for a mausoleum, which was built for the ‘Abbasid caliphs.<sup>47</sup> In addition, historical texts mention that ‘Aḍud al-Dawla was buried in his *turba* in Najaf (327/983).<sup>48</sup> The deceased in the Gunbad-i ‘Alī was a Būyid *amiīr*, so it is possible that this word was used deliberately.

The use of a foundation text rather than a Qur’ānic text occurs only in two Friday mosques at Khīva (c.400/1010) and Qirva (413/1022-23). These inscriptions are in some respects quite important. Firstly, the Khīva text mentions the title of the patron as a *faqīh* (jurisprudent), which is rare in the monumental inscriptions of the period. Secondly, the

inscription at Khīva emphasises that the patron allocated his own funds (*māl*) – and not the public funds or “*bayt al-māl*” - for the construction of the mosque. This text shows the role of pious people in the construction and development of the mosque in early Islamic Iran. The inscription at Qirva is the earliest surviving that mentions the term mosque (*masjid*) and congregational mosque (*masjid al-jāmi‘*). However it is likely that in the first instance the adjective “congregational” was used for the mosque but has vanished. The appearance of the term *jāmi‘* stresses the significance of receiving permission for the construction of a congregational (Friday) mosque in a small village in the early years of the 5<sup>th</sup>/11<sup>th</sup> century. The word *manāra* was mentioned in the foundation inscription band on the shaft of the minarets of both Damghan and Simnan.

The tomb towers of the period frequently possessed two exterior inscription bands; one below the cornice of the dome and a further one over the doorway, which is legible and usually gives same historical information. However, two tomb towers - the Pīr-i ‘Alamdār and Risgit - are different. In the first one a foundation text is set below the cornice and a pious phrase that is a part of the decoration is over the doorway. In contrast to the earlier tomb towers of the period, a Qur’ānic text encircles the shaft of the building at Risgit, while a four-line plaque of foundation text, which is an addition, can to be seen over the doorway. The placing of a Qur’ānic text at cornice level reveals a new tendency to highlight the tomb tower as a religious building, and a Muslim one at that.

Among the historical inscriptions of the period, the band below the cornice of the tomb tower at Lājīm, which mentions the name of patron of the tomb as “the noble lady

Chihrazād”, is noteworthy. This is the earliest surviving name of a lady in the inscriptions of Islamic Iran and this custom is to be seen later in the Gunbad-i ‘Alī, where the name of the deceased lady is inscribed over the doorway.<sup>49</sup>

Arabic, as in other media, was the formal language of epigraphy in monumental inscriptions. The tomb towers in the Caspian area show the co-existence of Pahlavī and Arabic in an inscription band. The Pahlavī text roughly repeats that in Arabic, however the Pahlavi was frequently written in smaller size (Rādkān and Lājīm), and was sometimes shorter (Risgit) than the Arabic text. The Pahlavī text gives the date in the Yazdgirdī rather than the Hijra calendar. This co-existence reveals the influence of pre-Islamic culture until the 5<sup>th</sup>/11<sup>th</sup> century in this area.<sup>50</sup>

The dominant script of epigraphy was Kufic, and this can be categorised as angular (simple), foliated, floriated and interlaced. Angular Kufic, the earliest style of epigraphy, appears in several monuments (Gunbad-i Qābūs, Jūrjūr Mosque, Lājīm and Shūshtar). In simple Kufic the letters fill the lower half of the band and rarely project into the upper half, and so aesthetically it looks unattractive. To solve this problem, a range of devices to fill the upper void, such as bumps, barbs, hooks and bevels, decorate the tops of the stems and/or the tails of letters.

The most popular style of monumental inscription of the period was the type of foliated Kufic that emerged in the 4<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> century (as at Na’in, Ardistan, Kashkān and Naṭanz). In this style the tops or teeth of the letters gradually enlarge into foliated Kufic, while the

stems of the letters were decorated with half-palmettes (the tomb of Sāmānids), or triple lobed leaves and separated terminals.<sup>51</sup>

The inscription in the Friday mosque at Na'in shows a further development of Kufic epigraphy in the 4<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> century. In this inscription three letters - *rā*, *nūn* and *wā* - have rising tails which curve in swans' neck or a bump is inserted in the middle of the word Allāh.<sup>52</sup> The letters of the inscription bands at Ardistan, Na'in and Naṭanz have trilobed endings. At Naṭanz not only are the letters foliated, but the background of the inscription is carved with floral decoration.

Foliated Kufic eventually turned into floriated Kufic, in which floral motifs, tendrils and scrolls grow mostly from the terminations of the letters.<sup>53</sup> The three inscription bands over the interior niches at the Davāzdah Imām are partly inscribed in this way, but the inscription at the tomb tower at Risgit shows a development in this style. In the inscription below the cornice of the tomb, the terminals of letters end skilfully in trilobes and floral motifs. In some letters like *hā*, a flower grows out of the middle bar of it and a half- palmette is set over the letter.

Apart from adding floral motifs in order to elaborate simple Kufic, the interlacing of the bodies of certain letters (like *dāl* or *kāf*), as well as of the stems or tails of letters, and pairs of letters (especially the *lām-alif* combination) became popular in Iran.<sup>54</sup> This style developed in the early 5<sup>th</sup>/11<sup>th</sup> century in Iran. The best example of this style is to be found in the tomb tower at Rādkān. In this inscription the interlacing has been removed from the body of letters to the upper zone and was joined to other ornament, so that the

inscription itself became more visible. The pre-eminent example of this type of epigraphy in this period is to be seen inside the Pīr-i ‘Alamdār tomb tower. The painted inscription of the tomb is an interlaced Kufic, in which the body, the termination and the stems of the letters are plaited. The endings of the letters are decorated and in the middle most of them are knotted in various forms. The inscription band resembles an abstract vegetal form, which perhaps symbolises paradise as the desired destination of every Muslim believer.

Inscriptions on wood are to be seen in various forms and locations in the monuments of the time. They include wooden plaques (a tomb at Kūfa<sup>55</sup> and the Friday mosque at Shūshtar), the wooden *mihrāb* at Iskodār or on a wooden column at Isbijāb (404/1014).<sup>56</sup> Of these inscriptions the first two plaques are of simple Kufic, the third is of foliated Kufic and the last is of floriated Kufic.

The wide range of variety in theme and style shows the popularity and the significant role of epigraphy in the decoration of monuments in early Islamic Iran.

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<sup>1</sup> Creswell, *EMA* II, pl. 14.c and pl.19.c.

<sup>2</sup> The size of bricks in this monument is smaller than elsewhere. The bricks of the Jūrjūr mosque measure 13x4x2.5 cm., 10x4x2.5 cm. and 4x4x2.5 cm.

<sup>3</sup> Wilkinson, *Nishapur*, pp.95-96.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p.99, fig.1.74.

<sup>5</sup> Hillenbrand, “ ‘Abbasid Mosques ”, *Rivista degli Studi Orientali* LIX (1987), p.180.

<sup>6</sup> Azarpay, *Sogdian Painting*, p. 105.

<sup>7</sup> Hakimov, “Arts and Crafts”, *History of Civilization* IV, Pt. 2, p.443, fig.29.

<sup>8</sup> Wilkinson, pp.17-32.

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- <sup>9</sup> It should be noted that in the second half of the 2<sup>nd</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> to the first half of the 3<sup>rd</sup>/9<sup>th</sup> century, many Sogdians migrated to Marv, Nishapur, Baghdad and Samarra (Azarpay, pp.18-19). So, not surprisingly, former cultural traditions continued.
- <sup>10</sup> Azarpay, pp.183-84.
- <sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 205-7.
- <sup>12</sup> Another major theme in Iranian painting which became popular after the Mongol invasion is the prince and his appurtenances. See Sims, *Peerless Images*, p.30.
- <sup>13</sup> Schlumberger, *Lashkari Bāzār*, pl.122,a,b.
- <sup>14</sup> Azarpay, p.177.
- <sup>15</sup> Blair and Bloom, “Iraq, Iran and Egypt”, *IAA*, p.124-25.
- <sup>16</sup> Wilkinson, p.242, fig.3.42.
- <sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p.230, fig.3.20.
- <sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p.237, fig. 3.33.
- <sup>19</sup> Baer, *Islamic Ornament*, p.121.
- <sup>20</sup> With the exception of the *mihrāb* at Bishāpūr that has a stepped repeated four times plan.
- <sup>21</sup> Such as the *mihrāb* of al-Khāṣṣakī.
- <sup>22</sup> Several *mihrābs* were found in Tepe Madrasa. Each *mihrāb* was at a corner rather than in the centre of each room. This suggests the importance of the *qibla* direction and of using *mihrāb* as a decorative element even in a secular complex, see Wilkinson, p.78, fig.1.45, and p.86, fig.1.55.
- <sup>23</sup> Hillenbrand, “Saljuq Monuments”, *Oriental Art* XVIII (1972), p.68, pl.6.
- <sup>24</sup> Siroux, “L’Evolution”, *Arts Asiatiques* XXVI (1973), p. 102, fig. 17.
- <sup>25</sup> The closest parallel for this type is the of the Jāmi‘ al-Khāṣṣakī (c. 145/762) in Baghdad.
- <sup>26</sup> Such as the Friday mosque of Ardistan, the Masjid-i Malik and Ḥaydariya mosque, and the mausolea of Pīr-i Ḥamza Sabzpuṣh and Gunbad-i ‘Alawīyān.
- <sup>27</sup> Wilber, *Masjid-i ‘Atīq*, p.9, fig 2.
- <sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>29</sup> Such as those of the Friday mosque at Qairawān (222/ 836), Sūsa (237/851), Ibn Ṭūlūn (266/879) and Cordoba (355/965).

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<sup>30</sup> Shani, “Paradise Glimpsed”, *Image and Meaning* , p.110.

<sup>31</sup> Ettinghausen, “ Beveled style”, *Archaeologica Orientalia*, p.76.

<sup>32</sup> This decorative pattern is reminiscent of that of the *mihrāb* at al-Azhar Mosque (359/969) at Cairo. See Creswell, *MAE I*, pl.c.7.

<sup>33</sup> The remains of this *mihrāb* is to be seen in the basement of the building.

<sup>34</sup> A further flat *mihrāb* of carved plaster, datable in the 5<sup>th</sup>- 6<sup>th</sup> /11<sup>th</sup> -12<sup>th</sup> century, was also found in Rayy.

The *mihrāb* is richly decorated by geometric and vegetal patterns and several inscription bands. Both of these flat *mihrābs* are preserved at the National Museum of Iran.

<sup>35</sup> Blair, *Monumental*, p. 78 and fig. 43.

<sup>36</sup> A further wooden *mihrab* is to be seen in the Maṣjid-i Maydān, Abyāna. Ettinghausen gives the date of this *mihrāb* as 497/1103 (see Ettinghausen , p.77), but Sajādī mentions this date as 477/1084 (see Sajādī, *Sair-i Tahavvūl*, p.140).

<sup>37</sup> Blair, *Monumental*.

<sup>38</sup> *SPA III*, p.1362, fig. 505.

<sup>39</sup> Blair, p.80.

<sup>40</sup> Allen, *Five Essays*, p.83.

<sup>41</sup> Hillenbrand, “Qur’ānic Epigraphy”, *Revue des Etudes Islamiques* 54 (1989), p.173.

<sup>42</sup> This phrase is “ O comforter of every lonely person”. See Blair, *Monumental*, p.22.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p.56.

<sup>44</sup> Such as Buq’ a-i Pīr at Tākistān.

<sup>45</sup> Allen, “ Tombs”, *BSOAS*, pp.427-29.

<sup>46</sup> *Turba* literally means soil.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p.424-25.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p.430.

<sup>49</sup> This trend continued in the following centuries in Iran.

<sup>50</sup> The earliest surviving Persian inscription is in the tomb at Safid Buland (c.450/1058-59) in Kirghizstan.

See Blair, p.128.

<sup>51</sup> Blair, p.11.

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<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> Grohmann, “Floriated Kufic”, *AO* II (1957), pp. 183-213; see also Tabbaa, *Transformation*, pp.55-57.

<sup>54</sup> Blair, p.12.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.41-46, and p.224, figs. 16-18.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.83-85, and p.237, figs.46,47.

## CONCLUSION

This study attempts to shed some new light on monuments that are supposedly well known. This fresh material will help in completing and correcting previous investigations so as to clarify the formation of architecture in early Islamic Iran. However, it should be acknowledged that there is still insufficient information about this period. This final section will summarise the evidence underlying this statement, but it will also highlight the principal discoveries that have been discussed in detail in this thesis.

The new information presented in this study highlights a variety of aspects of the architecture of the period. Some examples will make this clear. Thus, as a 19<sup>th</sup>-century photograph shows, there was a ruined dome with squinches over the *mihrāb* aisle at the Tārī Khāna mosque at Damghan, so the current view of this mosque must be revised. A governmental order on carved wood dated 455/1053-4, which was confused with the date of the wooden *minbar* of the mosque at Shūshtar,<sup>1</sup> suggests the existence of a mosque at that time. A building at Shahdād in the Kirman area introduces a new type - a military base or station, which displays the continuous impact of the Sasanian architectural tradition in this period.

In the Friday mosque at Sāva, recent investigations have uncovered Būyid paintings and a hitherto hidden stucco *mihrāb*. This investigation also revealed how a dome chamber was added to an earlier hypostyle plan in this mosque. The investigation of the Friday mosque at Na'in revealed the original hypostyle plan of the building and its later development. The restoration of the Gunbad-i Qābūs shows that this building was roofed by rhomboid bricks, whose use in this period was hitherto little known. The survey of the Kashkān bridge, which hitherto was known only by its inscription, explores the technical details of construction that were so skilfully used in this gigantic monument.

Probing analysis of the Masjid-i Malik at Kirman confirms that the earliest part of the mosque was built on the nine-dome plan, datable to the 3<sup>rd</sup> - 4<sup>th</sup> /10<sup>th</sup> -11<sup>th</sup> century, and that thereafter this mosque was expanded by the construction of a single *qibla īwān*, whose accurate date of construction was revealed by two inscription bands that were found in the course of restoration in the 1360s/1980s.

The unpublished Kūshk mosque at Firdaws – datable to the 4<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> century - follows a hypostyle plan, akin to that of the Friday mosque at Fahraj, and possibly provides an introduction to the earliest surviving mosques that have hitherto been identified in the Khurasan area. The story of garden architecture in the early Islamic is unclear, but the Kūshk-i Raḥīmābād at Bam, with its central dome chamber surrounded by four *īwāns*, illustrates the main features of this type of structure at that time.

The excavations at the Sasanian site of Bishāpūr yield information as to how the earliest mosque of hypostyle plan and with a *riwāq* around a central courtyard was built in the 4<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> century, using the material and techniques of the earlier buildings on this site. The examination of the Friday mosque at Nīrīz attested that the *qibla īwān* was added to an earlier hypostyle plan, so that Godard's theory about the *qibla īwān* does not work for this mosque. In addition, this examination shows that the other parts of the mosque, such as its minaret and a further *īwān* opposite the *qibla* side, were built in Qajar times.

An unpublished report of an archaeological investigation in the Friday mosque at Simnan in the mid-1350s/1970s shows the remains of the earlier plan of this mosque. Research on this mosque explains its chronological development and suggests that the dome chamber dates from the Saljuq period. The remains of a small mosque in hypostyle plan with a central courtyard and a *riwāq* around it, with applied decoration and an inscription band, at Tālīsh in the western area of Caspian Sea perhaps illustrates the standard plan of mosques all around Iran in this period.

The recent discovery of two fragments of ornament in the Davāzdah Imām at Yazd shows the influence of the Samarra style in this period. Close analysis shows that a trilobed arch inside each squinch had a structural role. A careful reading and analysis of two inscription bands above the cornice and doorway of the Gunbad-i 'Alī clarify the relevance of the deceased to the Būyid family.

The plan of a previously unknown caravansarai at Muḥammadābād (first half of the 5<sup>th</sup> /11<sup>th</sup> century), with a *riwāq* around a central courtyard, explains the formation of the plan of the caravansarai in this period. In addition, the plan of this building testifies to the appearance of the four- *īwān* scheme prior to its use in the mosque in the architecture of Islamic Iran.

Research on the Pīr-i Ḥamzeah Sabzpūsh mausoleum, which was earlier known only for its remarkable *mihrāb*, dated to the 6<sup>th</sup>/12<sup>th</sup> century, verifies that the *mihrāb* is a later addition and that the building was constructed in the first half of the 5<sup>th</sup>/12<sup>th</sup> century. The present study also underlines the importance of previously unsuspected interior decoration, such as that found in the Davāzdah Imām at Yazd. The re-examination of the mausoleum at Sangbast suggests that this building, perhaps reflects the influence of the Central Asian monuments that once possessed a *pīshṭāq*, which in this case has later vanished.

The recent restoration of the tomb tower at Risigit confirms that the cornice of the building was originally decorated with brick patterns, which were later covered by the present carved stucco. In addition, recent excavations near this building revealed fragments of carved stucco that are very similar to those of the Friday mosque at Na'in. These findings suggest that the tomb tower was part of a flourishing culture in this area.

As in the other Islamic lands the mosque is the dominant type of building, and it was built according to the Arab hypostyle plan, but with pre- Islamic details of construction. The

signs of a new approach to Iranian architecture emerged in the 4<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> century under the Sāmānid and Būyid dynasties, in east and central Iran respectively. Both these areas used pre-Islamic elements, but the Sāmānids employed the Central Asian tradition of brick decoration, while Būyid architecture adopted the ‘Abbasid style of decoration. The surviving monuments of the first half of the 5<sup>th</sup>/11<sup>th</sup> century clearly attest a sophisticated style of architecture that was skillfully developed later by the Saljuqs.

The existing information confirms that, except for the *madrasa*, all other major types of buildings were erected in early Islamic Iran. The hypostyle hall, main aisle, *riwāq*, dome (single- and double-shell), *chāhār tāq* form, four-*īwān* plan, *pīsh-tāq* and central courtyard, were all used in the architecture of early Islamic Iran. The mausoleum in the form of a domed square, and the tomb tower, both became popular from the 4<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> century onwards. In addition, the barrel vault, various types of squinch, mud brick, baked brick and rubble masonry characterize the building material and the structural features of the period. The execution of carved plaster, which was common in pre-Islamic Iran, continued. However, most decorative patterns can be traced back to the Samarra style. Inscription bands in Kufic, containing Qur’ānic, pious, historical and foundation texts appeared in the monuments of the period, mostly in the 4<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> century, and became standard in the design of architecture.

The research on which this thesis is based shows that two trends influenced the formation of architecture in early Islamic Iran: Sasanian architecture and the ‘Abbasid imperial style. Broadly speaking, the architecture of the period illustrates the fusion of these two

different styles, and this created a certain continuity. The use of construction methods and architectural elements of pre-Islamic origin continued, while the choice of the hypostyle plan as the main scheme of the Iranian mosque and the traces of the Samarra style in decoration provide evidence of the impact of imperial ‘Abbasid modes.

To summarise, then, the study of the architecture of Iran between 30/650 and 450/1058 shows both the continuity and the evolution of Iranian architecture at this time and makes it clear that this is in some sense the key to Islamic architecture in Iran. All the available information shows the essentially transitional nature of the architecture of early Islamic Iran. The variety of design and construction marks this period as an age of experiment.<sup>2</sup> In addition this variety, unlike the case in other areas of the Islamic world, shows the appearance of provincial styles – a trend that was to mark Iranian architecture in later periods. Despite the fact that the ideas in this period are still at an early stage, its achievements were vital for the development of Saljuq architecture.

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<sup>1</sup> Gulmuḥammadī cities wrong information of Mishkatī. See Gulmuḥammadī, *EI* VII, p.76.

<sup>2</sup> Hillenbrand, “ ‘Abbasid Mosque”, *Rivista Studi Orientali* LIX (1987), p.212.

## Catalogue of Monuments

|                                                                                                                |     |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| 1. Tārī Khāna at Damghan (250-300/ 864-912) .....                                                              | 145 |
| 2. Friday mosque at Shūshtar (254- ? / 866-?) .....                                                            | 152 |
| 3. Friday mosque at Fahraj (3 <sup>rd</sup> / 9 <sup>th</sup> century) .....                                   | 162 |
| 4. Qal‘a-yi Ramūk at Shahdād (3 <sup>rd</sup> / 9 <sup>th</sup> century) .....                                 | 169 |
| 5. Friday mosque at Sāva (3 <sup>rd</sup> / 9 <sup>th</sup> century) .....                                     | 175 |
| 6. Friday mosque at Ardistan (3 <sup>rd</sup> / 9 <sup>th</sup> century).....                                  | 183 |
| 7. Masjid- Malik at Kirman (3 <sup>rd</sup> – 4 <sup>th</sup> /9 <sup>th</sup> -10 <sup>th</sup> century)..... | 192 |
| 8. Friday mosque at Na’in (c.300-350/c.912-61).....                                                            | 200 |
| 9. Tomb tower at Samīrān (c.350-375/c.961-985) .....                                                           | 214 |
| 10. Gunbad-i Qābūs (397/1006-7).....                                                                           | 221 |
| 11. Kashkān Bridge (399/1008-9).....                                                                           | 229 |
| 12. Masjid-i Kūshk at Firdaws (4 <sup>th</sup> / 10 <sup>th</sup> century) .....                               | 234 |
| 13. Kūshk-i Raḥīmābād at Bam (4 <sup>th</sup> / 10 <sup>th</sup> century) .....                                | 241 |
| 14. Mosque at Bishāpūr (4 <sup>th</sup> /10 <sup>th</sup> century) .....                                       | 247 |
| 15. Friday mosque at Nīrīz (4 <sup>th</sup> /10 <sup>th</sup> century) .....                                   | 253 |
| 16. Friday mosque at Simnan (4 <sup>th</sup> /10 <sup>th</sup> century) .....                                  | 262 |
| 17. Ispī Masjid at Tālīsh (c. 400/ c.1009) .....                                                               | 270 |

|                                                                      |            |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| <b>18. Tomb tower at Rādkān West (407-11/ 1016-21) .....</b>         | <b>277</b> |
| <b>19. Tomb tower at Lājīm (413/1022) .....</b>                      | <b>283</b> |
| <b>20. Pīr-i ‘Alamdār at Damghan (417/ 1026-27) .....</b>            | <b>288</b> |
| <b>21. Davāzdah Imām at Yazd (429/1038) .....</b>                    | <b>295</b> |
| <b>22. Chihil Dukhtarān at Damghan (446/1054-55) .....</b>           | <b>308</b> |
| <b>23. Gunbad-i ‘Alī at Abarkū (448/1056-57) .....</b>               | <b>314</b> |
| <b>24. Caravansarai at Muḥammadābād (c.400-450/c.1009-58) .....</b>  | <b>321</b> |
| <b>25. Pīr-i Ḥamza Sabzpūsh at Abarkū (c.400-450/c.1009-58).....</b> | <b>328</b> |
| <b>26. Mausoleum at Sangbast (c. 450/c.1059).....</b>                | <b>335</b> |
| <b>27. Tomb tower at Risgīt (c. 450/c.1059) .....</b>                | <b>348</b> |

# 1

## Tārī Khāna <sup>1</sup> at Damghan

### **Location**

Damghan city, Simnan province.

### **Description**

An old hypostyle mosque, which is locally known as *Chihil Sutūn* is located to the south- east of Damghan (Pl.1.1.1).

This mosque is rectangular and an arcade (*riwāq*) surrounded its central courtyard (Fig. 1.1). The arcade once consisted of sixteen columns, but only seven of them remain standing now. The arcade on three sides is one bay deep. On the fourth side is placed the *shabistān* (prayer hall), whose arcade is three bays deep. The *shabistān* is seven bays wide and a mud brick wall, about 1.55 m. thick, encloses it.

The central aisle, which leads from the courtyard to the *qibla* wall, is slightly wider than the other bays. The *mihrāb* of the mosque is placed slightly to the left of centre, at the end of the main aisle (Pl.1.2). That *mihrāb* is rectangular in plan and is

1.43 m. wide and 3.32 m. high. Godard claims that there was originally a deep *miḥrāb* of plaster and but it has been replaced by an oblique niche amending the erroneous direction of the previous one.<sup>2</sup> There was once a mud brick *minbar* at the end of this aisle to the right of the *miḥrāb* and close the *qibla* wall.<sup>3</sup> It seems that the *miḥrāb* was built slightly to the left to make space for the *minbar*.

The building measures about 46 x 39 m. and its courtyard is about 26.7x 25.7 m. The present entrance of the mosque, which facing the main aisle, is located on the north-east side of the monument. Three arched doorways, which are now blocked, can be seen on this side to the east side of the present entrance; originally, it seems, this whole north-east side multiple possessed openings. Two small rooms are placed beside the present entrance, which is a later addition. Their style of construction and size of materials shows that they were added later. Another doorway can be seen on the east side. A doorway is on the west side and it seems there were two further ones that are blocked now. The remains of some piers and the square base of a minaret measuring 6.5 m per side, were once located outside the mosque on the west side.<sup>4</sup> This shows that there was another building adjacent to the mosque; these have now vanished. The remains of a *miḥrāb* in carved stucco that were founded by the ICHO in the out west side of *shabistān*, in 1375/1996 support this theory.<sup>5</sup> A blocked niche is placed in the west wall of *shabistān*. It seems that this niche originally functioned as a doorway between this building and another one, which was possibly built later as the mosque developed. In addition, according to the Godard's drawing,<sup>6</sup> four piers to the west wall of the *shabistān* imply that this area was extended at a later period. A cylindrical minaret (Pl.1.3 and Fig.1.2) stands beside the remains of the square minaret; it is dated 418/1027.<sup>7</sup>

The elliptical arch between the columns of the *shabistān* (Pl.1.4), is called *māzidār* in Persian.<sup>8</sup> This elliptical arch is placed on flat narrow wooden impost blocks. The flat wood has a structural role and transmits the load to the column. Above the impost, an unplugged square hole can be seen. It seems that this hole marks the position of the former beam-tie, which braced the arches. However, it is not clear whether tie-beams are originally part of the design.

The *shabistān* is roofed by domical vaults, while a barrel-vault roofs the main aisle. A photograph from the Gulistān palace museum archive, which was taken in the late years of 19<sup>th</sup> century, shows that the *shabistān* roofed by several barrel vaults that face the courtyard and are fronted with a low stilted pointed arch of broad span (Pl.1.5). The pointed arch is generally called *īzidār*( *janāghī* ) in Persian.<sup>9</sup> This kind of arch is created from two intersecting ellipses. Such arches are commonly used rather than the elliptical type to decrease the height. A further photograph from the late years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century shows, two squinches were placed in the corners of the main aisle (Pl.1.6).<sup>10</sup> It seems therefore that there was a dome at the end of the main aisle, however it is also possible that these two squinches had only a structural role in construction of the original roof of the main aisle.<sup>11</sup> This picture also shows that the roofs of the five arcades of the *shabistān* are higher than the ones on the east and west ends by that time. The width of the middle aisle implies that its original vault was taller than the other ones. However, the existing barrel vault of the aisle has been clumsily reconstructed with a round arch end in the middle of 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The columns of the building were built of baked brick. There is no foundation for these columns; they rest on a course of bricks laid flat at a depth of 15 cm. only.<sup>12</sup> The columns have an average diameter of 1.60 m. and are about 2.82 m. high from the floor to the capital level. In comparison with contemporary buildings such as

Ukhaiḍir, the columns are not placed on any base. This column was built of alternate course of baked brick set horizontally and vertically in alternation (Pl.1.7). This technique was known from Sasanian times and can be seen in such later buildings as the octagonal building at Naṭanz.<sup>13</sup> The average size of these brick is large; 34 x 34 x 7 cm. and 35 x 35 x 7.5 cm. The columns of the building, the walls of the interior and the interdos of arches of the interior were coated with plaster. It seems that the *shabistān* had originally a revetment of plaster.

The columns of *riwāq* are structurally same as the *shabistān* ones, but some of them are slightly smaller in diameter, perhaps they carried less weight than the columns of *shabistān*. A low stilt pointed arch is placed between the column of *riwāq* and the enclosed wall (Pl.1.8). These arches are similar to the low stilt pointed arch of the *shabistān* façade. As with the columns of *shabistān*, flat imposts are placed above these columns and in opposite side in the wall itself. There is a wooden plate at the spring of each arch. Godard says that above the wooden impost of the columns is a hole measuring about 30 x 30 cm., which indicates that each arch has been braced by a tie beam,<sup>14</sup> just as in the *shabistān*. However, the original form of the covering of the *riwāq* is not clear; probably it was originally roofed with barrel vault and domical vaults at the corners.

### **Decoration**

There is no applied any decoration in the building.

### **Inscription**

There is no inscription in the mosque.

## Material

Baked brick 34 x 34 x 7 cm. and 35 x 35 x 7.5 cm. laid in plaster mortar.

## Dating

The name of Tārī Khānā is not mentioned in any mediaeval historical sources. But the presence of a *minbar* implies that it was probably built as a *jāmi'* at that time.<sup>15</sup> The remains of a minaret and the existing cylindrical one adjacent to the building suggest that it was an important building.

The hypostyle plan was the dominant plan for Friday mosques in the early Islamic centuries, and known as the Arab plan. The arcade around the courtyard is part of this scheme. The thick columns, barrel vault, the projecting impost blocks from which the arches spring, and the large bricks are all Sasanian architectural characteristics, which survived into early Islamic Iran and can be seen in such other buildings as the Ukhaḍir palace (attributed to the 2<sup>nd</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> century) in the 'Abbasid period. The historical information about Damghan in the early Islamic period is scarce. The establishment of *jāmi'* in the major cities of Iran was started in the second part of the 2<sup>nd</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> century by the 'Abbasids.<sup>16</sup> The Damghan area was also an important base for military campaigning into the Caspian region which was being Islamicised. The city of Damghan reached particular importance during the brief of al-Hādī (169-70/785-86), when it was the administrative centre of district.<sup>17</sup> It is also said that, in the times of the Ṭāhirids (205-78/821-91) some buildings and fortifications were built in Qūmis province.<sup>18</sup> All this suggests that Tārī Khāna was built in the second half of the 2<sup>nd</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> century.

## Discussion

Tārī Khāna at Damghan shows the development of the Arab plan, with Iranian architectural characteristics. From the architectural point of view, it displays new features. The raised *shabistān* as compared with *riwāq*, emphasises its significance position and creates a variety of masses combination. It can be the best explanation for using two different type of arch; elliptical and pointed arch.

In comparison to large rectangular courtyard of the early mosques, the square one of the Tārī Khāna with its logical scale creates a peaceful atmosphere. Applying the similar shape and size of columns shows a harmony and their thickness instils the solidarity of the building. All this shows the mosque was built according to a pre-ordinate plan, which replies to both architectural and functional aspects of a mosque.

In comparison with the other early mosques such as Sūsa (1<sup>st</sup>/7<sup>th</sup> century), Yazd and Iṣṭakhr, the wide aisle of *shabistān* shows a new architectural innovation. It also suggests a new interpretation of the raised gabled transept, which was already built in the early Islamic mosques such as Damascus. The width of the main aisle is an introduction of the appearance of *īwān* in the *qibla* direction.

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<sup>1</sup> Tārī Khāna should not to be mistaken with Tārīk Khāna. *Tarī* is a Turko-Mongol word that means God and *khāna* in Persian means house and Tārī Khāna therefore means the house of God (mosque), While, *tārīk* literally means dark and Tārīk Khāna means dark room (house).

<sup>2</sup> Godard, “Le Tari Khana”, *Gazette des Beaux Arts* 76 (1934), p. 226-7.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* see also Finster, *Frühe*, pl. 16.2.

<sup>4</sup> *SPA* III, p.934.

<sup>5</sup> The photograph of this *mīhrāb* shows a damaged carved stucco feature, so its date is unclear (Personal communication).

<sup>6</sup> *SPA* III, p.933.

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<sup>7</sup> Adle and Melikian-Chirvani, “Monuments”, *SI I* (1972), p. 263-4.

<sup>8</sup> Pīrniya, “Chifd-ha va Tāq-ha”, *Athar* 24 (1373/1994), pp 9-12.

<sup>9</sup> Pīrniya, pp.14-15.

<sup>10</sup> The photograph archive of Gulistān Palace Museum (Kākh-i Gulistān), Archive No: 296. P.38.

<sup>11</sup> This treatment also is to be seen in the mosque of Ukhiḍiar.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*,

<sup>13</sup> Blair, “Octagonal Pavilion”, *Muqarnas I* (1983), p. 80.

<sup>14</sup> Godard, p.233.

<sup>15</sup> Hillenbrand, *Islamic Architecture*, p. 45.

<sup>16</sup> Godard, p. 235.

<sup>17</sup> Soucek, “Iranian Architecture”, *Highlights of Persian Art*, p. 136.

<sup>18</sup> Ḥaqīqat, *Tārīkh-i Qūms*, p.89.

## 2

### Friday Mosque at Shūshtar

#### **Location**

Shūshtar (Shūstar) city, Khūzistān province.

#### **Description**

The Friday mosque is located in an old area to the west of the city of Shūshtar. According to a local historical text, *Tadhkira-yi Shūshtar*, this mosque was originally built in the 3<sup>rd</sup>/9<sup>th</sup> century and reconstructed in the Safavid period, but much of its original plan still remains.<sup>1</sup> Even so, the current aspect of the mosque is that of its Safavid reconstruction, and it is hard to ascertain which parts of the present structure represent earlier work.

At present this mosque contains a spacious hypostyle *shabistān*, which is six bays deep (Fig.2.1). The western side of the *shabistān* is noticeably irregular, being of stepped form, and thus the width of the *shabistān* varies from 9 to 13 bays. However, the existing piers, which are incorporated to enclosing wall of the western side, can suggest that the original form was probably not irregular.

This *shabistān* consists of 54 piers of which four are engaged on the interior. The intercolumniation of the piers averages 3.20 m. According to the *Tadhkira-yi Shūshtar*, which was written in the 12<sup>th</sup>/18<sup>th</sup> century, the last two rows of piers of the *shabistān* facing the courtyard were destroyed in the course of reconstruction,<sup>2</sup> but the physical evidence for this is unclear. Nevertheless, these two vanished rows of piers would have brought the courtyard façade flush with the minaret, so this report may indeed be accurate.

The original piers of the Friday mosque at Shūshtar were, according to Imām Shushtārī, slimmer and higher than the present ones.<sup>3</sup> But here again the physical evidence is lacking. There is no clue about the original material of piers. It is more likely that the piers were built of mud or baked brick than of stone. The remains of the earlier Friday mosque at Sūsa in this area attest to this theory.<sup>4</sup>

A *muqarnas* hood which functions as an element of a capital, can be seen on the top of each pier (Pl.2.1). A four-centred high stilted arch is placed over each bay, and is coated with plaster (Pl.2.2). This type of arch is typically Safavid. Domical vaults of baked brick roof this *shabistān*. According to the *Tadhkira-yi Shūshtar*, a timber roof originally covered this *shabistān*; owing to the decay of the timbers the present roof was added to replace them in 1088/1677-78.<sup>5</sup>

The piers of the *shabistān* are octagonal in form and rest on a stone base; they are of stone so cut as to mimic bricks. The construction of the piers shows a sophisticated style, for example in the quality of the stereotomy and decorative elements such as the use of *muqarnas* at capital level. According to old caretaker man of this mosque, these cut stones were added as revetment of piers in the 1310s/1930s.

Inside the *shabistān*, in the fourth row of the piers away from the *qibla* wall, the second pier from the south-east wall is different from the others. A decorative

band contains a series of alternating multi-lobed pointed arches and flattered segmental arches run around its shaft in the middle and beneath the capital (Pl.2.3). This pattern can be seen in the Safavid monuments such as Masjid-i Shāh at Isfahan. The remains of a cut tie beam to be found in shaft. A cut stone that is the same as the material of the other piers can be seen in the shaft close to the base of this pier, which possibly shows the later restoration.

On the south-east and the north-east of the *shabistān*, between each pier and the enclosing wall of the *shabistān*, are placed a series of walls in baked brick, with a pointed-arched opening in each of them (Pl.2.4 and Fig.2.2). It is likely that these walls were added later to stabilise the building against thrust, probably in the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

A *mīhrāb* is placed in the *qibla* wall; it has a four-pointed arched niche. This niche is 1.40 m. wide and 1.04 m. deep. Two engaged columns flank this *mīhrāb*; each has a diameter of 48 cm. and is coated with plaster. The inside niche of the *mīhrāb* is decorated with *muqarnas* of Safavid style; some of it is painted. An old wooden *minbar* is placed next to the *mīhrāb*. According to the *Tadhkira-yi Shūshtar* this *minbar* is built of the same wood as the original roof of the *shabistān*.<sup>6</sup>

The exterior courtyard façade of the mosque contains 11 bays, with a four-pointed arch placed over each bay. Between each bay is a massive projecting semi-circular pier that articulates the exterior courtyard façade of the building (Pl.2.5). These piers of baked brick and their dadoes are coated with cut stone. It is likely that the body of the plinth is also of stone. The style of construction of these piers is similar to the bastions in the four corners of the Khudāy Khāna building, which is dated 752/1351, inside the Friday mosque of Shiraz.<sup>7</sup> It is possible that they were added to the mosque at the same time as the minaret, namely in the 8<sup>th</sup>/14<sup>th</sup> century.

There are several doorways and grilles of open-jointed brickwork in both the courtyard façade (Pl.2.6) of the mosque. In the middle bay of the courtyard façade is placed a *mihrāb*, which probably replaced a doorway.<sup>8</sup>

A cylindrical minaret in baked brick stands to the east of the mosque; it is about 15 m. high (Pl.2.7). The base of the minaret comprises two parts; a square base of baked brick and an octagonal base of stone over it and beneath the minaret. The entrance of the minaret is in the courtyard of the mosque. The upper part of the minaret has vanished. According to the *Tadhkira-yi Shūshtar*, in the middle of the 12<sup>th</sup>/ 18<sup>th</sup> century the minaret was about 26 m. high and an inscription on a tablet of stone existed there.<sup>9</sup> The lowest part of its shaft is decorated with brick patterns. Above this part can be seen diagonal square and lozenge patterns of blue glazed bricks. The rest of the shaft is coated with a square Kufic inscription reading *Allāhu Akbar*, in blue glazed bricks. According to the *Tadhkira-yi Shūshtar*, the patron of the minaret was Sulṭān (*shaykh*) Uways b. Ḥasan (757-76/1356-74), a Jalayirid ruler.<sup>10</sup> This book also gives the date of the construction of the minaret as 822/1432.<sup>11</sup> These two dates are of course contradictory. The style of decoration in the shaft of the minaret is similar to that of the two minarets on the portal of the Masjid-i Nizāmiya (c.725 /1325) at Abarkū.<sup>12</sup> The brick pattern of the minaret is also very similar to the brick pattern in the shaft of the so-called Chilibī Oghlu tomb tower (733/1333) in Sulṭāniya.<sup>13</sup> These comparisons make it more likely that the minaret was built in the 8<sup>th</sup>/14<sup>th</sup> century.

Adjacent to this minaret is located a single short *guldasta*, whose upper part has vanished. According to a historical text, *Tuhfat al-'Alam* (12<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> /18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century) this *guldasta* and its adjacent wall were repaired in the late years of 12<sup>th</sup>/18<sup>th</sup>

century.<sup>14</sup> A series of open niches in two storeys are placed between the minaret and the *guldasta* on the south-east side of the building.

### **Decoration**

There is no clue as to the decoration of the mosque of Shūshtar in pre-Safavid times.

### **Inscriptions**

There are several inscriptions in the building. In the *qibla* wall can be seen the remains of a stucco Kufic inscription (Pl.2.8) of three lines (A). The first and second lines contain part of *Sūrat at-Taubah* (*Qur'ān* 9: 128, 129).<sup>15</sup> The third line has been identified as a historical text which probably bore the name of a caliph, though this part of the inscription has been vanished.<sup>16</sup> According to *Tuhfatat al-'Alam*, the name of the 29<sup>th</sup> caliph, Abū Mansūr al-Mustarshid (512-29/1118-35) was inscribed on the inscription.<sup>17</sup> The style of the epigraphy also supports this theory. However, after removing the present layer of plaster by the ICHO in 1385/ 2006, the name of the caliph was not found.

In the extrados of the niche of the *mihṛāb* is an inscription band of plaster in Kufic. This band is badly damaged. It is likely that the text is Qur'ānic.<sup>18</sup>

In the end wall of the *mihṛāb* is an inscription band in *thulth*. It contains *Qur'ān* 2: 144.<sup>19</sup>

The remains of an elaborate inscription band (Pl.2.9) in carved stucco can be seen next to the *mihṛāb* (B). It is a one-line inscription band in floriated Kufic and contains part of *Sūrat Yāsīn* (*Qur'ān* 36).<sup>20</sup> It is possible that this band was written in the second half of the 5<sup>th</sup>/11<sup>th</sup> century or in the early years of the 6<sup>th</sup>/12<sup>th</sup> century. The

style of the floral decoration of this inscription band is similar to that of terra cotta panels from a building at Tepe Madrasa at Nishāpur (465-85/1065-85).<sup>21</sup>

In the *qibla* wall there is a simple Kufic inscription of wood (Pl.2.10), which is dated 445/1053-54 (C). This inscription is about a tax (*maliyāt*) exemption granted to the people of Shūshtar on cows and sheep by Amīr Abu'l-Ḥārith Arslān al-Basāsīrī.<sup>22</sup> According to historical texts this man was a Turkish general under the last Būyids and governor of Baghdad. He revolted against the 'Abbasid Caliph and exiled him from Baghdad, but he was finally defeated and murdered by Tughril Beg in 451/1060.<sup>23</sup> In the border of this inscription is a further Qur'ānic inscription (2: 255-57) in Kufic.<sup>24</sup> It is possible that this inscription was moved from somewhere else to the building at a later period; however, installing a governmental decree in the Friday mosque was a tradition and this does suggest that this mosque existed at that time. The style of epigraphy of this inscription is similar to the inscription band on the shaft of the Gunbad-i 'Alī at Abarkū (448/1056-57).

There are several inscription bands that contain endowment texts; all of them belong to the Safavid era.<sup>25</sup>

**Text:**

(A)

... بالمومنين...

العرش العظيم

[امير] المومنين اطال الله بقاءه

(B) *Qur'ān* 9: 128,129 (part).

(C) بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم أمر الاجل السيد المظفر المنصور ابو الحارث ارسلان البساسيري ادام الله علوه ازاله رسم صدقه البقره و الاغنام بقصبه تستروا سقاطه عن كافه الرعيه تقربا الى الله تعالى و طلبا لمرضاته فمن اعاده من من بعد ما سمعه فعليه لعنته الله و لعنه الاعداء؟ و الملائكه و الناس اجمعين و من جاء بالحسنه فله خير منها و هو من فرع يومئذ آمنون و صلى الله على محمد و آله الطيبين و سلم و كفانا به شهدا و كتابه فى صفر سنه خمس و اربعين و اربعه مائه و كفانا به عهداها .

**Translation:**

(A) ... Faithfuls...

The great throne

The Commander of the Faithful may God extend his life

## Material

A new investigation on this mosque by the ICHO in 1384/2006 revealed that the *qibla* wall is entirely of baked brick, which measures 23 x 23 x 4 cm. and 23.5 x 23.5 x 4.5 cm.

## Dating

The plan of the mosque is hypostyle. Unlike other mosques in the early Islamic period such as the Tārī khāna at Damghan and the Friday mosque at Fahraj, there is no trace of a *riwāq* around the courtyard. The closest parallel to this plan is the mosque of Kūfa, which was erected in the 1<sup>st</sup>/7<sup>th</sup> century. It is possible that the plan of the Friday mosque at Shūshtar, a standard plan capable of easy extension, was inspired by that mosque.

According to the *Tadhkira-yi Shushtār*, the Friday mosque of Shūshtar was founded by Abū ‘Abdallāh al-Mu‘tazz, the Abbasid Caliph (252-255/866-69) in 254/866-7. Further work on this mosque was carried out by Caliph al-Qādir (422-467/1031-75) and his son al-Qā'im (Qāsim) (467-87/1075-94) and it was finally completed by Abu Manšūr al-Mustarshid (512-29/1118-35).<sup>26</sup>

Muqaddasī, in his *Aḥsan al-Taqāsīm* (4<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> century) records Shūshtar as Tustar, and says this city surrounded by gardens and the Friday mosque at Shūshtar as being in the middle of the cloth-merchants' market.<sup>27</sup>

This information makes it possible to believe that a date of 254/866-7 for the original date of construction of the Friday mosque at Shūshtar could be defended.

## Discussion

The Khūzistān area in the early Islamic century was under the control of the Abbasids. The Friday mosque at Shūstar shows a hypostyle *shabistān*, which was the typical mosque plan in the early Islamic period. This kind of plan varies from the Iranian type of mosque, which a *riwāq* or covered areas were placed around a courtyard. This plan, then, shows domination of the Arab style, unmodified by any Iranian architectural characteristics, in the early Islamic period.

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<sup>1</sup> Imām Shūshtarī, *Tārīkh-i Jughrāfiyā-yi Khūzistān*, pp.130-31.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p.132.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p.131.

<sup>4</sup> For the mosque at Sūsa see Ghirshman, “Une Mosquée”, *Bulletin d’ Etudes Orientales* XII (1947-8), pp.77-9.

<sup>5</sup> Imām Shūshtarī, p.131.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> Wilber, *Architecture*, p.183.

<sup>8</sup> Finster, *Frühe*, pl.44.1.

<sup>9</sup> Imām Shūshtarī, p.131.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, and also see Hutt and Harrow, *Iran* 2, p.47, pl. 23.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> Wilber, p.167.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p.173.

<sup>14</sup> ‘Abd al-Laṭīf Shūshtarī, *Tuḥfat al-‘Alam*, p.73.

<sup>15</sup> Qūchānī and Raḥīmīfar, *Katībihā-yi Masjid-i Jami’*, p.17.

<sup>16</sup> Iqtadārī, *Dīyār-i Shahrīyārān* I, p.678.

<sup>17</sup> ‘Abd al-Laṭīf Shūshtarī, p.72.

<sup>18</sup> Qūchānī and Raḥīmīfar, p.18.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

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<sup>21</sup> Blair, *Monumental*, p.267.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.* p.17.

<sup>23</sup> *EI I*, p.669.

<sup>24</sup> Qūchānī and Raḥīmīfar, p.17.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 18-19.

<sup>26</sup> Imām Shūshtarī, p. 130.

<sup>27</sup> Le Strange, *Lands*, p.234-35.

# 3

## Friday mosque at Fahraj

### Location

Fahraj<sup>1</sup> village, south-eastern of Yazd city, Yazd province.

### Description

The Friday mosque is located to the south-east of a small square, which is locally known as the *ḥusayniyya*, in the old part of the village.

The mosque consists of a *shabistān* and a *riwāq* (arcade) around the courtyard (Fig 3.1). The *riwāq* of the *shabistān* is two bays deep while the other side is one bay deep. Each arcade of the *shabistān* consists of two low-stilted pointed arches. The central aisle of the *shabistān* as in the Tārī Khāna mosque is slightly wider than the others. The piers of the *shabistan* are rectangular in plan, and have four decorative engaged columns, at each corner (Pl.3.1). This kind of pier can be seen in the Friday mosque at Maybud, the mosque of Aḥmad b. Ṭūlūn<sup>2</sup> and the Ḥakīm<sup>3</sup> mosque in Cairo.

The *mihrāb* of the mosque is 2.32 m. wide and 3.24 m. high and is placed at the end of the central aisle in the *qibla* wall. It contains a shallow inset rectangular panel and a pointed arched niche within it. Two knotted columns of mud brick frame the pointed arch niche of the *mihrāb*. This niche is rectangular in plan and is about 96 cm. deep. The *mihrāb* is coated with plaster. The faded trace of a multi-lobed blind arch in plaster is placed above the rectangular frame of the *mihrāb*. A part from this *mihrāb* another decorative *mihrāb* of smaller size can be seen on the west side (Pl.3.2). A rectangular window within a tri-lobed frame is placed in the tympanum opposite the *mihrāb*. Exactly this form can be seen in the remains of the great mosque of al-Mutawakkil (234-37/848-52) in Samarra.<sup>4</sup>

The pointed arches of *riwāq* are placed on square impost, above engaged columns. The *shabistān* façade consists of three pointed arches. Opposite the *shabistān* is a four-vaulted arcade (Pl.3.3). Each vault has two elliptical squinches. These four bays are not symmetrical with the three of the *shabistān*. Shokoohy says that the best explanation for this inequality is that the Friday mosque of Fahraj was copied from another one, which has been disappeared now.<sup>5</sup> It seems, however, that there is an architectural reason for this disposition. The section of the building shows that the *shabistān*, to the south-west, has the most significant position and is therefore the loftiest part of the mosque. The courtyard is not completely square and thus the north side is slightly wider than the opposite side. The use of four bays on the north side, as distinct from three bays on the opposite side, which is an architectural solution creates a shorter height on the north side and thus stresses the height of *shabistān* to the south-west.

The present entrance of the mosque is located on the south-west of the monument (Fig.3.2). Two doorways; one open and another blocked are located on the

north side of the building, within the *riwāq*. Owing to their placing opposite the *qibla shabistān*, towards the direction of *qibla*, it seems that they are the original entrances of the mosque.

The arches of the arcade around the courtyard are largely of elliptical form but with a slight point. A barrel-vault roofs the *shabistān* and both the west and east sides of the *riwāq*. The north arcades are roofed with a series of half-domes, each provided with two small double elliptical squinches of mud brick (Pl.3.4). Shokoohy claims that these squinches have no structural role and can be seen as decorative elements.<sup>6</sup> But this kind of squinch, which is called *kāna (kūna)* in Persian, has a structural role in the erection the vault,<sup>7</sup> for it helps both to span an awkward corner and helps to direct the thrust from above to either side of the corner.

The remains of a *shabistān*, which is rectangular in plan, can be seen on the south-west of mosque. Three piers are placed in the middle of this *shabistān* and these imply that it was roofed with eight domical vaults. It seems that this place was used in winter. The small size of its mud bricks, its placing in the south outside of the building, and the type of roofing different from that of the larger *shabistān* indicate that it was added later. On the north-west side of the mosque stands a cylindrical minaret with several rooms beside it (Pl.3.5). The minaret has a spiral staircase and is built of mud brick. The entrance of the minaret opens directly to the *riwāq*. It seems that the minaret was not intended to be free-standing and that it was built later; however, the date of its construction is not clear. Considering the style roofing of the additional *shabistān*, Shokoohy claims that it was not built earlier than the 4<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> century. He says that the minaret was built with the same mud brick as the additional *shabistān* and attributes the construction of the minaret to the same time. He also says

that the rooms on the south-west were reconstructed later but on the foundation of an earlier site.<sup>8</sup>

### **Decoration**

Three decorative patterns of plaster can be seen in the mosque: a multi-lobed arch above the *mihrāb* and the same type in the tympanum of the vault in the south wall of the *shabistān*; stepped design in the tympanum of the north end wall of the *riwāq* (Pl.3.6) on the north-west side of building; and a cusps rest on the outer extrados of the arch of *mihrāb*, creating a rayed effect. The decorative multi-lobed arch can be seen as early as the Ṭāq-i Kisrā, in the remains of the Friday mosque of Mihrābād near Abarkū (6<sup>th</sup>/12<sup>th</sup> century), in the portal of the Jūrjūr mosque in Isfahan (4<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> century) and in the entrance of Ukhaiḍir<sup>9</sup>. The enclosed stepped design is typically Iranian pattern and was used in the pre-Islamic period for exterior decoration. It seems that it was imitated later and it can be seen in such later monuments as Khirbat al-Mafjar and Ukhaiḍir<sup>10</sup> (2<sup>nd</sup> /8<sup>th</sup> century)<sup>11</sup>, and in the north-west façade of the Ḥakīm mosque in Cairo.<sup>12</sup>

Two blind lobed arches with a pointed apex (Pl.3.7) can be seen in the façade of the *shabistān* on the south side. This form is also found on façade of the Aḥmad b. Ṭūlūn mosque<sup>13</sup> and in the Friday mosque of Mihrābād . Three blind lobed arches with an ogee apex (Pl.3.8) are placed in each façade of the arcade on the west and east side. A similar form can also be seen above the recessed sides in the portal of the Jūrjūr mosque. On the north side of the courtyard, three cannular grooves are placed in the façade of the *riwāq* (Pl.3.9).

There are three decorative false doorways, which are an average of 1.79 m. wide and 2.48 m. high, in the east wall of the *riwāq*. They are badly damaged but the

remains of stucco with red paint can be seen in one of them (Pl.3.10). Their size is larger than the standard of the other doorways in the building and this implies that they did not function as doorways. The purpose of their placing is not clear, but it is more likely that they had a decorative role and also the builder aimed to make this part of *riwāq* symmetrical to the opposite side.

The remains of a decorative medallion, with a diameter of 21 cm., were once placed at a height of 1.65 m. in the *qibla* wall.<sup>14</sup> It was painted on plaster and consisted of six overlapping circles in red.<sup>15</sup> The date of this decoration is not clear, but given the presence of three decorative doorways in the same colour, it seems reasonable to support that they were all created at the same time and that they are contemporary with the building itself, or at least very close to this time. Before the discovery of this mosque, the painting on plaster decoration was not appeared in the early Islamic monuments in Iran no earlier than the 5<sup>th</sup>/11<sup>th</sup> century, so that this painted decoration has particular significance.

### **Inscription**

There is no inscription in the building.

### **Material**

Mud brick 32 x 32 x 5 cm. laid in clay mortar.

### **Dating**

The name of Fahraj is mentioned in mediaeval historical sources such as the anonymous *Ḥadūd al ‘Ālam* (4<sup>th</sup> /10<sup>th</sup>),<sup>16</sup> *Aḥsan al Taqāsīm* (375/985),<sup>17</sup> *Masālik va Mamālik* (340/951)<sup>18</sup> and *Fārs-nāma* (6<sup>th</sup> /12<sup>th</sup>).<sup>19</sup> Therefore it seems that Fahraj was a

considerable place in the early Islamic period. Iṣṭakhrī and Yāqūt (623/1225) both specify the existence of a mosque in this town.<sup>20</sup>

The applying of different kinds of decoration implies that the builder aimed to make the mosque as elaborate as possible but his limited budget prevented him from creating a very decorative ensemble, so the architectural characteristics of the building offer more reliable criteria for dating it. The plan type of this mosque is generally the Arab one, but the barrel vault, the size of the mud bricks, and the form of the squinches shows the survival of its Sasanian architectural characteristics into the early Islamic period. The barrel vault, the type of pointed arch and the size of the mud bricks in Fahraj are similar to these features in the Tārī Khāna mosque. However, in the *shabistān* of Fahraj the pointed arch is used instead of the elliptical one and, despite the smaller bays and the lower height, the heavy piers replace columns. The use of such a substantial support in such a small space shows that probably these piers were modelled from another building. The closest parallels are the mosque of Aḥmad b. Tūlūn (263-265 /876-79) and al-Ḥakīm (380-403/993-1016) in Cairo. All this suggests that the Friday mosque of Fahraj was built in the 3<sup>rd</sup> / 9<sup>th</sup> century and more likely in the second half of it.

## **Discussion**

Despite the common hypostyle plan of the Friday mosque at Fahraj, the construction and decoration method of the mosque illustrate a provincial style of mosque architecture in early Islamic Iran. The small size of mosque and its various decorative patterns, suggests that the builder aimed to collect together all elements to pretend a small building as a great mosque.

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- <sup>1</sup> This Fahraj must not be confused with another Fahraj near Bam in the Kirman Province.
- <sup>2</sup> Creswell, *EMA* II, pls. 99,100.
- <sup>3</sup> Creswell, *MAE* I, pl. 20/a.
- <sup>4</sup> Creswell, *EMA* II, pl. 66/d.
- <sup>5</sup> Shokoohy, *Studies*, p.73.
- <sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p.70.
- <sup>7</sup> Pīrnīyā, “Chifdhā va Tāqhā”, *Athar* 24 (1373/1994), p.81.
- <sup>8</sup> Shokoohy, p.73.
- <sup>9</sup> Creswell, *EMA* II, p.76, Fig. 59.
- <sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p.65, Fig. 44.
- <sup>11</sup> Creswell, *EMA* I, pt. II, pl. 100/d.
- <sup>12</sup> Creswell, *EMA* II, pl. 98/a, b.
- <sup>13</sup> Creswell, *MAE* I, pls. 98/a,b.
- <sup>14</sup> Zipoli and Alfieri, “La Moschea Ğāmi‘ ”, *Studi Iranici* (1977), p.73.
- <sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, pl.. XIV a,b.
- <sup>16</sup> *Hudūd al- ‘Alam*, p.136.
- <sup>17</sup> Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al Taqāsīm*, p. 634.
- <sup>18</sup> Ištakhri, *Masālak va Mamālak*, p.117.
- <sup>19</sup> Ibn al-Balkhī, *Fārs-nāma* p.63.
- <sup>20</sup> Shokoohy, p.65.

# 4

## Qal‘a-yi Ramūk at Shahdād

### **Location**

To the north of Shahdād (Khabīs) area, Kirman province.

### **Description**

The remains of a massive building are to be seen about 5 km. to the north of Shahdād, in the Ramūk area, adjacent to the modern road of Kirman to Bīrjand. This building is locally known as Qal‘a-yi Ramūk<sup>1</sup> This building is located in the Ramūk-i Pā’īn district. A further building with the same name, but of smaller size and in ruined conditions, is located near Qal ‘a-yi Ramūk, in the Ramūk-i Bālā area.<sup>2</sup>

Qal‘a-yi Ramūk is orientated to the cardinal points, and is fairly square; it measures about 29 x 28 m. The building is built in two storeys (Fig 4.1). A round tower, which is solid at ground floor level, is to be seen at each corner of the building.

The entrance of the building has an elliptical arch, measuring 1.61 m. wide and 2.10 m. deep, which occupies the middle of the south side (Pl.4.1). A window of arrow- slit form is to be seen over the entrance. Two semi-circular towers flank the

entrance. These towers are solid up to the upstairs. This type of entrance is to be seen in the Sasanian monuments such as the wall of Takht-i Sulaimān<sup>3</sup> and early Islamic monuments such as Qaṣr al-Ḥair al-Sharqī (110/728-9).<sup>4</sup> The form of the entrance and the same arrow-slit window are to be seen in the fortified buildings at Darzīn (dated 2<sup>nd</sup> /8<sup>th</sup> century) near Bam in the Kirman area.<sup>5</sup>

The ground floor contains twelve identical rooms. Each room is about 8 m. deep and 3.20 m wide. The door of each room is on average 65 cm. wide and 2.60 m. deep, creating a long but narrow vestibule set in a mass of mud-brick masonry. The sheer mass of mud brick here is a structural requirement to support the first floor above it where a very different solution is used to mediate between the rooms and the corridor. An elliptical arch is to be seen over each door (Pl.4.2). These rooms are windowless roofed with barrel vaults (Pl.4.3). These narrow and confined rooms were probably used for storage or stable. The ground floor contains a central corridor and two symmetrical rows of rooms, one row on each side of it. The corridor, which is 3.48 m. wide, is broken by a small open space, which measures 6.10 x 4.63 m. There is no trace of any roof over this space and it seems that it was originally the courtyard of the building. There are steps of mud brick inside the west side of this courtyard that lead to the upper floor.

The upper storey consists of fifteen rooms and is asymmetrical to the ground floor (Pl.4.4). On the west and east side of the building are six identical rooms. Each room is on average 3.55 m. wide and about 11 m. deep. It is therefore a much more spacious chamber than its equivalent downstairs. It was perhaps intended a living space. A narrow corridor, which provides access to all the rooms, is set alongside each row of rooms (Pl.4.5). Three rooms plus the void, designed for the courtyard, are set between these corridors, in the middle part of the upper floor. These very narrow

corridors also provide access to the upper parts of the semi-circular towers on each side of the entrance. At each corner a room also provide direct access to a round tower. The partition wall of each room is on average 60 cm. thick. The upper floor is badly damaged, but the much-ruined remains of a barrel vault over a single room can still be distinguished. It suggests that the other rooms on the upper floor, like those on the ground floor, were roofed by barrel vaults.

The function of the building is not clear, but the small size of the courtyard implies that this building was not a caravansarai or a palace. The fortification enclosure, round towers, plain design of the structure, and lack of any decoration suggests that this building was a guard-post (or a military station), which was constructed to safeguard the trade route from Kirman to Khurasan. The closest parallel as a guard-post building is Zindān-i Hārūn. In contrast to Qal‘a-yi Ramūk, this building is made of rubble masonry, smaller in size and no courtyard and fortified enclosure are to be seen in the building. These two buildings, however, are constructed in two storeys.

Qal ‘a-yi Ramūk is built entirely of mud brick, in units of 38 x 38 x 8 cm, 36 x 36 x 7 cm. and 34 x 34 x 6 cm. These sizes of mud brick are close to the standard large brick of the Sasanian period, a type which, it seems, continued to be used in the early Islamic centuries.

### **Decorations**

The only decorative elements are the windows of arrow-slit form on the south wall of the building (Pl.4.6). These windows probably have a defensive purpose and makes able archers to aim corps of enemy without to be seen. This type of window is

to be found in the forts at Darzīn and Qaşr Kharāna in Jordan (Umayyad period)<sup>6</sup>, Qāsh Qal‘a in Afghanistan<sup>7</sup> and the citadel wall at Paikend.<sup>8</sup>

### **Inscription**

There is no trace of inscriptions in the building.

### **Material**

Mud bricks 38 x 38 x 8 cm. and 36 x 36 x 7 cm. in the walls and 34 x 34 x 6 cm. in the roof of building.

### **Dating**

The building is in the Shahdād area, which is known in historic texts as Khabīṣ. This area is next to the Lūt desert (Dasht-i Lūt) and was also on the main route from Kirman to Khurasan. Al-Iṣṭakhrī, in his *Masālik va Mamālik* (346/957)<sup>9</sup> mentions the name of Khabīṣ as a city on the border of desert. He also describes a route from Khabīṣ to Khurasan. Muqaddasī in his *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm* (second half of the 4<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> century), says that Khabīṣ has a fortress with four gates, and its Friday mosque is inside the city. He also notes that Khabīṣ is on the edge of the desert and is well populated.<sup>10</sup>

In the course of several scientific excavations at Shahdād by the Iranian Centre for Archaeological Research (ICAR) in 1347-1354/1968-1975, the remains of a pre-historic settlement were found.<sup>11</sup> A further study by the NOPAM recorded the remains of several buildings on the north and east of Shahdād, which dates from the Sasanian to the Saljuq period.<sup>12</sup>

The closest parallel for the plan of this building at Shahdād is another fortified building which was once located to the south of Shahdād and now has been vanished. This building was known as Qal‘a-yi Chughūkī, which was constructed in two storeys and was of mud brick, which measuring 35 x 35 x 11 cm.<sup>13</sup> this building has been attributed to the Sasanian period, however, because of several similarities to Qal‘a-i Ramūk , perhaps was built at the same time or at a close date.

All this information indicates that Shahdād (Khabīs) was an important area and that the survival of a monument from early Islamic Iran in this area is plausible.

The elliptical arch, the large size of the mud bricks, the fortified enclosure, as the two semi-circular towers on each side of the entrance and the windows of arrow-slit pattern can suggest a date for the Qal‘a-yi Ramūk at Shahdād in the 3<sup>rd</sup>/9<sup>th</sup> century.

## **Discussion**

Qal‘a-yi Ramūk is important from some counts. It is the earliest surviving building that has been recognised in the Kirman area in the Islamic period. It is possible that the form of building was imitated from the early Islamic forts; however, it shows the influence of Sasanian construction style. In addition, considering the other surviving monuments such as the Forts of Dārzīn, Kūshk-i Raḥīmābād it is likely that there was a local school of architecture in the Kirman area in the early Islamic centuries.

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<sup>1</sup> Mustaufī, “ Shahdād va Jughrāfiyā-yi Tārīkhī-ya ān” ,*Guzārishhā-yi Jughrāfiyā-yi VIII*( 1351/1971), p.63.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

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<sup>3</sup> SPA 14, p.3052.

<sup>4</sup> Creswell, *EMA* I, pt. II, p.523, fig.570, 577 and pl. 92.c.

<sup>5</sup> Shokoohy, *Studies*, pp.76-85. See also Shokoohy, “Monuments”, *JRAS* (1980), p.19.

<sup>6</sup> Urice, *Qaṣr Kharāna*, p.125, fig. 44 and p.155, fig.113.

<sup>7</sup> Lee, “Monuments of Bamīyān”, *Iran* XLIV (2006), p.234, Fig. 9.

<sup>8</sup> Semenov, “Excavations”, *The Art and archaeology of Ancient Persia*, p.113.

<sup>9</sup> Al-Iṣṭakhrī, *Masālik va Mamālik*, p.189.

<sup>10</sup> Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm*, p.408-9.

<sup>11</sup> For more information see Ḥākīmī, *Shahdād* (1997).

<sup>12</sup> See “Sāzmān-i Millī-yi Ḥifāzat-i Āthār-i Bāstānī”, *Majalla-i Hunar va Mi‘mārī* 22-24 (1353/1975), pp.123-28.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p.127.

# 5

## The Friday mosque at Sāva

### **Location**

Sāva city, Markazī province.

### **Description**

The Friday mosque at Sāva is one of the earliest mosques in Iran. This mosque is located at the south-western limits of the modern city. A series of archaeological investigations carried out by the ICHO<sup>1</sup> after the Islamic revolution in Iran (1362-68/1984-1990) has yielded new and detailed information about the construction and the development of this monument.<sup>2</sup> However, this study has not yet been able to determine the exact date of its foundation.

At present the mosque consists of different buildings that are placed around a square courtyard (Fig 5.1), which measures about 42 x 42 m. The *qibla īwān*, which is dated 936/1546, occupies the south-west side of the courtyard.<sup>3</sup> Behind the *qibla īwān* is a dome chamber, which is dated 922 /1516-17 (Pl. 5.1).<sup>4</sup> On the north-west side of the courtyard is an *īwān* (Pl. 5.2) that is datable to the 8<sup>th</sup>/14<sup>th</sup> century on the basis of

its decoration.<sup>5</sup> To the east, almost attached to the mosque, but outside the mosque stands a free-standing baked brick minaret (Pl. 5.3) that is dated 504/1110-11.<sup>6</sup>

The study of this monument by the ICHO shows that the earlier mosque was built in various periods. The earliest evidence that was discovered was beneath the present dome chamber and comprised the remnants of three piers, immediately behind the present *īwān*. These piers were of mud brick and were set on a stamped earth (*chīna*) foundation, which is earlier date and goes back to the foundation of the mosque.<sup>7</sup> The study by the ICHO claims that the earliest building was probably built of stamped earth, has now vanished without leaving any clue about its features.<sup>8</sup>

The size of the mud bricks of the piers measures 36 x 36 x 9 cm. This size of mud brick is larger than the size of mud brick in other earlier mosques, such as the Friday mosque at Fahraj. The study by the ICHO suggests that according to the numerous piers which were found in various places in this mosque, in the second stage of the history of the mosque, there was a continuous covered area, three bays deep on the three sides (south-west, north-west and south-east) around the present courtyard.<sup>9</sup> The original limit of this building to the north-west and the north-east side is not yet clear.

Another building is located on the north-east side of the mosque (Fig.5.2); this was discovered in the course of an excavation in the 1350s/1970s.<sup>10</sup> This building is not symmetrical with the opposite side of the courtyard and is placed at an oblique angle to it. A survey of this building by the ICHO shows that its level is higher than that the other parts of the mosque and contrary to the situation in the other parts, its floor is not covered with plaster. In addition, the different type of construction and material, the various sizes of the piers, its low height and the oblique angle all combine to show that this building was added later. It is likely that this building

replaced the original north-east section of the covered area which presumably followed the standard pattern of the rest of the covered area, namely three bays deep and eight bays wide. According to Qazvīnī (674/1275), the *kitābkhāna* (library) of Sāva was located in the Friday mosque at that time<sup>11</sup> and the present north-east section of the mosque is probably the remnant of that *kitābkhāna*. It is also possible that this area of the building originally extended further along to the north-east side and that the remains of it have not been found yet. Therefore, the north-east area of the courtyard, beyond the present building, still needs excavation to reveal its original features.

There are several piers in mud brick of different sizes in the monument. This various size of piers is due to the fact that they were erected at different times or to their structural role in the building.<sup>12</sup> Unfortunately these piers have not been chronologically distinguished yet. The recent restoration of this building shows that the piers of the monument were restored several times and consolidated with baked brick (Pl. 5.4). These differences also show that they are not contemporary.

The design of the main entrance of the present mosque is not clear. Qazvīnī (740-1340) describes this entrance as a high portal with two high minarets on each side of it.<sup>13</sup> It is likely that the main entrance was placed opposite the *qibla* on the north-east side of the courtyard, which has not been excavated yet. One of the original entrances of an earlier mosque was discovered on north- west side of the courtyard, to the south-west of the north-western *īwān*.<sup>14</sup>

In addition to the existing barrel vaults of the mosque, the study by the ICHO found the remains of the original roof of the earlier mosque inside the walls of the north-western *īwān* and on the first storey of the corridor to the east side of the dome

chamber. They show that a barrel vault of mud brick originally roofed the mosque.<sup>15</sup>  
The size of the mud bricks was 36 x 36 x 9 cm.

The study of this mosque by the ICHO suggests that owing to the erection of the dome chamber, an original pier in mud brick was destroyed and the two existing isolated baked brick piers, which are placed on the north-east side of the dome chamber, were added. The thickness of the enclosing wall was also increased at the same time. In addition, two new backed brick piers were built and attached to the two original pillars, on both sides of the doorway of the dome chamber.<sup>16</sup>

### **Decoration**

There are several types of decoration in various forms - carved plaster, painted plaster, brickwork and tilework in this mosque. There also exist some decorative inscription bands in the building.

The earliest one which has been identified so far is painted on plaster and has been attributed to the 4<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> century. Painting on plaster is also to be found in the Friday mosques at Fahraj and Na'in. The latest inscription band is an in tilework, dated 936/1529, inside the dome chamber. In the course of the recent restoration of the north-west *īwān* there has appeared part of the original decoration of this *īwān*, in addition to the existing Safavid ornament. This earlier decoration contains joint plugs of different types in plaster; these belong to the 8<sup>th</sup>/ 14<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>17</sup>

Several highly decorated *miḥrābs* in different styles survive in addition to the *miḥrāb* of the dome chamber. The earliest is a flat *miḥrāb* (see below), which is attached to a pier on the east side of the dome chamber, and may date to the 4<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> century (Pl. 5.5). There is another *miḥrāb* that dates from the 8<sup>th</sup>/14<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>18</sup>

## Inscriptions

Several inscription bands in Kufic and *thulth* can be seen in the mosque. Apart from two inscription bands- one on the minaret and other in the dome chamber - the other bands are Qur'ānic or of pious content.

Apparently the earliest surviving inscription band is the one painted on plaster in Kufic. Unfortunately, only one word, *mūliya*, remains from this band (Pl.5.6). Ghuchanī claims that the correct form of this word is *maulana* and this word is part of a Qur'ānic verse (Qur'ān 2:286).<sup>19</sup> He also says that this word is usually written *mūliya* in Qur'ānic texts. Referring to Ibn Muqalah's prescribed style of writing, he suggests a date in the late years of the 4<sup>th</sup> /10<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>20</sup> The earliest surviving *miḥrāb*, on the east side of the dome chamber, contains three inscription bands in plaster. The Kufic inscription band in the panel above the apex of the arch of the *miḥrāb* has not been read yet.<sup>21</sup> The two other inscription bands are Qur'ānic. The first one runs in the outer border of *miḥrāb* (A), and the remains of the second one (Pl. 5.7) can be seen in the middle blind arch of the *miḥrāb* (B).

### Text:<sup>22</sup>

(A) *Qur'ān* 9: 128-129.

(B) *Qur'ān* 3: 19 (part).

**Translation:**

(A) *Bismallāh* (in the name of God). Certainly a Messenger has come to you from among yourself; grievous to him is your falling into distress, excessively solicitous respecting you; to the believers (he is) compassionate.

(B) ...religion with Allāh...

The style of epigraphy of this *miḥrāb* is very similar to that of other inscription bands in the 4<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> and the 5<sup>th</sup>/11<sup>th</sup> century such as those of Sabz Pūshān in Nishapur (c.350- 375/ 960-985) and Davāzda Imām in Yazd (429/1038). Quchānī says that this inscription is comparable with an inscription band in the Naʿīn mosque and a band on the earthenware bowl found at Nishapur and datable to the 4<sup>th</sup> /10<sup>th</sup> century. This *miḥrāb* is flat and is similar to two other flat *miḥrābs*, which were found in Rayy; probably in the 3<sup>rd</sup> - 4<sup>th</sup> /9<sup>th</sup> -10<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>23</sup>

**Material**

Mud brick 36 x 36 x 9 cm. laid in clay. Baked brick 27 x 27 x 6 cm.

**Dating**

According to early historical sources Sāva was an important city in the early years of the 4<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> century on the *caravan* route to Rayy and Khurasan. Muqqadāsī

(375/985) says that the town was fortified, that there were fine baths here, and the Friday mosque stood near the high road and at some distance from the market.<sup>24</sup>

As mentioned earlier, the investigation by the ICHO shows that the present building replaced another one, which was originally made of stamped earth and can be mentioned as the earliest Friday mosque at Sāva. Nevertheless, there is no evidence to identify the exact date of its initial construction.

In the second phase this mosque of stamped earth was overlaid with another structure of mud brick in a hypostyle plan around a central courtyard. The remnants of this phase, such as massive pillars, barrel roofs, mud bricks of large size, and the painted inscription band, can be seen in the building. The style of construction is reminiscent of Sasanian architectural characteristics, which extended in to the early Islamic centuries. Therefore, one can consider that this mosque was built in the 3<sup>rd</sup>/9<sup>th</sup> century.

## **Discussion**

The architectural features, various types of construction, decoration and inscriptions show that this building was developed at different times. The evolution of this mosque shows that it was built according to a hypostyle plan arranged around a courtyard. The size of the building and its courtyard indicates that it was built as a Friday mosque. The closest parallel to this monument is the earlier Friday mosque in Yazd. The type of construction and the size of its piers show that the builder aimed to erect a durable and imposing building. The investigation of this building by the ICHO shows that the dome chamber was added to a hypostyle *shabistān* in the south-west

side of the building in the 5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup>/11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> century. In this respect it adopted the new style that was first appeared in the Friday mosque of Isfahan in the Saljuq period.

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<sup>1</sup> Formerly, the Office of the National Organisation for the Protection of Ancient Monuments.

<sup>2</sup> Mūkhtārī, “Masjid-i Avvalī-ya Sāva”, *AKTMS*, vol. 3, p.158.

<sup>3</sup> Farahānī and Qūchānī, *Masjid-i Jāmi*’, p.34.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p.41.

<sup>5</sup> Mihryār, “Sair-i Taḥavvūlāt”, *AKTMSI*, Vol. 2, p.773.

<sup>6</sup> Miles, “Inscriptions”, *Studies in Islamic Art and Architecture*, p.167.

<sup>7</sup> Mihryār, pp.778-80.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> Mūkhtārī, p.169.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 159

<sup>11</sup> Le Strange, *Lands*, p.210.

<sup>12</sup> Mūkhtārī, p.176.

<sup>13</sup> Qazvīnī, p.156.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p.171.

<sup>15</sup> Mūkhtārī, p.177.

<sup>16</sup> Mihryār, p.778.

<sup>17</sup> Farahānī and Qūchānī, p.94.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p.44.

<sup>19</sup> Mūkhtārī, p.181.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p.182.

<sup>21</sup> Farahānī and Qūchānī, p.47

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.47-9.

<sup>23</sup> These *miḥrābs* are on display at the National Museum in Tehran.

<sup>24</sup> Le Strang, *Lands*, pp.210-11.

## 6

### Friday Mosque at Ardistan

#### **Location**

Ardistan city, Isfahan Province.

#### **Description**

The Friday mosque of Ardistan is located in *Mahāl*, one of the oldest areas in the west part of the city. This monument and other historical buildings that are located adjacent to it are known as the centre of this area. An archaeological survey of this building was carried out by local office of the NOPAM in Isfahan contemporary with its restoration in 1350s/1970s,<sup>1</sup> revealed new information about evolution of the mosque.

This building contains four *īwāns* around a courtyard (Fig 6.1), which measures about 25.17 x 20.69 m. On the south-west side of the building is situated an *īwān* (Pl.6.1), which is dated 555/1165.<sup>2</sup> A dome chamber is behind this *īwān* (Pl.6.2). This dome chamber measures 4.77 x 4.68 m. at ground level and is dated 553/1163.<sup>3</sup> In the interior, the dome is placed on a zone of four-pointed arches. Each arch

contains a decorative tri-lobed squinch. Four further blind arches are situated between these arches on each side of the dome chamber. This dome has a double shell and is of baked brick.

A *shabistān* is placed on the south side of the building, to the east of the dome chamber. This *shabistān* is two bays wide and four bays deep. Two elaborate *mihrābs* are placed in the *qibla* wall of this *shabistān*, in addition to the *mihrāb* in the dome chamber. A *riwāq*, which is two bays deep and one bay wide, is located on the west side of the dome chamber.

To the north-east of the mosque is situated another *īwān*, which is known as *Şuffa-yi Şafā* and dated 946/1556 (Pl.6.3). Two bays, each one has two storeys, flank this *īwān*. The study on the mosque by Bāqir Shīrāzī in the middle of 1970s shows that these bays were contemporary with the *īwān*.<sup>4</sup> An old square chamber is located on the north side of the building, beside the doorway next to a minaret. Apparently it was an independent building. Its function is not clear, but since the remains of a *mihrāb* by the doorway, which was destroyed in order to establish the present doorway to the surviving chamber, perhaps it was a private *namāz khāna*.<sup>5</sup> The walls and the arches of this building are of mud brick. Its roof was reconstructed later. The style of construction and materials suggests that this building was constructed contemporary with the earlier Friday mosque of Ardistan.<sup>6</sup> Adjacent to this building and the north-east *īwān* is located a *madrasa* that dates from Safavid.

On the south-east of the courtyard is placed another *īwān*, which is known as *Şufa-yi Amūr*, attributed to the 11<sup>th</sup>/17<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>7</sup> A dome chamber is placed behind this *īwān*, which its dome is vanished. It is flanked by two *shabistāns* each quite distinct from the other in design. One has a single file of two bays ending in two laterally placed space each roofed by a domical vault. The other has two files of four

unequal bays. Considering the similar style of construction and material, it seems that this *īwān* and the dome chamber behind it were contemporary. On the opposite, on the north-west side is another *īwān*, which likely was built in the 12<sup>th</sup>/18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>8</sup>

This mosque has several entrances but the oldest one is located on the south-west side of it, west of the main dome chamber (Pl.6.4). This entrance is a four-pointed archway whose door is set within a rectangular frame. The arch of the entrance rests on two square brick capitals, which are placed on two engaged brick columns. These columns are coated with stucco. On both sides of the façade of the entrance are situated two recessed blind arches within rectangular frames. These arches are largely elliptical with pointed ends. Two similar blind arches are also on both sides of the doorway. This entrance possibly was built contemporary with the dome chamber in the 6<sup>th</sup>/12<sup>th</sup> century.

The remains of the original columns of the earliest structure can be seen in the corridor on the south-east, in the western *shabistān* and also in the *shabistān* on the north-east side of the building. Remnants of the destroyed columns and pillars were found in the course of investigations in the building (Fig.6.2). This discovery and the existing columns suggest that the mosque was originally built as a hypostyle one.<sup>9</sup> Shīrāzī's study also notes that four *shabistāns* of the mosque were placed around the present courtyard.<sup>10</sup> It seems that all the *shabistāns* were not contemporary with each other - the southern *shabistān* was the earliest and the eastern one was the latest.<sup>11</sup> The southern and the northern *shabistāns* were symmetrical and each was five bays wide and three bays deep.<sup>12</sup> The middle bays of both the northern and the southern *shabistān* were wider than the others and probably higher.<sup>13</sup> Both the eastern and the western *shabistān* of the mosque were six bays wide and two bays deep. The pillars that are placed on the façade of the courtyard are rectangular in form and the others in

the rows behind are round. In the south-west corner remains a twin engaged column (Pl.6.5), which reminds of the Friday mosque of Isfahan. The average diameter of the columns in the southern *shabistān* is about 1.25 m.; they are larger than the other column in the mosque.<sup>14</sup> The columns of the southern *shabistān* were built of alternating course of baked brick, measuring 42 x 24 x 8 cm., set horizontally and vertically in alternation.<sup>15</sup> This kind of construction was used in the Tārī Khāna mosque (2<sup>nd</sup> /8<sup>th</sup> century) and the octagonal pavilion at Naṭanz (389/998-9).<sup>16</sup> This size of brick is the largest that has been recorded in the early Islamic centuries in Iran. It is possible that this size refers to the local style of construction.

The remains of the original roof of this *shabistān* show that a barrel vault originally roofed it.<sup>17</sup> The remains of carved stucco, inside the wall, can be seen in the east side of the doorway of the main dome chamber (Pl.6.6). This implies that the original pillars and columns were adorned with carved stucco. The columns of the western and the northern *shabistān* were built in the same style and material.<sup>18</sup> The columns of the northern *shabistān* were adorned with carved stucco, but the columns in the west *shabistān* were coated with plaster. The pillars of the east *shabistān* were built in octagonal form and were coated with plaster.<sup>19</sup>

This early mosque was entirely built of baked brick with plaster mortar. The enclosing wall of the building was of mud brick, on average of 1 m. thick.<sup>20</sup> The original form of the earliest *miḥrāb* is not clear. According to the study by Shīrāzī, the original mosque was itself built on a former mud-brick structure, which has disappeared. The remnants of its mud-brick, measuring 32 x 32 cm., were found in the course of excavation in the mosque.<sup>21</sup>

On the north side of the building stands a minaret of baked brick; Its upper part has disappeared. Shīrāzī also claims that the minaret on the north side of the

mosque, to judge by the style of construction was built in the 6<sup>th</sup>/12<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>22</sup>

The investigation by Shīrāzī shows that the original hypostyle mosque was developed in the 6<sup>th</sup>/12<sup>th</sup> century toward to the south side and the dome chamber was built.<sup>23</sup> Then the south-west *īwān* was erected and, contemporary with this the south *shabistān* was redeveloped toward the south side.<sup>24</sup> In the next stage, the north, the west and finally the east *īwān* respectively were erected.<sup>25</sup> Therefore, Godard's theory about the adding four *īwān* to the original form of the mosque at the same time is not acceptable.<sup>26</sup>

## **Decoration**

The main decoration that remains from the earlier mosque is the revetment of the pillars and columns of the building in carved stucco. The remains of carved stucco in the south-west *īwān* can be seen in the upper storey of the corridor beside the south-west *īwān* along the wall. This decorative band contains a wavy bud shape (Pl.6.7). This form is generally similar to the Samarra style.<sup>27</sup>

The revetment of a pillar to the south-west of the courtyard consists of a decorative floral pattern in carved stucco.<sup>28</sup>

A decorative band comprising several adjacent squares, painted on plaster, once decorated an arcade of the mosque in the upper storey of the corridor beside the dome chamber to the south-west of the courtyard.<sup>29</sup> Painted on plaster decoration can be seen in the Friday mosque at Fahraj.

A decorative band is on the extrados of an arch on the south-west of the building (Pl.6.8). This band contains an interlaced leaf pattern with a palmette on the apex of the arch. The revetment of the engaged columns in carved stucco at the

entrance of the building, on the south-west, is very similar to the carved stucco of the Jūrjūr mosque (350-400/960-1010) in Isfahan. The decoration beside this doorway contains a series of jointed plugs in plaster in the wall. The same kind of decoration can be seen in the wall beneath the inscription band, which has been attributed to the second half of the 4<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> century.

### **Inscriptions**

There are several inscription bands in the mosque. In the south-west *īwān* is situated a Qur'ānic and historical band in *thulth*, dated 555/1165.<sup>30</sup> This inscription says that the south-west *īwān* and the *riwāq* adjacent to it on the west side, were built together. In the dome chamber, beneath the transition zone, runs another *thulth* inscription band in carved stucco. This band also contains Qur'ānic and historical texts and is dated 553/1163.<sup>31</sup> Both These inscriptions give the name of patron as Abū Ṭāhar Ḥusayn and the name of the builder (*bannā'*) as Muḥammad Isfahanī. In the north-east *īwān* is found a historical inscription band in *thulth* which gives the name of the patron of the *īwān* as Sulṭān Bik and is dated 946/1556.<sup>32</sup> Beside this inscription, another band can be seen, in carved stucco, which gives the name of the builder as Ḥiydar 'Alī and is dated 946/1556.<sup>33</sup>

The main *miḥrāb* of the mosque is placed in the *qibla* wall of the dome chamber. This *miḥrāb* is adorned with several Qur'ānic and religious inscription bands in carved stucco. On the east side of the dome chamber are situated two further decorative *miḥrābs*. Both of them have Qur'ānic texts in *thulth* and *naskhi*. Other Qur'ānic inscription bands in carved stucco can be seen in the arcades inside the dome chamber.

The earliest inscription is part of a Kufic inscription band in the arcade running south from the south-west corner of the courtyard (Pl.6.9).<sup>34</sup> This band material found at the beginning of two chapters from the *Qur'ān*: 25 and 67.<sup>35</sup> The latter, known on a wide range of Islamic monument throughout the centuries, is presumably the one intended here.<sup>36</sup> The script is quite similar to the one used on the mosque at Na'in (ca. 350/960). Stems and tails end in trilobes.<sup>37</sup> Both inscriptions use a similar punched rosette to decorate the empty ground of the upper zone.<sup>38</sup> It is likely that this band was written in the second half of the 4<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> century.

**Text:**

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ تَبَارَكَ الَّذِي ...

**Translation:**

*Bismallāh*. Blessed is he who ...

**Material**

Baked brick, 42 x 24 x 8 cm., laid in plaster mortar. Mud brick, 38 x 38 x 7 cm. and 35 x 35 x 7 cm., in the enclosing wall of the mosque.

**Dating**

The historical sources say that the existing Friday mosque of Ardistan was built in the 3<sup>rd</sup>/9<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>39</sup> Muqaddasī, in his *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm* (4<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup>) mentions that this mosque was in good condition at that time.<sup>40</sup>

As mentioned earlier, this mosque was erected in different phases. The south

*shabistān* was built as the earliest part of the mosque. The round form, the style of construction and the size of materials of the columns; the type of barrel vault, the twin engaged column and the remains of the revetment of the columns in carved stucco, all combine to suggest a date in the 3<sup>rd</sup>/9<sup>th</sup> century. Moreover, the painted plaster decoration, the remains of a decorative inscription band, the remnant of the decorative band in carved stucco in the south-west side of the building and the decoration of the entrance on the south-west of the mosque all go to show that the building had developed considerably in the 4<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> century.

## **Discussion**

The Friday mosque at Ardistan was originally built in a hypostyle plan around a central courtyard. This building developed toward the south side and the present dome chamber and the south-west *īwān* were added to it in the 6<sup>th</sup>/12<sup>th</sup> century. This pattern is found for the first time in the Friday mosque of Isfahan, where the Gunbad-i Nizām al- Mulk was added to the south side of the mosque in the later years of the 5<sup>th</sup>/11<sup>th</sup> century. To add a dome chamber to a hypostyle mosque was the new architectural style in the Saljuq period, and was a significant stage in the evolution of mediaeval history of Iranian architecture.

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<sup>1</sup> Shīrāzī, “Masjid-i Jami’ ”, *Athar I* (1358/1979), p.10.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p.11.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p.12

<sup>4</sup> Personal communication.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p.12.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

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- <sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p.13.
- <sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p.13.
- <sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p.9.
- <sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p.17.
- <sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p.9.
- <sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p.9.
- <sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p.15.
- <sup>16</sup> Blair, “Octagonal Pavilion”, *Muqarnas* I (1983), p.80.
- <sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p.9.
- <sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p.16.
- <sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8
- <sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24.
- <sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p.18.
- <sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p.12.
- <sup>27</sup> Finster, *Frühe*, p.175.
- <sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, pl.4.2.
- <sup>29</sup> Godard, “*Ardistan*”, *AeI*, p. 286, fig. 186.
- <sup>30</sup> Hunarfār, *Ganjīna-yi āthār-i tārikhī-yi Isfahān* , pp.214-15.
- <sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p.122.
- <sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p.219.
- <sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>34</sup> Godard, p.288, fig. 188.
- <sup>35</sup> Blair, *Monumental*, p.72.
- <sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>39</sup> Mihrābādī, *Ātashkada-i Ardistan*, p.14.
- <sup>40</sup> Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al- taqāsīm*, p. 346.

## Masjid-i Malik in Kirman

### **Location**

Kirman city, Kirman Province.

### **Description**

The Masjid-i Malik is the oldest and also the largest mosque in the city of Kirman. The mosque underwent sustained development and change over the centuries and the exact date of its foundation is not clear. Owing to these multiple changes, physical evidence as to its original features is not easy to decipher.

The present mosque contains four *īwāns* and some covered areas around a central courtyard (Fig. 7.1). The building has three entrances; these are on the south-west, north-west and north-east sides. The main entrance of the mosque is now to the north-west; it was re-decorated in the 1370s/1990s. The earliest entrance is located to the south-west and the latest, which was erected in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, is on the north-east side of the mosque.

A lofty *īwān* dominates the south-west side of the courtyard, thanks in part to the dome behind it, and serves as the *qibla īwān* (Pl.7.1). It contains a four-pointed arch within a rectangular frame, and is 7.68 m. wide and 14.38 m. high.<sup>1</sup>

A dome chamber is situated behind the *qibla īwān* (Pl.7.2). The dome is low and is built of baked brick. Khanikoff describes this mosque as being ruined and under reconstruction in 1275/1859.<sup>2</sup> According to the historical sources, this mosque was repaired by the order of Shihāb al-Dawla, the governor of Kirman in 1285-6/1868-70.<sup>3</sup> It seems that it was at this latter date that this *masjid* was redecorated. A Qur'ānic inscription band inside the dome chamber, dated 1286/1869-70 attests to this theory.

Three passages are placed to the south-east and another three to the north-west of the dome chamber. Schroeder's drawing<sup>4</sup> suggests that these are two rows of massive piers which take up the south-east and north-west sides of the dome chamber. These rows are not piers however; they are merely openings in a continuous wall. The erection of the dome, it seems called for a pair of piers on each side of that continuous wall of the *īwān* so as to support that wall.

The north-eastern wall of the dome chamber is not bonded into the original wall of the *īwān*, although Schroder's plan records this as an unbroken mass of brickwork. A fragment of decoration, painted on plaster, which seems to be of Safavid date, can be seen between this wall and the Saljuq wall of the *īwān* at a height of approximately 5 m. in the southern corner of the *īwān*. This suggests that this wall, which is not bonded into the earlier wall with its Saljuq decoration, was erected later, probably contemporaneously with the dome. This dome chamber is rectangular in ground plan. The upshot of all this is that the dome was added to the original *īwān* in the course of the reconstruction of the mosque in the Qajar era.

Two staircases survive in the south-east and north-west parts of the walls of the *qibla iwān*. Examination of these staircases shows clearly that they were built at the same time as the main *iwān*. The use of the same style of construction, material, and size of bricks attests to this theory.<sup>5</sup> It is more likely that these belong to the two minarets that were once placed on the top of the *iwān*. There is no clue as to the original form and height of any minarets to which these staircases might have led, unless indeed they served simply for access to the roof of the *iwān*.<sup>6</sup> Contrary to the other façades of the courtyard, the two bays flanking the main *iwān* are two-storeyed, probably in order to act as structural support for the *iwān*. The wall of the main *iwān* is 2.13 m. wide. From the structural standpoint, this extraordinary thickness, like the double storeys of the flanking bays, was intended to support the extra weight of the huge *iwān* and that of the assumed portal minarets.

Two *shabistāns* flank the main dome chamber to the north-west and the south-east (Fig. 7.2). Both of them have been attributed to the Qajar period. It is likely that they were added to the mosque when it was reconstructed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>7</sup> The intercolumniation and vaulting of each *shabistān* is different, however which suggests that they were not built at the same time.

A *shabistān* in the extreme south-western corner of the mosque is locally known as *Shabistān-i Imām Ḥasan* (hereafter SIH).<sup>8</sup> The local people believe that the Imam Ḥasan ('a), the second Shī'ite Imām, visited this city after its conquest and prayed in this place (c. 21-3/641-43).<sup>9</sup> To commemorate this event a building was erected later, probably as a small *masjid* (or *namāz khāna*), formerly separate from the mosque and thus technically a *shabistān*. It is now a part of the Malik Mosque. This *shabistān* is three bays deep and three bays wide (Fig. 7.3). It is built of baked bricks, measures 23.5/4 x 23.5/4 x 4 cm. and is roofed with low domical vaults. The height of

this *shabistān* is the lowest of all the rooms in the mosque. In the course of the restoration that was carried out by the local office of the NOPAM in Kirman in the early years of 1360s/1980s, two piers of mud brick were found inside the wall of the north-west side of this *shabistān*. The remains of other original piers were found inside this *shabistān*. A part of the enclosing wall, which is about 1 m. thick, was also found in the north-east side of the *shabistān*. According to the supervisor of the restoration carried out by the local office, these mud bricks found here measure 33 x 33 x 10 cm. and all sides of each pier were coated with plaster.<sup>10</sup> This suggests that the original building was constructed in mud brick and later was rebuilt (or probably reinforced) with baked brick to erect the upper floor. The original doorway of the *shabistān* stands opposite this *mihrāb*, on the east side. This doorway has a pointed arch and is 80 cm. wide; the opening is now blocked. A corridor of three bays is found on the south side of this *shabistān*. The remains of an old pier are to be seen in this corridor, which contains some courses of mud brick, measuring 30 x 30 x 8 cm.<sup>11</sup> The different style of construction, the different size of the bricks and the greater height of this part all suggest that it was of later date, perhaps at the same time of the reconstruction of the *shabistān*.

Upstairs, directly above the SIH and its *mihrāb*, three *mihrābs* which are similar in style of construction and decoration are set in the *qibla* wall (see below). The remains of part of a wall and some original columns of the building can be seen. They are made of baked brick measuring 24 x 24 x 3-4 cm. In addition, the four surviving columns can be seen inside the wall. In the course of restoration in the 1360s/1980s the remains of three other pillars were found.<sup>12</sup> All of this shows that another building, three bays wide and three bays can be detected on the roof of this *shabistān* (Fig 7.4). The piers of this building are quadrilobate, measuring about 90 x

90 cm., with a central groove between each pair of lobes.<sup>13</sup> This richly decorated building was perhaps erected as a private mosque (or *namāz khāna*). It also can be mentioned as the nine-bay type of mosque.

A minaret, which is about 6 m. high and its upper part has vanished stands at the northern exterior corner of the mosque (Pl.7.3). The minaret projects from the enclosing wall of the building and it is not bonded to the walls of the mosque. This implies that the minaret was originally built to be free-standing and combined with the mosque later. A decorative brick, which recurs in the main *īwān* of the building, runs around the shaft of the minaret. The use of identical brick sizes suggests that this minaret was built at around the same time as the *īwān*.

### **Decoration**

There is no trace of decoration of the earlier mosque. The only decoration is a large *mihrāb*, is found inside the SIH. It is more likely that this *mihrāb* was probably built earlier than the three others on the upstairs, at the same time as the erection of the *qibla īwān* or at a very close date to it in the 5<sup>th</sup>/11<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>14</sup>

The remains of three highly decorated *mihrābs* are placed beside each other on the roof of the SIH. These *mihrābs* are similar in decoration, style of epigraphy and size, which implies that they were all built at the same time, possibly in the late years of the 5<sup>th</sup>/11<sup>th</sup> century or the early of the 6<sup>th</sup>/12<sup>th</sup> century, and are thus of the Saljuq period.<sup>15</sup>

### **Inscriptions**

There is no trace of any inscription of the earlier mosque. Three inscription bands (two historical and part of a Qur'ānic) were found in the course of restoration in the south-west *īwān* of the mosque in 1361/1982.<sup>16</sup>

The first band (Pl.7.4) mentions the name of Tūrān Shāh, the Saljuq governor in Kirman (477-90/1084-98). According to a local historian, Abū Ḥāmid Kirmānī, Tūrān Shāh was a fair ruler and he ordered this mosque to be built as a *jāmi'* with other buildings outside of the city.<sup>17</sup> These inscription bands were originally executed in baked brick against plaster.

Part of *Sūrt al-Raḥmān* in the *Qur'ān* (55:1, 2) is located below the arch of the *qibla īwān*. It contains the two opening verses of and the rest of the inscription is not clear. An inscription band in *nasta'liq* is placed inside the dome chamber, beneath the transition zone of the dome. This band contains the *Sūrt Jum'a* (Qur'ān 62) in tile work, dated 1286/1896-5.

### **Material**

Baked brick 23.5-24 x 23.5-24 x 4 cm laid in plaster mortar in the main *īwān*, in the SIH, staircase and in the shaft of the minaret. Baked brick 24 x 24x 3-4 cm. in columns, mud brick 24 x 24 x 3-4 cm. in the remains of enclosing wall and behind the three *mihrābs* on the upstairs. Mud brick 33 x 33 x 10 cm. and 30 x 30 x 8 cm. in the SIH.

### **Dating**

As mentioned, this mosque was built over various periods. It seems that the original building of the SIH is the earliest surviving part of the mosque. The location of the later Saljuq *īwān* close to it may indicate that the site for *īwān* was chosen on account of its proximity to a holy place. In addition, the reconstruction of this *shabistān*, installing a decorative *mihrāb* within it, and also erecting an additional building with three decorative *mihrābs* above it, shows its importance. The large size

of the mud brick in the surviving columns of this *shabistān* is notable. The closest parallel is the Friday mosque at Fahraj. The ground plan of this *shabistān*, three bays wide and three bays deep, reminds one of the Nuh Gunbad mosque in the Iranian world, such as Balkh (perhaps late 3<sup>rd</sup>/9<sup>th</sup> century). The accurate date of the construction of this *shabistān* is not clear, but one can attribute it to the 3<sup>rd</sup> - 4<sup>th</sup> /9<sup>th</sup> - 10<sup>th</sup> century.

The exact date of the construction of the mosque is not clear but considering the name of Tūrān Shāh in the inscription band in the south-east *īwān*, it seems that the *īwān* was originally built in 477-90/1084-98 and was reconstructed and a dome chamber was added to it in the middle of 19<sup>th</sup> century.

## **Discussion**

The Masjid Malik in Kirman is a significant building on several counts. Architecturally, it displays a type of mosque new to Iran at this time. A lofty and deep *īwān*, stressing the *qibla*, sets a new style in the architectural history of mosques in Iran. The appearance of this style earlier in Kirman as a major city and also under the ruling of a powerful governor is more acceptable, rather than the Friday mosque at Nīrīz. The Masjid-i Jāmi‘at the Arg-i Bam (citadel of Bam) is perhaps the closest parallel to the Malik Mosque in the Kirman area.<sup>18</sup>

The Malik Mosque with its historical inscription band is the most reliable example to be considered as the earliest survivor of this new style of mosque with a huge *qibla īwān*. In addition, the placing of two minarets on the top of the *īwān* was an innovation, which was applied in the following centuries as a landmark to recognise the *qibla īwān*.

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<sup>1</sup> The main *īwān* of the Friday mosque at Nīrīz has a close dimension to this *īwān*; 7.52 m. wide and 18.3 m. deep.

<sup>2</sup> Khanikoff, *L'Asie*, p. 156.

<sup>3</sup> Vazīrī, *Tarīkh-i Kirman*, p.407.

<sup>4</sup> *SPA* III, p. 1034. Fig. 367.

<sup>5</sup> Each stair is about 51-5 cm. wide and is made of doubled stretch baked brick measures 23.5/4 x 23.5/4 x 4 cm.

<sup>6</sup> Designing of two separate staircases inside the walls of the *īwān* only to accesses to the roof was not standard. In addition, the placing of two staircases on the each side of an *īwān* is not to be seen in the other buildings earlier than the 6<sup>th</sup>/12<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>7</sup> The accurate date of the erection of the covered areas around the courtyard is not clear.

<sup>8</sup> Schroeder mention this building as an old mosque. See *SPA* III, p.994.

<sup>9</sup> There is no evidence on this event.

<sup>10</sup> It implies that the original *shabistān*, was probably larger.

<sup>11</sup> It is likely that this corridor was originally part of the SIH.

<sup>12</sup> These piers re-covered again and now are placed under the paving of the roof.

<sup>13</sup> For detail of this pier see Anisi, “Masjid-i Malik”, *Iran* XLII (2004), p. 144., fig. 14.

<sup>14</sup> According to a master builder, who has been working in the Masjid-i Malik over than 25 years, the remaining of another *mīrhāb* is to be found behind this existing one.

<sup>15</sup> For these *mīhrābs* see Anisi, pp.150-52.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.153-54.

<sup>17</sup> Kirmānī, *Saljūqiyān*, pp. 367-68.

<sup>18</sup> The recent investigation by the ICHO local office, in the Arg-i Bam after earthquake (1382/2003), explorers that the Masjid-i Jāmi ‘ inside the Arg, was originally built in a hypostyle plan with a *rīwāq* around its central courtyard and its *qibla īwān* was added to this plan at some time later.

## 8

### Friday Mosque of Na'in

#### **Location**

Na'in city, Isfahan province.

#### **Description**

This building is a hypostyle mosque with a central courtyard surrounded by a *riwāq* (Fig 8.1). The deepest arcade is on the *qibla* side (south-west) and the shallowest, which is one bay deep, occupies the north-east side. A broad aisle leads to the *mihrāb* on the *qibla* side. The arcade to the north-west of the courtyard is four bays deep and to the south –east is three bays deep.

The ground plan of the mosque is asymmetrical and irregular. The varied intercolumnation, vaulting and piers suggest that its architecture developed in various stages. There are four piers in the first row from the *qibla* wall. Three of these piers are cylindrical, and measure on average 80 cm. in diameter, while the fourth one is

rectangular, and is 91 cm. in diameter (see next paragraph for the implications). The decoration and the round form of these columns suggest that they are original.

An investigation into this mosque was carried out by the local office of NOPAM in Isfahan in the 1350s/1970s.<sup>1</sup> This study revealed that the original *qibla* wall was built of mud bricks, which measure 38 x 38 x 9 and 38 x 38 x 8 cm. Mud bricks of the same size were found in the rectangular pier to the south-west of the *mihrāb* and are also to be seen in the wall of the mosque, which is adjacent to the minaret at the southern corner. It seems that the oblong pier was originally a column, but the extra masonry support, has changed its original form. It is more likely that these sizes of mud bricks have been used in the three columns.

Intercolumniation of the north-west and south-east of the *qibla shabistān* (i.e. the two blocks flanking the area surrounding the *mihrāb*) is equal and the style of vaulting is Ilkhanid: the south-east portion has domical vaults and the north-west has barrel vault. There are seven niches in the *qibla* wall of the mosque, either side of the *mihrāb*. Each niche has a broken-headed arch (Pl.8.1). This kind of vaulting and arch can be seen in the Ilkhanid period. All this implies that this mosque was originally nine bays wide, with only four bays as an isolated projection at the centre of the *qibla*. However, considering the plan of other earlier mosques in Iran, it is more likely that these vaults was a latter additions (for instance in the course of restoration or developing of the mosque), and was originally nine bays wide at the *qibla* area.

A *shabistān*, which is 5 bays long and 4 bays wide, is placed on the extreme north-west side of the building. According to the local people it was added as the latest *shabistān* in the 1930s.

The height of the roof of the two bays furthest to the north-west is higher than that of the two south-east of them and closest to the courtyard (Pl.8.2). A corridor at

the northern corner of the mosque, leads to a blocked doorway. A gap can be seen about 1 m. south-east of the latest *shabistān*. This wall, which blocks the earlier doorway, was added later. This shows that to this wall. When the NOPAM removed the layer of revetment of the inner north-east south-west wall (which has a *mihrāb*), it became clear that the north part of the wall was added later, and that it was badly damaged by wind and rain. This evidence suggests that this was an exterior wall. A *mihrāb* with a trilobed arch, probably belonging to the Ilkhanid period, is set to the south-east of the gap (on the other side of the wall). Therefore, this part was probably added in the Ilkhanid period.

The three present-day doors of the mosque are placed on the south-east side of the mosque. At the north-east end of the south-east side is a lofty portal. According to the *Mirāt al-Būldān* the doorway has the date of 748/1347.<sup>2</sup> The form, proportion and decoration of the portal confirm a date in the 8<sup>th</sup>/14<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>3</sup>

The zulla of the mosque was originally covered by barrel vaults supported by arcades perpendicular to the façade of the courtyard, but some parts were later roofed by domical vaults, which appear to be earlier than the famous stucco. In comparison with earlier monuments such as the Tārī Khāna mosque and the Friday mosque at Fahraj, these arcades are higher and slimmer. Two domical vaults flank the main aisle, adjacent to the *mihrāb*. The domical vault to the south of the south-west adjacent is placed on squinches, which have a recessed arch on fairly triangular corbel forms carrying half dome outset from the corner (Pl.8.2).<sup>4</sup> These domical vaults carried on decorated cylindrical columns stress the *qibla* wall and the *mihrāb*. There are a further five domical vaults are in the south-east part of the mosque, between the minaret and the portal (Pl.8.3). It is likely that they were added to the mosque in the 8<sup>th</sup>/14<sup>th</sup> century.

Two closed doorways are located on the north-east side of the monument. It seems that they are the original doors of the mosque.

The floor level of the north-west arcade of the courtyard is 1.68 m. higher than the courtyard level (Pl.8.4). According to local people it was raised in the Qajar period (19<sup>th</sup> century), and was due to use of the space underneath as a small winter *shabistān*.

A decorative *mihrāb* is placed in the *qibla* wall.<sup>5</sup> This *mihrāb* is 1.22 m. wide and 1.10 m. deep. This *mihrāb* itself comprises three niches, each within the next. The outermost and the middle arches rest on two outset capitals, which are placed over an outset column on each side. The outermost and the middle niches are highly decorated (see below) and have a stilted arch, but the innermost is plain and has a low arch (Pl.8.5). It seems that the innermost arch was added later to the original *mihrāb*. The form of this *mihrāb* - two niches, an outer and an inner, four engaged columns with projecting capitals- established a new standard type of *mihrāb* in Iranian architecture, and was used widely in the following centuries.

A *minbar* is placed beside the *mihrāb*. Two inscription bands in *thulth* are to be seen on each side of the *minbar*. The one on the viewer's right gives the names of benefactor and builder and that on the left one gives the date of the *minbar* as 711/1311.<sup>6</sup>

Four interior bays in the west *shabistān* of the building and also one bay in the main aisle are two-storied (Pl.8.6). It seems that the upper storey or raised platforms in the main aisle were added at a later time, was used by a *muballigh* (a man with loud voice to repeat certain invocations of the prayer leader), especially during Friday pray. The closest parallel is to be seen in the mosque of Ibn Ṭūlūn (263-66/876-79) in Cairo.<sup>7</sup> The other upper storeys were probably built to support the piers. The piers which support this upper storey may have been perhaps cylindrical originally, and the

need to support, the extra masonry may have made it rectangular. A broken-headed arch is to be seen in the latter. It seems that these second storeys were added in the Ilkhanid period.

A staircase on the south side of the courtyard leads down to a *sardāba* (cool place). A further staircase on the north-west of the courtyard leads to a large basement, which occupies the south-west of the mosque (Fig.8.2). This basement, which resembles a summer *shabistān* is irregular in plan and was originally carved out of the ground. This *shabistān* can be reached via a corridor leading to the south-east *sardāba*.

Two notable square piers, which are placed in the second row south-west of the courtyard, flank the main aisle (Pl.8.7). These piers are plain to a height of 1.25 m and in both of them an engaged column at each corner of it extends downwards below the abacus. However, it seems that these engaged columns were originally stood at full height and the blank part for more stabilisation were added later. These piers resemble those in the Friday mosques at Fahraj and Ibn Ṭūlūn.

The barrel vault over the *qibla* aisle ends in a two-tier dome-like vault (Pl.8.7). This pattern of a domical form over the *mihrāb* is foreshadowed in a uniquely Iranian form. This vault has an oblong base and plain panels extend the wall upward, where further panels outlined with mouldings transform the vault into a small hexagon which is closed off with a small oval cupola. A square stalactite domical vault is to be seen in the middle bay of the north-east arcade (Pl.8.8). Schroeder attributes these vaults to the 7<sup>th</sup>/13<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>8</sup> However, this vault is decorated with painting of a simplicity which might be contemporary with the stucco, so it can be normally attributed to the late of the 4<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>9</sup> In addition, the advanced form of the *patkāna* in the Davāzda Imām mausoleum at Yazd and the Friday mosque at Isfahan can support this

dating. Placing these two decorative vaults in the *mihrāb* axis implies that the architect aimed to highlight the *mihrāb* aisle (Fig.8.2). The way that the top of the main aisle and also its opposite number, over the middle bay of the north-east side, break the roof line externally supports this theory. This style of design was completed by replacing the wider aisle by a *qibla ṭwān* and a main entrance opposite it, in the following centuries.

The revetment of the *qibla* wall is *sīmgal* (a mixture of small straw and mud) that was covered with lime. In comparison with other early mosques such as the Tārī Khāna and the Friday mosque at Fahraj, the façade of the courtyard is high (Pl.8.9). In spite of the small size of courtyard, this high facade increases the feeling of an enclosed space and stresses the size of the mosque. The courtyard façade of this aisle has a crowning panel, which breaks the roof-line, but like the Tārī Khāna and the Friday Mosque at Fahraj its arch is no higher than other flanking bays. This highlighted middle bay is repeated on opposite side and stresses the axial design.

A free-standing minaret stands at the southern corner of the mosque (Pl.8.9). The base of the minaret is square and its shaft is octagonal, but it ends in sophisticated fashion in a cylinder. This shaft leads to a cornice with foliated decoration in carved stucco. A herringbone pattern is to be seen on the shaft of the minaret. A brick railing is set over the cornice. The minaret ends with a small round domed shaft with multiple apertures. According to Bāqir Shīrāzī, the shaft of the minaret is cylindrical between the square base and octagonal shaft, which is now hidden by part of the wall of the mosque.<sup>10</sup> The square base, the cornice and the decoration beneath it, the plain shaft and then compound shaft all combine to distinguish it from other minarets of the 5<sup>th</sup>/11<sup>th</sup> century, and thus one may suggest a date in the 4<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> century. This minaret is made of baked bricks, which measure 23 x 23 x 4 cm. and 23 x 23 x 5 cm.

## Decoration

The main decoration of the mosque is concentrated in the ornamented *mihrāb* and the three bays directly in front of the *mihrāb* area; all of this ornament is in carved stucco. The unusual wealth of decoration in the *mihrāb* area stresses the importance of the *mihrāb* and the *qibla* direction. The style of this decoration bears a general resemblance to the style of Samara. This relationship has been discussed at length in the earlier literature on Na'in. The three columns are ornamented with a geometric interlaced band that creates separate clusters filled with leaves (Pl.8.10).

The spandrels and intrados of the arches are decorated with various floral patterns, vine leaves and rosettes (Pl.8.11). The outer band of the *mihrāb* is decorated with a network of eight-pointed stars and crosses that divides into separate fields, which are occupied by the clusters filled with leaves. The concave tympanum of the outermost niche of the *mihrāb* and its spandrels are ornamented with multiple rows of congested leaves and tendrils. The tympanum of the middle niche has floral pattern in high relief. The four engaged columns of the *mihrāb* are also ornamented with geometric patterns and vine leaves. According to the studies of Flury and Bazl this decoration can be dated to ca. 350/960.<sup>11</sup>

In spite of its wealth decorations, there is no inscription band in the *mihrāb*. Indeed was no space for one in the design, clearly the decoration itself was regarded as more important. It seems that vegetal decoration was preferred.

The remains of a further smaller *mihrāb* were found by the NOPAM on a pier (Pl.8.12), in the second row of piers from the *qibla* wall in the main aisle of the *qibla shabistān*. It comprises a flat panel with a pointed arch, which contains a floral pattern

in carved stucco. The style of decoration suggests a date in the Ilkhanid period; a parallel with Ūshtarjān makes the point.<sup>12</sup>

The piers of the courtyard façade of the mosque are adorned with brick patterns, whose bricks measure 21 x 21 x 3 cm. and 21 x 21 x 4 cm. The pattern contains recessed and projecting geometric patterns such as zigzags, diagonal strips, and herringbone and lozenge designs (Pl.8.13). The closest parallels for this style of decoration in this area are the portal of the Jūrjūr mosque (c.350-75/ c.960-85) and also the Friday mosque at Isfahan. Therefore, an attribution of this brick decoration to the second half of the 4<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> century is plausible.

A series of painted turquoise diamond patterns of uncertain date is to be seen above each broken-headed arch. A decorative foliated band comprises a repetitive chain of S shape and their inverse placed beside each other beneath the cornice of the minaret (Pl.8.14). Both sides of S are raised; the upper part has the shape of a swan's neck while the lower part is raised in floral form.

### **Inscriptions**

There are two inscription bands in the *miḥrāb* area:<sup>13</sup>

An inscription band around the top of the walls of the domed bay in front of the *miḥrāb*, beginning on the east side(A), and in the extrados of the arch (Pl.8.15) in front of the *miḥrāb* (B).

In the course of the restoration of this building by the NOPAM in 1970s, three epigraphic friezes were found painted on the wall in the *qibla shabistān*, to the south-east of the main aisle, toward the doorway (Pl.8.16):<sup>14</sup>

(C) two words (D) a band of pious (E) probably Qur'ān 48:4 ( part).

**Text:**

(A)*Bismallāh*. *Qur'ān* 9:18 and 2:137, [several words behind the *minbar*] and:

... الله عليه و على آله الطيبين الطاهرين الا خيار

(B)*Bismallāh*. *Qur'ān* 27: 40 and 9: 127.

(C) الجيروت لله

(D) لاله اله الا الله محمد رسول الله صلى الله عليه و على آله

(E) ...السموات و الارض و كان الله عليما حكيمًا

**Translation: (A):** *Bismallāh*. The only people to frequent God's mosque are those people who believe in God and the Last Day, and observe the contact prayers, and give the obligatory charity, and do

not fear except God. These would be surely among the guide ones. He is the All-hearing, the All-knowing.

[A phrase more likely, “There is no God but *Allāh*, Muḥammad (s) is the prophet of God”].  
May God bless Him and His pure family.

**(B):** *Bismallāh*. This is of my Lord’s bounty that He may try me, whether I am thankful or ungrateful. Whosoever gives thanks only for his own soul’s good, and whosoever is ungrateful-my Lord is surely All-sufficient, All-generous.

But if they turn back, say *Allāh* is sufficient for me, there is no god but God; on Him do rely, and He is the Lord of mighty power.

**(C):** God’s almightiness.

**(D):** There is no God but *Allāh*, Muḥammad (s) is the prophet of God. May God bless Him and His pure family.

**(E):** to God belong all forces of the heavens and the earth God is Omniscient, Most Wise.

The Na’in inscriptions employ a variety of devices to fill the upper zone. The letters- *ra*, *nun*, and *wa*- have rising tails which are curved in the form of swans’

necks.<sup>15</sup> Many of the letters end in tripartite foliations, like the inscription dated 389/998-99 at Naṭanz.<sup>16</sup> In order to balance the new weight added to the upper zone, scribes began to make the inscription descend below the flat base line.<sup>17</sup> Blair says that the style of inscription fits a date in the middle of the 4<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>18</sup> However, owing to its similarities to the inscription at Naṭanz, it could be attributed to the second half of the 4<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> century.

Apart from the Qur'ānic texts, the inscription band over the *miḥrāb* ends with a blessing on the pure family of Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ). This part is a common Shī'ite benediction. Considering that the Shī'ite Būwayhids were in power in the late 4<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> century, ruling, it is likely that this *miḥrāb* and also the decoration in the *miḥrāb* area postdate the architecture itself and were added at this time.<sup>19</sup>

Three further painted bands are inscribed in blue. The letters are tall and slender. The letter *alif* has a bevelled upper end. Some letters such as *ha* and *jīm* have raising tails which curve in swan's neck shape, like the pattern beneath the cornice of the minaret. In contrast with the other bands, these bands are less elaborated, but show similar style of epigraphy.

According to Bāqir Shīrāzī, a part of a further inscription band is under the carved stucco in the *qibla* wall.<sup>20</sup> It is more likely that it is earlier, however, removing of the present layer is not possible at present.

## **Material**

The mud bricks in the *qibla* wall measure 38 x 38 x 8 cm. and 38 x 38 x 9 cm. The baked bricks in the minaret, measure 23 x 23 x 4 cm. and 23 x 23 x 5 cm. The baked bricks in the courtyard façade, measure 21 x 21 x 3 cm. and 21 x 21 x 4 cm.

## **Dating**

As mentioned earlier, Flury's study on the decoration of this mosque dates it to the second half of the 4<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> century. On the basis of the large size of the mud bricks in the *qibla* wall and the wall of mosque beside the minaret, one can attribute the erection of this mosque to the first half of the 4<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> century; soon after, it seems it was redecorated and some parts of it reconstructed. A further pointer in this direction is the manifest tension of the first vault to the south-east of the main aisle. This seems that to have been raised above the level of the previous vault. This reconstruction seems to have occurred in the second half of this century, and the mosque was further developed in the Ilkhanid period.

## **Discussion**

The Friday mosque at Na'in is important on several counts. Its decoration and inscriptions are among the best-preserved examples from the early Islamic centuries. The style of its epigraphy shows the evolution and development of Kufic epigraphy in the 4<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> century. In comparison to other earlier mosques such as the Tārī Khāna and Fahraj, the appearance of a highly decorated *mihrāb* sets a new standard, which continues in the following centuries.

The mosque's architecture shows a blending of the Arab plan with Iranian characteristics. In this scheme, the main aisle is wider and higher than the adjacent bays and stresses the *mīhrāb*, as in the Great Mosque of Damascus. The idea of a dome associate with the *mīhrāb* is of course known as early as the Great Mosque of Damascus, but Iranian architects adopted the idea in different materials and on various scales and made it their own.

The main aisle also ends to a decorative vault in front of the *mīhrāb*. This decorative vault also can be noted as an earliest *muqarnas* dome, which is surviving in Islamic architecture.<sup>21</sup> The decorative dome and the further decorative one on the same axis to the north-east, for which the Damascus mosque offers no parallel, seems to be an innovation in that it suggests an axial design, which stresses the *mīhrāb* and the *qibla* direction. The designers had not yet developed the notion of overall symmetry, incorporating secondary *īwān* and axial entrance. This pattern was eventually replaced by the *qibla* *īwān* and an *īwān* at the centre of the opposite side of the courtyard, with the main entrance behind that *īwān*. This scheme is a prologue to the appearance of two *īwāns*, opposite each other, as a development in the plan of mosque.

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<sup>1</sup> This investigation carried out under supervision of Bāghar Shīrāzī, but no record has been published.

<sup>2</sup> I 'timād al-Saltāna, Muḥammad Hasan Khān, *Mi'rāt al-Buldān* IV, p.2039.

<sup>3</sup> The closest parallels are the Masjid-i Ushturjān, see Wilber, *Architecture*, pl. 95.

<sup>4</sup> It seems that this vault is original and probably the present symmetrical dome has been reconstructed.

<sup>5</sup> *SPA* VIII, pl.267.

<sup>6</sup> Hunarfar, *Ganjīna-yi āthār-i tārikhī-yi Isfahān*, p.51. See also Smith, M. B., "Wood Minbar", *AI* IV (1937), 7-41.

<sup>7</sup> For the photograph of this mosque see, Blair and Bloom, "Iraq, Iran and Egypt", *IAA*, p.113.

<sup>8</sup> *SPA* III, p.939.

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<sup>9</sup> O’Kane, “Iran and Central Asia”, *The Mosque*, p.122.

<sup>10</sup> Personal communication.

<sup>11</sup> Blair, *Monumental*, p.38.

<sup>12</sup> Wilber, pl.49.

<sup>13</sup> Hunarfār, p.50.

<sup>14</sup> Qūchānī, “Barisī Katībihā-yi Tārīkhī-yi Majmū ‘a”, *Athar* 26-27 (1375/1996-7), p.138.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> Personal communication.

<sup>21</sup> The earliest dated *muqarnas* dome is that of the shrine of Imām Dur ( 478/1085), which was built by a Shi’ite patron, near Samarra. See Tabbāa, *Transformation*, p. 112-13 and also Tabbāa, “The Muqarnas Dome”, *Muqarnas* III (1992), p. 62.

# 9

## Tomb tower at Samīrān

### **Location**

In the Ṭārum area, near the Sifīdrūd dam, to the east of Manjīl, in Gīlān province.

### **Description**

An octagonal tomb tower is placed on a stone base, on the top of a rocky hill (Pl.9.1). There are the remains of several tomb towers to the north and a stronghold to the east of it.

The doorway of the building is on the south side and is 1.57 m. wide and about 5.50 m. high (Pl.9.2). In front of the entrance were once some wide steps. Over the door a four-pointed arch is placed within another niche. The remains of the columns, which flank the door show that there were three arches placed one above the other. All of them are within a rectangular inset frame. The interior diameter of the tomb is 10.57 m. and its shaft is about 10 m. high (Fig.9.1). Each side of the tomb is on

average 4.23 m. long on the interior. On the middle of each side is placed a niche with a pointed arch (Pl.9.3). These niches are on average 2.57 m. wide. They lighten the structure of the tomb and enable it to resist earthquakes, an especially important feature in an area where earthquakes are common. Inside the tomb, on the west side of the entrance, are the remains of the stairs (77 cm. wide) which lead to the roof. A window is placed on the east side; it is 1.72 m. wide and about 5.50 m. high. As with the doorway, an inset rectangular frame is set over the window arch on the exterior wall. There is no trace of a grave or gravestone inside the tomb, but two dead bodies; those of one man and one woman, were found wrapped in yellow and white cloth under the tomb floor in the 1340s /1960s.<sup>1</sup> This recalls the discovery of burials, which were wrapped in cloth and found in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century in Rayy. These have been attributed to the Būyid period.<sup>2</sup>

A zone of blind pointed arches can be seen beneath the remains of the dome (Pl.9.4). At the corners are placed eight pointed- arch squinches, with a further eight trilobed plaster arches between them. Eight buttresses are placed at the corners of the exterior wall. They begin in four-sided form to a height of 1.43 m. and continue beneath the cornice in circular form. Structurally, they support the corners and also the cornice, while architecturally they are decorative elements. The tomb is badly damaged and its dome has been demolished. The remains of it show that it was built of baked brick. Considering the stairs inside the building it is very possible that the roof had a double- shell dome. The high springing of the dome suggests that it was probably a conico-spherical form like the domes of the tomb towers at Lājīm and Risgit. The shaft of the tomb was built of rubble masonry and plaster. Some timbers were located as tie-beams within the wall and the corners. Both the exterior and interior walls of the tomb are covered with plaster. The use of stone in this area is

usual and the skilful construction of the building shows that the builder was completely familiar with the material.

### **Decoration**

In comparison to the other early tomb towers in northern Iran, this building has little in the way of decoration. The main decorative elements are the multi-lobed blind arches of plaster that encircle the shaft, between the buttresses and beneath the cornice (Pl.9.5). On each side, the double arches are placed in a rectangular inset frame. The cylindrical buttresses also have a decorative role. In fact they express the building's solidity and also articulate the face of the building and create a space between the buttresses for decoration.

### **Inscription**

There is no inscription on the tomb, but it is possible that an inscription was formerly set within the inset rectangular frame over the doorway in the empty frame or above the window, which is on the shaft.

### **Material**

Rubble masonry with plaster mortar on the shaft. Baked brick 26 x 26 x 5/5.5 cm. on the roof.

### **Dating**

According to the sources, Samīrān (Shamīrān) was the centre of the Musāfirids or Sallārids, a Daylamite family. This family ruled in the Ṭārum area from the beginning of the 4<sup>th</sup> /10<sup>th</sup> until about the end of the 5<sup>th</sup>/11<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>3</sup> Muḥammad

Musāfir was the first ruler of this family; who ruled in Samīrān in the early 4<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>4</sup> He gathered craftsmen and artists and there were about 2800 houses these, both small and large.<sup>5</sup> The Samīrān stronghold is mentioned as a very strong and important base. The date of its construction is not clear, but apparently it was erected before the times of the Kangariyan and was the key to the whole area. Muqaddasī (375/985) says that the walls of this stronghold were painted with golden pictures of animals, moon and sun, but that the houses were built of *khīsh* (mud brick).<sup>6</sup> Nāṣir-i Khusraw visited this city in 438/1046-7 and mentions its stone fortress on a rocky hill overlooking the city.<sup>7</sup> This fortress was the ruler's residence and the city's citadel (*arg*).<sup>8</sup> The stronghold was very carefully built of stone and the use of wooden ties within the walls and at the corners of the wall helps to explain its survival over such a long time.

The location of the tomb on a rocky hill and the placing of the dead bodies inside the floor just above the rock perhaps reflect a memory of the pre-Islamic burial tradition. However, wrapping the corpse in cloth indicates that the Islamic burial tradition was followed here. Stone is an indigenous material in this area and the skilful erection of the tomb and the stronghold attests to close familiarity with its use. Furthermore, this hill is the highest place around the stronghold and thus the placement of the mausoleum has been chosen carefully. In addition, this tomb is the largest one to survive on this site, so possibly it was built for a Musāfirid ruler and his wife. Placing the window in an east-facing direction, facing the stronghold perhaps suggests a relationship between the deceased and the stronghold. It may also imply that the tomb was built in the lifetime of the patron.

Considering the relation of this site to a known Daylamīte dynasty, it is possible that the concept of a tomb tower may have originated in northern Iran.

Muqaddasī says that the Daylamīte Kings constructed lofty and stable domed structures over their graves.<sup>9</sup> It shows that the erection of a tomb tower was caused no surprise in the 4<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> century. The discovery of remains a huge tomb tower in Rayy gives more information about the nature of the early tomb towers in Iran. The building in question is so-called Gunbad-i Īnānj, who was a Saljuq commander and was killed by his servants when he was fighting with the Atabeg Ildigiz and Sulṭan Arslān in 564/1168-69.<sup>10</sup> He was buried by them (his enemies) at the bottom of the hill of Ṭabarak and his dome was still existed.<sup>11</sup> However, the construction of such a huge tomb for a dead commander by his enemy is very unlikely indeed. It is therefore possible that this tomb tower was erected earlier and that he was eventually buried inside it.

The so-called Gunbad-i Īnānj, which probably is a Būyid structure, is dodecagonal in ground plan and is built in baked brick. This building is about 12 m. in diameter and the remains of a stairs is to be seen inside it. The stairs imply that the dome had probably two shells. The wall of the monument is about 2.50 m. thick and a buttress is placed at each exterior corner.<sup>12</sup> Nizām al-mulk, in his book *Sīyāsat-nāma* says that a fire-worshipper built a sepulchre (*ustudān*) for himself with double shell (*dūpūsh*) in Rayy in the time of Fakhr al-Dawla (366-387/976-97).<sup>13</sup> He also says that this building was on the hill of Ṭabarak, above Fakhr al-Dawla's tomb tower.<sup>14</sup> This story shows that erection of tomb towers for the Būyid rulers in their life time, and also the use of double-shell domes were at that time remembered in the late 5<sup>th</sup>/11<sup>th</sup> century and were connected with the region of Rayy.

This building was a lofty tomb tower and thus, it had to be built by order of a rich and powerful ruler. According to texts, before al-Muqaddasī's visit only two Būyid rulers were buried in Rayy; Mardāvīj and Rukn al-Dawla.<sup>15</sup> The latter was a very powerful ruler (335-66/947-76)<sup>16</sup>, whose capital was Rayy. He is a possibility for

can be the patron of this tomb tower, in which case, it was probably built in the middle of the 4<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> century.

Neither the history of the Kangariyan family nor the fates of its rulers are clear, but it is obvious that this tomb tower must have been erected in flourishing time of Samīrān and in the reign of a powerful man. According to texts, Wahsudān is the successor of Muḥammad, who is mentioned as powerful ruler.<sup>17</sup> He expended his territory and built several strongholds. He also minted coins in his own name.<sup>18</sup> It is not clear when he died, but Samīrān was conquered by Fakhr al-Dawla in 379/989-90 for a while, however, this family returned to power and maintained their territory.<sup>19</sup> It is, therefore, possible that this monument was built in the second half of the 4<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> century.

## **Discussion**

The octagonal form with eight cylindrical buttresses and two rectangular frames (probably spaces for inscriptions) presents a new style of tomb tower construction, which corresponds to the material and traditional type of construction in this area. The eight niches on the interior sides of the tomb, plus the decorative elements beneath the dome, and the large window which provides the lighting, shows the significance of the interior as an architectural space. It also accounts for the balance between the exterior and interior decoration and the overall unity of the building.

The octagonal form became very popular and continued in use throughout the medieval period later in Iran. The Gunbad-i 'Alī at Abarkū is the closest parallel in

this case and one might also cite the two remarkable brick tomb towers at Kharrāqān which were built later in the second half of 5<sup>th</sup>/11<sup>th</sup> century, to say nothing of several others in the following century.

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<sup>1</sup> Varjāvand, *Sarzamīn-i Qazvīn*, p.426.

<sup>2</sup> Karīmān, *Rayy-i Bāstān* I, p.376.

<sup>3</sup> Kasrawī, *Shahriyārān-i Gumnām*, pp. 36-49.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p.38.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 38-9.

<sup>6</sup> Muqqadasī, *Aḥsan al-Taḳāṣīm*, p.317.

<sup>7</sup> Nāṣir Khusraw, *Book*, p. 4 and see also Kasrawī, pp.48-9.

<sup>8</sup> Nāṣir Khusraw, p. 4.

<sup>9</sup> Muqqadasī, p.193 and Karīmān, *Āthār-i Tārīkhiy-i Rayy*, p. 79.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.144-45.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> Nīzam al-Mulk, *Sīyāsat Nāma*, p.167.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> Karīmān, *Rayy-i Bāstān* 1, p.446

<sup>16</sup> Bosworth, *New Islamic*, p.154.

<sup>17</sup> Kasrawī, pp.40-41.

<sup>18</sup> Madelung *CHI* IV, p.225.

<sup>19</sup> Kasrawī, p.41.

# 10

## Gunbad-i Qābūs

### **Location**

Gunbad-i Kāvūs (Qābūs) city in province of Gulistān.

### **Description**

An extraordinarily high tomb tower on an artificial tepe, some is 15 m. high beside the ruins of the ancient city of Gurgān,<sup>1</sup> dominates the surrounding ground that was the previous Gurgān plain.

The tower is a cylindrical building with a conical roof (Pl.10.1). The structure of the building is divided into three main parts: the foundation, the cylindrical shaft and the conical roof (Fig. 10.1). The tomb is set on a circular base of which 1.5 m. is visible and the rest of it is inside the mound. The base between the flanges is of corbelled brick bond. It supports the shaft wall and transmits the load of the building to the base and the foundation. The foundation is built of baked brick and it is continued to a great depth. Godard writes that when the Russian excavators sunk a shaft into the floor of the tomb in 1899, the brick foundation, whose base was not discovered, continued to a depth of at least 10.75 m. in the mound.<sup>2</sup> Statically, it is possible that due to the weight of this very lofty building the foundation could be

polygonal. The Interior diameter of the tomb is 9.70 m.; around the exterior of the wall, the diameter is 14.66 m. and the diameter of the outside of the foundation is 17.08 m.<sup>3</sup> There is a single door with a four-pointed arch over it and this is 1.6 m. wide. In the back of it, another door that is 1.32 m. wide leads into the interior (Pl.10.1). The inside is empty and there are no stairs to the roof and no tombstone. The interior wall is plain and the revetment is of plaster, whose thickness is 1-5 cm.<sup>4</sup> The plainness of the interior shows that attentions are focused on exterior.

Ten extended and parallel triangular flanges, evenly spaced, surround the circular plan, and run straight from the plinth toward the corbelled cornice (Pl.10.1). The role of the flanges is notable. Structurally, they support the conical roof and the round body and they also make brick-laying easy on this large scale. Architecturally, they add interest to make various the plain brick shaft and emphasise the height and solidity of the monument. The building is built entirely of baked brick of high quality. In fact, baked brick is the most important unifying element of the building. In the shaft of the tower the horizontal mortar varies between 2-4 cm. Its colour is grey and this could well be the common solid and durable mortar that in Persian is called *sāruj*.<sup>5</sup> Its use was common in huge structures in Iran. From the construction point of view, to build such a huge monument in cylindrical form was easier and more practicable than to use another form. Moreover, for the construction of a high roof in a small span, the conical form is the best solution.

The conical roof sits directly on the cylindrical shaft with a corbelled cornice, which increases the surface of support. From the technical point of view, using the corbelled cornice as a structural element was apparently an innovation. The structure of the roof is noteworthy. The surface is covered with a rhomboid baked brick.<sup>6</sup> This kind of brick was used to cover the roofs of other monuments like Rādkān West and

Sulṭāniya in later centuries. This brick is of wedge shape and come in different sizes. The narrow end of it is completely anchored in the plaster mortar and this causes the bricks to be attached very strongly to the roof. This technique also creates a smooth and tough surface on it. This surface and the slope of the roof have protected the building against rainfall and birds over the centuries. The size of the brick depends on the place where it is used; it increases in size from the top to the bottom. At the base of the roof the outset surface, namely, the thicker side, is 25 x 35 cm. and the narrow edge is 48-50 cm. long; in the middle of the roof, the thick side and opposite end, i.e. the thinner side, decreases to 25 x 25 cm. and 40 or 36 or 29 cm. respectively and finally, on the top is 19 x 10 cm. and 28 cm.<sup>7</sup> There is no vault under the roof, and its inside is curved.

A rectangular window is located in the east-side on the roof. According to Mishkatī, it is 2 m. high, at the bottom is 80 cm. and at the top it is 74 cm. wide. The thickness of the roof in the bottom it is 2.55 m. and at the top is 2.10 m.<sup>8</sup> Apparently, its main role was to provide lighting and ventilation for the inside. Situating the first inscription panel exactly below the window is a clue to show the beginning of the inscription. Also it suggests that there may be a symbolic relationship between the window and the inscription. By this reckoning, the window illuminates the inside and the inscription with presentation of the information enlightens the mind.

Mishkatī mentions that the tower is 55 m. high, the base and the shaft are totally 38 m. and the conical roof is 17 m. high,<sup>9</sup> while Godard says it is a little more than 51 m. high. There are, unfortunately, only approximate measurements. Supposing one accepts either of them, the ratio of the width to the height is 1:3. According to Tavasūli's drawing (Fig.10.2),<sup>10</sup> the ratio of the interior diameter of the tomb to the shaft height is 1:4 and the ratio of the roof height to the shaft height is 1:2.

## Decoration

The building has little in the way of decoration. The sole decorative element, excepting the ten blank brick flanges and inscription panels, is the pair of simple squinches (*muqarnas* shape) above the recessed doorway (Pl.10.1). Each one is 50 cm. high and is of considerable importance as an example of the earliest type of squinch in Iranian architecture.

## Inscription

Two cut-brick Kufic inscriptions with the same text encircle the tomb tower. One band is located 2.65 m. below the corbelled cornice and another at 8 m. above the ground.<sup>11</sup> The first one has a symbolic presence and eternally preserves about the tenant of the tomb information and the second is readable (Pl.10.1). Both inscriptions are set in relief against the brick masonry. It seems the patron aimed to have durable texts, and thus both were made of baked brick instead of carved in plaster. For more consolidation the letters was built of rooted brick.<sup>12</sup> Godard claims that the letters of the inscription were coated with plaster,<sup>13</sup> but Mishkātī says that no trace of plaster was found and that originally they had not such coating.<sup>14</sup> The text consists of ten brick panels; each panel is 2 m. high and 0.80 m. wide. They were arranged between the flanges and were obviously designed for the building according to a pre-ordained plan.

### Text:

بسمله هذا القصر العالی لئلا میر شمس المعالی الامیر بن الامیر قابوس وشمگیر امر ببناؤه فی حیاته سنة سبع  
و تسعین و ثلاثاً قمریة وسنة خمس و سبعین و ثلاثاً و شمسیة

### **Translation:**

*Bismallāh*. This is the high palace (*qasr*) of the amīr Shams al-Ma ‘ālī, the *amīr*, son of the amir, Qābūs b. Wushmgīr.<sup>15</sup> He ordered it built during his lifetime in the year three hundred and ninety-seven lunar [27 September 1006-16 September 1007] and the year three hundred and seventy-five solar [15 March 1006-14 March 1007].<sup>16</sup>

The inscription gives the name of the patron and the date of building. It is obvious that the patron demanded to have an eternal monument and thereby to perpetuate his name. Hence, he himself ordered it to be built and did not devolve it to anybody else. The reference to his own lifetime shows that Qābūs supervised the building according his desires. The text was written in Arabic as the formal language of the time. But the mention of the solar calendar shows his affection for the Iranian cultural sphere.

The monument is called a *qasr*; this word means, “castle” or “palace”. It is a term mentioned on the two later tomb towers: Rādkān West and Lājīm. This term is equivalent to the Persian word *kakh* which was applied to Zoroastrian buildings and it might be that the borrowing was not confined to the word but also connoted the form of a vaulted monument with a circular plan.<sup>17</sup> Blair notes that the *qasr* is qualified by the word *al-‘ali* (lofty), the first extant example of an adjective in a monumental inscription from the eastern Islamic world. She also claims that the form “ordered it built” became increasingly popular from the 5<sup>th</sup>/11<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>18</sup> It is more likely that the term *qasr* used in conjunction with this adjective indirectly implies the glory and power of the deceased, who was capable of having such an unusually high monument as his tomb.

The letters of the inscription are angular, rounded on one side, and unadorned. Thus they strongly contrast with several contemporary examples. The style of the Gunbad-i Qābūs inscription is different from that of the inscriptions on slightly later tomb towers, like Rādkān West and Lājī m, which are elaborately carved in plaster.

In addition, the unity of the inscription material with that of the monument and the rectangular letter is as a development of writing style that continued in the following century.

### **Material**

Baked brick 23 x 23 x 5 cm, 25 x 25 x 6 cm on the shaft.

Rooted baked brick 25 x 35 x 48-50 cm., 25 x 25 x 40, 25 x 25 x 36, 25 x 25 x 29 cm., and 19 x 10 x 28 cm. on the roof.

### **Dating**

According to the inscription, the date of the building is 397/1006-7 and more specifically between September 1006 and March 1007.

### **Discussion**

Gunbad-i Qābūs is an outstanding building in some respects in Islamic architecture. It shows the development of the construction of the cylindrical tomb towers and became the benchmark for the later tomb towers of Iran. It successfully joins both art and technique with integration of the form and function, creates a monumental building in the history of Iranian architecture. This type of building, due to its simplicity and explicitness, quickly became popular and continued throughout the following century in various forms and sizes.

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1 Gurgān or Jurjān was an ancient province to the southeast of the Caspian Sea. The Sasanian king Fīrūz rebuilt the defensive old brick wall around it, whose remains still exist. It was captured by Muslims Arab in the 1<sup>st</sup>/7<sup>th</sup> century and the foundation of the Islamic city of Gurgān is attributed to them. By Qābūs' time, it was highly developed and had become a centre for artists and scientists. Its deterioration started with the Mongol invasion, and it was annexed to the Mazandaran at that time. After Tīmūr's attack, it was devastated and was described as an abandon city at the close of the 8<sup>th</sup>/14<sup>th</sup> century. See Kīānī, *Islamic city*, pp. 6-8.

2 Godard, *SPA* III, p.971.

3 Tavasūlī, "Gunbad-i Qābūs", *Hunar va Mi'māry* XIV (1351/1972), p.70.

4 Mishkāfī, "Jurjān", *Hunar va Mardum* 51(1345/1966), p.38.

5 Godard, p.972.

6 In Persian this type of brick termed *rīshidār*. See Mishkāfī, p.37.

7 *Ibid.*, p.37-8.

8 *Ibid.*, p.37.

9 Mishkāfī claims that he was in charge of the restoration of the monument in 1939. After the erection of scaffolding, the building was measured carefully. See Mishkāfī, p.39.

10 Tavasūlī, p.14.

11 Mishkāfī, p.35.

12 *Ibid.*, P.35.

13 Godard, p.973.

14 Mishkāfī, p.35.

15 Qābūs b. Wushmgīr b. Ziyār, was the fourth Ziyārid Amīr. He was famous as a scholar, poet and calligrapher and also as the patron of the scientists. But he was noted as a bloodthirsty tyrant. He was captured and exiled to a castle near Gurgān and died in the early years of 5<sup>th</sup> /12<sup>th</sup> century.

16 Blair, p.63.

17 Adle and Melikian-Chirvani, "Monuments ", *SI* I (1972), pp. 252-3

18 Blair, p.64.

# 11

## Kashkān Bridge

### **Location**

52 Km. to the west of Khurramābād city, in the Changī area, Lurstan Province.

### **Description**

Four ancient bridges span the Kashkān River.<sup>1</sup> The style of their construction is fairly similar, but among them, Kashkān Bridge is the best-preserved and presents the main characteristics of bridges in the early Islamic Iran.

This bridge spans the river from west to east on the ancient road from Shāhpūrkhāst to Ṭarhān (Pl. 11.1).<sup>2</sup> The location of the bridge was chosen carefully to minimise the area to be spanned. In addition the foundation of the bridge rest on a rocky river bed, which provides more stability for its huge piers.

This bridge is about 325 m. long; its maximum height is 16.5 m. and its minimum height is 4.80 m. (Fig. 11.1).<sup>3</sup> Some bays of the bridge have vanished, but careful study shows that it originally comprised 14 piers and 13 bays of various dimensions (Fig.11.2).<sup>4</sup> A barrel vault that is elliptical in lower portion and pointed in

upper part covers each bay. The construction of this vault is remarkable. It is elliptical in its lower portion and pointed in its upper part. The lower part of the vault is made of rubble masonry but the upper part is in baked brick (Pl. 11.2). This brick measures 28 x 28 x 9 cm. and 28.5 x 28.5 x 9.5 cm.<sup>5</sup> A further stone arch is set over this baked brick arch. In fact the load of the upper surface is borne by the stone arch, and the brick arch beneath acts only as centering to constructing the stone arch. On top of this vault is the flat surface of the bridge, in paving stones. This flat surface is on average 8 m. wide.

Three small bays are to be seen to the west end. These bays were clumsily reconstructed by order of Muẓaffar al-Mulk, the ruler of Khurramābād in the Qajar period.<sup>6</sup> The reconstructed parts of bridge are built in baked brick, measuring 22.5 x 22.5 x 5 cm.<sup>7</sup>

The largest bay is 27.5 m. across and the smallest is at the east end is 4.80 m. across.<sup>8</sup> The pier bases of the bridge are rectangular with rounded terminations and are built in stone (Pl. 11.3). This rounded termination protects the piers against stress of water flow. The exterior of the base of each pier is faced with interlocking cut stones, which measure on average 40 x 50 cm. and 50 x 60 cm. The cut stone is strong, waterproof and resists both dampness and freezing temperatures. The interior edges of these cut stones are of wedge-shaped anchored in plaster mortar which attaches strongly to the pier. The interior of each pier is filled with rubble masonry and cobblestones thoroughly combined with plaster. Above this lower part can be seen rubble masonry whose stone have flat surfaces and measure on average 40 x 60 x 20 cm. These cuts stone are brought from a local stone mine.<sup>9</sup> The other materials, except for baked brick are to be found at the site. Some timbers are also to be seen embedded in the rubble

masonry of these piers. These timbers help to stabilize the rubble masonry and have a unifying function.

The use of semi-elliptical arch, the cobblestones at the core of the piers, and the use of interlocking cut stone are all reminiscent of the Sasanian style of construction.

Openings casually with pointed arches are to be seen above each pier between the bays (Pl. 11.4). In fact behind these openings were originally hollow spaces, which structurally lighten the bridge and save on material. The hollow space between piers is reminiscent of a similar device which is called *kūrnu* or *kūnal* in Persian (Fig.11.3). The term *kūrnu* is a small vault that is placed over hollow spaces between a series of vaults or arches, so as to provide a flat roof.

### **Decoration**

There is no decoration on this bridge.

### **Inscriptions**

A stone plaque from this bridge, which measures 90 x 160 cm. and 28.5 cm. thick contains seven lines of foliated Kufic. This plaque is now conserved in the Falakl al-Aflāk museum in Khurramābād.

**Text:**<sup>10</sup>

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم هذا/ ما امر ببناء الامير الاجل ابو/ النجم بدر بن حسنويه بن ا/ لحسين اطال  
الله بقاء سنه/ تسع و ثمنين و ثلثمائه و فرغ/ منه سنه تسع و تسعين و ثلثمائه/ ... عشره سنين اثابه الله عنه.

### **Translation:<sup>11</sup>**

*Bismallāh*. This is what the most exalted amīr Abu'l-  
Najam Badr b. Ḥasanwayh b. al-Ḥusayn, may God  
prolong his life, ordered constructed in the year three  
hundred and eighty nine (23 December 998-12  
December 999). It was finished in the year three  
hundred and ninety nine (5 September 1008-24 August  
1009) [after] ten years, may God reward him for it.

The inscription is a historical text, which mentions the name of patron as Abu'l- Najm Badr b. Ḥasanwayh. His family were Kurds and are known as the Ḥasanwayhid dynasty. This family ruled in western Iran and southern Kurdistan (c.350-406/c.961-1015).<sup>12</sup> Two identical inscriptions in his name dated (374/984-85), are to be found on the Kalhur Bridge over the Kashkān River.<sup>13</sup> The Kashkān inscription also says that the construction of the bridge was started in 389/ 998-99 and finished 10 years later.

### **Material**

Cut stone measuring on average 40 x 50 cm., 40 x 60 cm. and rubble masonry.  
Baked brick measures 28 x 28 x 9 cm. and 28.5 x 28.5 x 9.5 cm.

## Dating

According to the inscription on this bridge, it was built in 399/1008-9.

## Discussion

Information about early Islamic Iranian bridges is sparse. The survival Kalhur and Kashkān bridges, with their similar style of construction, show the importance of bridges in this area in the 4<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> century. The intelligent use of indigenous materials and of hollow spaces and the erection of compound vaults in rubble masonry and baked brick imply the builder's ability. In contrast to other type of buildings in the early Islamic period, such as mosques and mausolea, only two bridges (Kalhur and Kashkān ) have inscription bands. These inscription bands has the foliated Kufic which was the standard style of epigraphy in the second half of the 4<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> century.

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<sup>1</sup> Īzadpanāh, *Āthār-i Bāstānī* I, p.255.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p.256.

<sup>3</sup> Sajādī, "Pūl-i Kashkān," *Athar* 35 (1382/ 2003), p.251.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p.250.

<sup>6</sup> Karīmī, *Rāhhā-yi Bāstānī*, p.156-7.

<sup>7</sup> Sajādī, p. 252.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p.251.

<sup>9</sup> Īzadpanāh, p.257.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 259, fig.29. See also Blair, *Monumental*, p. 232, fig.35.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p.66.

<sup>12</sup> Bosworth, *New Islamic*, p.158.

<sup>13</sup> Herzfeld, "Bericht über" *AMI* 1 (1929), p.74 and Īzadpanāh, *Āthār-i Bāstānī* II, P. 157, fig.53.



## Masjid-i Kūshk at Firdaws

### **Location**

In the city of Firdaws, to the south-west of Mashhad, on the way to Yazd, Khurasan-i Razavī Province.<sup>1</sup>

### **Description**

The Masjid-i Kūshk is situated in an old quarter in the eastern part of Firdaws (formerly Tūn), to the south-east of the Friday mosque of the city. An earthquake hit the city of Firdaws in 1347/1968 and only the main feature of this monument has survived.

An aerial photograph of the city that was taken before the earthquake (1335/1956) shows that the Masjid-i Kūshk was set in an open space, adjacent to the old wall of the city. At the present, to the south-west is a garden, to the north-west a public bath (Ḥammām-i Kūshk); the remnants of the old wall of the city adjoining to the south and east corner of the mosque and to the west-east and south-east is open space.

The building comprises a *shabistān* to the south-west and an arcade (*riwāq*), which surrounds a central courtyard (Fig.12.1). The *shabistān* is two bays deep and three uneven bays wide, while the arcade is one bay deep. The ground plan of the mosque is similar in form to that of the Friday mosque at Fahraj. The *īwān*-like entrance of the building is to the north-west, with a four-centred arch, set in a rectangular frame, over its doorway (Pl.12.1). This portal is about 6 m. high, 3.62 m. wide and 3.75 m. deep. A doorway, which is 1.20 m. wide and 2.37 m. high, leads to the courtyard of the mosque. The courtyard is rectangular in ground plan, measuring 8.70 m. x 7.50 m., and is surrounded by an arcade one bay deep (Pl.12.2). This bay measures on average 1.95 m. deep. The middle bay of this arcade is 3 m. wide, and each bay flanking it is 2.15 wide.

There is a vaulted square space behind the doorway; the two free-standing piers facing the courtyard are of mud brick, which are various from the others, support the vault (Pl.12.3). The back wall of the north-west arcade is of mud bricks that are of the same size as those of the *shabistān* (see below). This arcade is of baked brick and was reconstructed after the earthquake. It is not clear, however, whether the original arcade was built at the same time as the *shabistān*. The north corner of the courtyard is now blocked, but it is likely that the northern corner of the courtyard was originally marked by a free-standing pier, as is the case with the other three corners.

A wall, which is to the south-west of the courtyard, separates most of the *shabistān* from the arcade. This wall is about 40 cm. thick and of baked brick, while the *shabistān* to its south-west is of mud brick. It seems, therefore that this wall is a later addition; it follows that the *shabistān* was originally two bays deep. A central opening leading into the *shabistān*, is in the middle of this baked back wall, and measures 1.03 m. wide.

A *mihrāb* is to be seen adjacent to the south-east of this opening, to the viewer's left (Pl. 12.4). This *mihrāb* is 93 cm. wide, 2.12 m. high and 1.02 m deep. An inscription band, dated 885/1480, was once placed beside this *mihrāb*, to the viewer's left (see below). The location of a *mihrāb* here was for the convenience of people, who prayed in the courtyard in summer. A black stone is on the opposite side of the inscription. A foot-step is to be seen on this stone, which is attributed to 'Alī ('a), the first Shī'ite Imām (see below).

Two massive square piers, measuring 1.90 m. x 1.90 m., are inside the *shabistān*, in front of the *mihrāb*. The walls at right angles to the back wall have rectangular projection to the north-west and south-east of the *shabistān*. An engaged column is set at the outer corner of each of these piers as a decorative element, and is found also at each of the outer corners of the *shabistān* (Pl.12.5). These engaged columns are on average 30 cm. in diameter. This type of column is to be seen in the Friday mosques at Fahraj and Maybud<sup>2</sup> in the Yazd area. The remaining of revetment of these piers and walls shows that they were covered with plaster. The recent restoration revealed that the original ground level of the *shabistān* was about 40 cm. lower than at present, and that its floor was covered with plaster.

The remains of a *mihrāb* are to be found to the south-west of the *shabistān* (Pl. 12.6). This *mihrāb* is 1.38 m. wide, 3.20 m. high and 1.48 m. deep. The *mihrāb* was originally level with the original floor of the *shabistān*. The *mihrāb* was decorated by carved stucco bear a cursive inscription. On the *mihrāb* was a lower Kufic inscription, dated 554/1159, which have now vanished (see below). A further *mihrāb* is also to be found in the west south- west of the *shabistān* (Pl.12.7). This *mihrāb* is 87 cm. wide, 1.33 m. high and 36 cm. deep.

There is no vestige of the original roof of the building, but the remains of the springing of an arch can be seen in the back wall of the *shabistān* to the north-east of the *mihrāb* (Pl. 12.8). This remnant, and also the rectangular plan itself, suggest that the *shabistān* was roofed by barrel vaults. In contrast to other earlier mosques such as the Tārī Khānā and the Friday Mosque of Fahraj, when the vaults are all perpendicular to the courtyard, due to the surviving four-centred arch between the two massive piers, it is likely that two longitudinal barrel vaults which were parallel to the *qibla* wall (Fig.12.2), were roofed the *shabistān*.

As mentioned earlier, the *shabistān* is of mud brick, measuring 34.5 x 34.5 x 9 cm. and 35 x 35 x 9.5 cm. This large size of mud bricks is reminiscent of the Sasanian period. The closest parallels for this size are of baked bricks in the Tārī Khānā mosque (34 x 34 x 7 cm. and 35 x 35 x 7.5 cm.) and in the mud bricks of Kūshk-i Raḥīmābād (33 x 33 x 7 cm. and 34 x 34 x 7 cm.).

A flight of some eight steps are to be seen to the south-east of the *shabistān*. Given the precarious remnants of the original roof, these steps could have served as a buttress to support the south-south-west rectangular projection of the south-east wall; it is however, a later addition.

### **Decoration**

Except for the engaged columns, there is no decoration in the mosque.

### **Inscriptions**

As noted earlier a supplementary *mihrāb* of carved stucco formerly stood, in the *shabistān*. A photograph of this *mihrāb* shows that a four-centred arch was set

over its niche. On the extrados of this *mihrāb* there was an inscription band in *thulth*, comprising *Qur'ān* 61:13 in part, and the name of the artist as Mas'ūd b. Aḥmad al-Ghaffār. Inside the niche of *mihrāb* was a lower Kufic inscription contains *Qur'ān* 39:53, in part and this was dated 554/1159.<sup>3</sup>

A further band was placed beside this *mihrāb*, inside the courtyard, on the south south-west wall. This band contained a religious text blessing Muhammad (ṣ) the Prophet and his pure family (*chahārdah ma'ṣūm*) and was dated 885/1480.<sup>4</sup> This band also gave the name of patron as Darvīsh Khalaf b. 'Alī b. Darvīsh Mīrānshāh-i Tūnī.<sup>5</sup> This band is important because it shows that these were sufficient Shī'ite sympathies in the city to permit such an inscription, even though this was before Shī'ism became current in Iran. On the black stone, on the opposite side, was a poem of two lines with the date 1013/1604.<sup>6</sup> This poem has now vanished.

Another inscription band was once inside the portal of the mosque contains blessings on Muḥammad (ṣ), the Prophet and his pure family.<sup>7</sup> A poem of three lines, dated 983/1572, was under this band.<sup>8</sup> The poem gave the name of patron as Shaykh Maḥmūd and the builder as Ustad Ḥasan b. Nizām al-Dīn-i Tūnī.<sup>9</sup>

## **Material**

Mud bricks measuring 34.5 x 34.5 x 9 cm. and 35 x 35 x 9.5 cm. occur in the *shabistān*. Baked bricks measuring 23.5 x 23.5 x 4-5 cm. occur in the arcade.

## Dating

The Arabs entered Khurasan through Ṭabas around 28/648.<sup>10</sup> Considering the closeness of the Tūn area to Ṭabas, it seems likely that this area was conquered at the same time or at a date close to this period.

*Ashkāl al-‘Alam*, by Aḥmad Jaīhanī (second half of the 4<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> century) cites the name of Tūn as a large and prosperous city.<sup>11</sup> The anonymous author of *Hudud al-‘Alam* (372/982), mentions Tūn as a prosperous city.<sup>12</sup> Muqaddasī in his *Aḥsan al-Taqāsīm* (375/985) describes the city as a well-populated and wealthy place. He says that it has a stronghold and that its Friday mosque (*jāmi‘*) is inside the city.<sup>13</sup> Nāṣir-i Khusraw visited Tūn in 444/1052.<sup>14</sup> The city was in ruins in his time, but he describes Tūn a large city and has a strong fort. He also notices the existence of many gardens in the eastern suburbs of city and describes its good economic condition at that time.<sup>15</sup> All this information shows the significance of Tūn in the early Islamic centuries.

The location of the mosque; adjacent to the old wall of the city and its small size indicates that this building was probably part of a complex which served passengers; it is possible, however, that this mosque was allotted to a particular group of Muslim such as the Shī‘ite, who lived in this part of the city.

The main architectural characteristics of this mosque are engaged columns, barrel vault, the large size of mud brick and piers, hypostyle *shabistān*, and an arcade around the central courtyard. These features are to be found in other early mosques in Iran, such as the Tarī Khāna and the Friday Mosque of Fahraj.

This combination of feature suggests a date in the first half of the 4<sup>th</sup>/9<sup>th</sup> century for the Masjid-i Kūshk at Firdaws.

## Discussion

The Kūshk mosque at Firdaws is one of the earliest surviving monuments in Khurasan in the Islamic period. This building is a further sample of the so-called Arab plan modified by the influence of Sasanian architectural characteristics. Tūn is near the Yazd area, and so it is not surprising that this mosque has some similarities - such as engaged column at corner of each pier - to the other Friday mosques at Yazd. However, the roofing of mosque in Firdaws shows a new type, which possibly was a local practice.

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<sup>1</sup> Khurasan province was officially divided into three parts in 1383/2004.

<sup>2</sup> This type of column was found in the Maybud Jāmi‘, by the ICHO local office in the course of restoration of this mosque in 1380/ 2001. Later restorations and archaeological surveys (1380-83/2001-4) revealed that there was originally a hypostyle *shabistān* here and that the present dome chamber was added later.

<sup>3</sup> Nūghānī, “Āthār-i Tārīkhī-yi Firdaws”, *Mishkāṭ* XVII (1366/1988), p.191.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* 189.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* 190.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p.187.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> Yāḥaqqī and Būdharjumihri, *Firdaws/Tūn*, p.23.

<sup>11</sup> *Ashkāṭ al-‘Ālam*, p.170.

<sup>12</sup> *Ḥudud al-‘Ālam*, p.283.

<sup>13</sup> *Aḥsan al-Taqāsīm* 2, p.436.

<sup>14</sup> Nāṣir-i Khusraw, Book, pp. 100-101.

<sup>15</sup> Le Strange, *Lands of*, p. 353.

# 13

## Kūshk-i Raḥīmābād

### **Location**

Raḥīmābād area, to the east of Bam city, Kirman province.

### **Description**

This is a single massive building, about four kilometres to the east of the city of Bam, in the Raḥīmābād area (Pl.13.1).

This building is orientated to the cardinal points and is fairly symmetrical in its ground plan (Fig.13.1). The building is square and measures about 34 x 34 m. It contains four rectangular *īwāns* on each of the four sides. Each *īwān* is on an average 6.47 m. wide and 9.93 m. deep. The walls of each *īwān* measure 3.10 m. in thickness. This extraordinary thickness of the walls is perhaps due to the roofing of each *īwān* by a barrel vault and also to protect the inside spaces against the hot outside temperature.

A domed chamber whose dome has now vanished, occupies the centre of this monument. This dome chamber measures 8.22 x 8.22 m. and is about 10 m. high from ground level to the surviving part of the transition zone. Its surrounding walls are on

an average 2.10 m. thick. The domed chamber has four doors, each leading to an *īwān*; however, the east and the north ones have collapsed (Pl.13.2). Each door has whose base is inset, and each doorway is about 5.50 m. high and 2.48 m. wide. Two squinches are to be seen to the north-east and south-east of the dome chamber (Pl.13.3). They are distinguished by low pointed arches and are adorned with six narrow rectangular blind arches (Pl.13.4). Three further narrow rectangular opening, of which the middle one is higher and wider than the others, are placed above the north and south doorway to the dome chamber (Pl.13.5).

A stairway is to be found at the north-west of the building; this leads directly to the roof. There is a narrow way (*mardgard*), which is 84 cm. wide, on the roof around the remains of the transition zoon of the dome. This suggests strongly that the dome was of a double-shell type.

Apart from the *īwāns* and the dome chamber, various other spatial units are to be seen in the building. The two biggest rooms are placed on the north-west and north-east of the building. Two middle-sized rooms are on the south-west and south –east, flanking the south *īwān*. A further room is set beside them on each side. Four narrow oblong rooms, 2.42 m. wide, are placed at the each corner of the building. The staircase to the north-west is inside one of them and it seems that the others acted as service spaces.

The recent earthquake in the Bam area (1382/2003) revealed that an extensive net of *qanāts* (underground streams) once operated in this area.<sup>1</sup> According to the local people, it was covered by date orchards in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Taken together this suggests, that this building was originally constructed as a *kūshk* (pavilion), by order of a local ruler as a palace, and that it was probably once set in a garden. According to historical texts, Ghuzz invaded to the Bam area in the late years of the 6<sup>th</sup>/12<sup>th</sup>

century.<sup>2</sup> It is likely that deterioration of this area started with this invasion, when the building was abandoned.

The building is entirely made of mud bricks, which measure 34 x 34 x 7 cm., 33 x 33 x 7 cm. and 28 x 28 x 8 cm. The walls of the building are set on rubble masonry, of which a section which about 25-27 cm. high can be seen beneath the wall of the building. Inside and outside, of the building is plain and there is no decoration.

The remains of barrel vaults are to be seen in the large room on the north-west, the medium-sized room on the south-east side and the narrow oblong room on the south-east side (Pl.13.6). This suggests that the other parts, except the domed chamber, were covered by barrel roofs.

In comparison with the other monuments in the Bam area it was only lightly damaged by the recent earthquake, but it is in poor condition and needs restoration.

### **Decoration**

Three narrow rectangular panels form are the only decoration in the building (Pl.13.6). The closest parallel for this feature is to be seen in *Qal'a Dukhtar* (girl's fortification), which is located to the north-west of the Kūshk-i Raḥīmābād. This building perches on a hill and has three levels (storeys). The characteristics of this monument such as elliptical arches, recessed squinches, outset entrance, several bastions and large size of mud brick all imply that it was built in the Sasanian period. This structure is in poor condition and no investigation of it has been published.

The blind arcade is also visible in a massive mud brick wall called the Masjid-i Haḍrat-i Rasūl at Bam, which has been attributed by Schroeder to the 1<sup>st</sup>/7<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>3</sup>

## Inscription

There is no trace of any inscription in the building.

## Material

Mud brick 33 x 33 x 7 cm., 34 x 34 x 7 cm. and 28 x 28 x 8 cm. laid in clay mortar.

## Dating

All the geographic sources, such as Ibn Khurdādbih, *al-Masalak wa'l-Mamalak* (3<sup>rd</sup>/9<sup>th</sup> century)<sup>4</sup>, anonymous *Ḥudud al-Ālam* (372/982-3)<sup>5</sup>, Iṣṭakhrī, *Masalik va Mamalik* (346/957-8)<sup>6</sup> and Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-Taqāsīm* (3<sup>rd</sup>/9<sup>th</sup> century)<sup>7</sup> mention the name of Bam in the early Islamic centuries as developed and prosperous area.<sup>8</sup> Other existing monuments, such as the forts at Darzīn (probably late 2<sup>nd</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> century)<sup>9</sup> show that the appearance of such a huge building as a *kushk* in the Bam district is plausible.

The closest parallel to this building is the central pavilion in Lashkar-i Bāzār in Afghanistan,<sup>10</sup> which was discovered in the 1960s and has been attributed to the Ghaznawid period (4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> century). This monument measures about 30 x 30 m and is of mud brick. Another parallel is the pavilion at Kurtly<sup>11</sup> in the Marv area which has been attributed to the 4<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> century. Both of these parallels have a cruciform plan and have four *īwāns* that are orientated to the cardinal points.

The size of the mud bricks in this area is the same as that of the mud bricks in the upper part of the Arg-i Bam (Bam citadel) and the northern wall of its fortifications. This size of mud brick is also found in such early Islamic monuments as the Friday Mosque at Fahraj (3<sup>rd</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> century).

All this combines to suggest a date in the 4<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> century for the *Kūshk*-i Rahīmābād.

## Discussion

In comparison with other types of buildings such as mosques and mausoleums, few palaces and *kūshks* survive from the early Islamic period in Iran. The earliest one, which is described in historical sources,<sup>12</sup> is the Dār al-‘Imāra of Abū Muslim at Marv (130/747). This building had a central domed chamber, which had four doors, each leading to an *īwān*. This outward-looking monument with its inviting *īwāns* along the cardinal points is the prototypical cruciform plan type in the Iranian world.

The *kūsh* at Raḥīmābād is important from on three architectural counts. Firstly, one can claim that it is the earliest surviving example of this type of building that has been identified in present-day Iran from the early Islamic period. Secondly, its double-shell dome shows that the use of this type of dome was known in this area in the 4<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> century. Thirdly, its squinch decorations show the continuous use of Sasanian decorative elements in the Iranian architecture in the early Islamic period.

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<sup>1</sup> According to an unpublished geological survey of the Bam area, after the recent earthquake that was presented at the international workshop on the reconstruction of the Arg-i Bam (Bam, 1383/2004).

<sup>2</sup> Vazīrī, *Tārīkh-i Kirman*, pp. 128-29 and also see Abuhāmad Kirmāni, *Saljuqīān*, pp.253-55.

<sup>3</sup> Schroeder, *SPA* III, p.930.

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<sup>4</sup> Ibn Khurdādbih, *al-Masalik wa' l-Mamalik*, pp.38 and 40.

<sup>5</sup> Ḥudud al-‘Ālam, p.128.

<sup>6</sup> Iṣṭakhrī , *Masalik va Mamalik* , p.143.

<sup>7</sup> Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al- Taqasīm*, p.408-9.

<sup>8</sup> Le Strange, *Lands*, p.312.

<sup>9</sup> Shokoohy, “Monuments”, *JRAS* (1980), pp.3-20.

<sup>10</sup> Schlumberger, *Lashkari Bazar* III, pp.81-4 and figs. 31 a,b.

<sup>11</sup> Herrmann, *Monuments*, p.121.

<sup>12</sup> Iṣṭakhrī, p.206 , Mustawfī, *Nizhat al-Qulūb*, p.221 and also see Creswell and Allan, *A short Account*, pp.230-31.

## Mosque at Bishāpūr

### **Location**

Bishāpūr area, on the road from Shiraz to Kāzirūn, Fars province.

### **Description**

The remains of the ancient city of Bishāpūr (Shāpūr) are located off the south side of the Shāpur River, 20 km. to the north of the city of Kāzirūn. This city was constructed by order of Shāpūr I, ruler of the Sasanian empire in the later third century, as his capital.

The first study on this site was published by David Talbot Rice in 1935.<sup>1</sup> Ghirshman carried out further work on this site (1938-42) and his report was published in two volumes in 1971.<sup>2</sup> He mentions substantial remains of early medieval Islamic buildings on the site.<sup>3</sup> A further archaeological study was carried out under the supervision of Sarfarāz (1347-53/1968-73) on this site.<sup>4</sup> According his report the remnants of a settlement dating from the 2<sup>nd</sup> -5<sup>th</sup> /8<sup>th</sup> -11<sup>th</sup> century are recognisable and

the remains of a building which originally had a *riwāq* around its central courtyard were found in 1350/1970-71.<sup>5</sup> He claims that this building was a *madrasa*;<sup>6</sup> however, there is no strong evidence for this.

In the course of recent excavation (1376-80/1997-2001) by the ICHO, the remains of a mosque were found at the west end of Bishāpūr. This building thanks to its high wall is locally known as the *zindān* (literally means prison).<sup>7</sup> Talbot Rice mentions it as a late Sasanian or an early Islamic palace<sup>8</sup> and Ghirshman attributes this structure to the Umayyad period.<sup>9</sup>

The recent study by the ICHO (1375-1380/1995-2001) has shown definitively that this building was originally a mosque (Fig 14.1). Considering the large size of this structure it is also likely that it was a Friday mosque.

This building measures a gigantic 90 x 60 m. and is a fortified enclosure (Pl.14.1). A round tower was originally placed at each corner of the building and three semi-circular towers were set on each side (Pl.14.2). The original mosque was built in rubble masonry laid in plaster. These materials were probably provided by earlier Sasanian buildings in this site. There is a *qibla shabistān* to the south-west of the building, which is 11 bays wide and 6 bays deep. The middle bay (*qibla* aisle) is 10.89 m. wide and is very substantially wider than the others; it is about 30 m. deep. A further wide bay is set in the opposite side to the north-east; it measures 10.77 m. wide by 7.88 m. deep.

A *riwāq* (arcade) that is 2 bays deep surrounds the courtyard of the building. A *mihrāb* is placed in the *qibla* wall, at the end of the main aisle (Pl.14.3). This *mihrāb* is stepped four times, though irregularly, in ground plan; its widest part is about 2.70 m. wide and the narrowest section is 52 cm. wide and 75 cm. deep.

The remains of columns in the *qibla shabistān* show that they rested on a square base (Pl.14.4). These columns are 1.20 m. in diameter and their bases measures 1.20 x 1.20 m. or 1.30 x 1.30 m. and are on average 60 cm. high. The piers of both sides of the main aisle are different. These are rectangles with rounded terminations (Pl.14.5). These piers are 2.40 m. long and 1.20 m. or 1.30 m. wide. It seems that this pier was originally a column, which its form may have been changed for later extra masonry support. All the piers are built in cut stone laid in plaster.

The remains of a vault in baked bricks, measures 21 x 21 x 3 cm. and 21 x 21 x 4 cm. were found in the course of excavation in the north-west corner of the building. This suggests that the building was perhaps roofed in brick. The remains of the north wall of the building (Pl.14.6) show that it was built of rubble separated by horizontal tiers and is about 1.80 m. thick and 8 m. high. This tiered style of rubble construction is to be seen in other Sasanian buildings such as Ardishīr's palace at Fīrūzābād. According to the study by the ICHO many various sherds were found around the north tower of building, and these can be attributed to the 2<sup>nd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup>/ 8<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>10</sup>

Two doorways, each measuring 1.40 m. wide, were found on the north-east of the building.<sup>11</sup> The remains of a further doorway, which is 4.40 m. wide, were also found at the back of the north-east opening (probably an *īwān*) of the courtyard façade building.<sup>12</sup>

### **Decoration**

There was no trace of any decoration in the building.

### **Inscriptions**

There was no trace of any inscription in the building.

### **Material**

Cut stone and rubble masonry laid in plaster; baked brick (21x21x3-4 cm.).

### **Dating**

As mentioned above, Bishāpūr is originally a Sasanian site. According to Bilādhuṛī, (*Futūḥ al-Buldān*) this city was conquered by the Arabs in the year 26/646.<sup>13</sup> It is likely enough that the Muslims built a Friday Mosque in this area. The location of the mosque shows that it was built out of the enclosure wall of the royal city of Bishāpūr. According to the late Muḥammad Mihryār, the supervisor of the recent excavation in Bishāpūr, this mosque was built on the remains of a still earlier mosque, which has now vanished.<sup>14</sup>

The name of this city has mentioned in most historical and geographic sources from the early Islamic centuries. Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al- Taqāsīm* (4<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> century) has the best description. He mentions Bishāpūr (Shāpūr) as a prosperous town (*qasaba*). He says its "... buildings are built of rubble masonry and plaster. The Friday mosque is placed outside the city within a nice garden".<sup>15</sup>

According to *Firdaws al-Murshidiya fī Asrar-i al-Ṣamadīya* by Maḥmūd ‘Athmān (written in 728/1372), the life story of Abū Ishāq Kazirunī (352-426/963-1034), when Abū Ishāq was 17 years old (around 369/979), he visited the Friday Mosque of Shāpūr.<sup>16</sup>

The fortified enclosure wall is reminiscent of the two Friday Mosques at Samarra, Abū Dūlaf (3<sup>rd</sup>/9<sup>th</sup> century) and also the Friday Mosque of Kūfa (2<sup>nd</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> century). The general form of the ground plan of the building at Bishāpūr, especially

the *qibla* aisle (perhaps an *īwān*) is reminiscent of Tārī Khānā mosque (2<sup>nd</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> century). The two wide bays on the *qibla* axis and set opposite each other recall the Friday Mosque in Na'in (4<sup>th</sup> /10<sup>th</sup> century). All this combines to suggest a date no later than the 4<sup>th</sup> /10<sup>th</sup> century, and perhaps significantly earlier for this building.

## Discussion

The mosque in Bishāpūr is the only surviving fortified mosque in present-day Iran dating from the early Islamic centuries. The deep *īwān* in this building was probably imitated from the Sasanian buildings; here it marks the *qibla* side.

A *qibla shabistān* with a *riwāq* around a central courtyard and a fortified enclosing wall are the main characteristics of a mosque in the early Islamic centuries. The appearance of a broad and probably high aisle on the *qibla* axis (such as Tārī Khānā) and of a similar wide bay on the opposite side (like Na'in) is a new style of construction, which emphasises the *qibla* direction and also the *mihrāb* at the end of it. The mosque at Bishāpūr is an example of this type of construction and thus shows the gradual evolution of the hypostyle mosque in Iran.

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<sup>1</sup> Rice, "City", *AI* II (1935), pp. 174-88.

<sup>2</sup> See Ghirshman, *Bichapour* I, II.

<sup>3</sup> Ghirshman, *Bichapour* I, p.35.

<sup>4</sup> Mihryār, "Pīshīna Pazhūhishā", *DKMSI*, Vol. 2, p.13.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p.41.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> Mihryār, "Sīmā-yi Shahr-i Bīshāpur", *DKMSI*, Vol. 3 p.71.

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<sup>8</sup> Talbot Rice, p. 187.

<sup>9</sup> Ghirshman , *Bichapour I* p.35.

<sup>10</sup> Mihryār, “Sīmā-yi Shahr-i Bishāpūr ” p.78.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p.75.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> Bilādhurī, *Futūh al-Buldān* p.144.

<sup>14</sup> Personal communication.

<sup>15</sup> Muqqadasī, *Aḥsan al-Taqāsīm*, p.645.

<sup>16</sup> Maḥmūd ‘Uthmān, *Firdaws al-Murshidīya*, p.61.

## Friday mosque at Nīrīz

### Location

Nīrīz city, Fars province.

### Description

The old building known as the Friday mosque of Nīrīz is located in the central part of the city. Owing to several changes and restoration that has been carried out in this building over the centuries, the original details of its construction are unclear.

The building contains a fairly high and deep *qibla īwān*, which is flanked by two *shabistāns* (Fig.15.1). This *īwān* is 7.36 m. wide and is 18.12 m. deep. On the each south- east and north- west interior sides of this *īwān*, are placed five pointed-arched doorways set in rectangular frame. Above these frames on either side, another row of five frames enclosing blind arches can be seen (Pl.15.2). These arches are flat-topped segmental arches with bevelled sides that are placed within a rectangular outset frame. The interior of the *īwān* is coated with plaster. An arcade (*riwāq*) is situated on

the east and the west side of the courtyard (Pl.15.2). Each *shabistān* is three bays wide and five bays deep. The piers of the *shabistān* and their arches and vaults are of baked brick. The *riwāq* is two bays deep and five bays long. Another shallow *īwān* is placed opposite the main one, on the north-east side of the courtyard (Pl.15.3). The *īwān* is built of baked brick, but the lower part of its wall is built of rubble masonry at a height about 1.5 m. and wooden ties are visible inside it. Two blind pointed arches in a rectangular frame are placed on either sides of this *īwān*. Above these blind arches, on each side is placed a pointed arch frame, which an open rectangular can be seen within it.

The present entrance of the building is located at the northern corner of the mosque (Pl.15.4). Owing to the similar style of construction, it is likely that it was built contemporary with the north (shallow) *īwān*, probably in the Qajar times. The location of the original entrance of the building is not clear, but probably as in other early mosque, it was placed opposite the *qibla* *īwān*. On the east side of the mosque, but outside it, are located the remains of additional buildings. There can also be seen the ruins of an additional structure of mud brick at the back of the north-east *īwān*.

The *īwān* is at least twice as high as the *shabistāns*. At the end of the main *īwān*, in the *qibla* wall, is located a *mihrāb* in carved stucco. The arched niche of the *mihrāb* is 1.24 m. wide and is 2.17 m. high. To the north-west and the south-east sides of the *īwān*, five buttresses in baked brick can be seen. These buttresses were added later to consolidate the *īwān*. On both sides of the façade, the *īwān* is adorned by a composition of brick and tile, which is called *mua'qilī* in Persian. Similar decoration can also be seen in the spandrels of the arch of the *īwān*. On the both side of the *īwān* are placed three decorative, blind pointed arches. It is obvious that the decoration was added later.

A barrel vault with a pointed arch roofs the *īwān*. Both *shabistāns* are roofed by domical vaults, while the *riwāq* has a flat roof in wood, which is covered with some layers of adobe and *kahgil*.

On the north side of the mosque stands a minaret, which is about 13 m. high. (Fig.15.2). It is a cylindrical one and is built of baked bricks, measuring 24 x 24 x 4/5 cm. The base of minaret has a diameter of 1.44 m. and its wall is 91 cm. thick. Three horizontal rows of blind pointed arches each set in a rectangular frame are placed in the lower exterior of the minaret. Each row contains eight pointed arches that each arch is 75 cm. wide. The rest of the shaft of the minaret is covered with a brick pattern, which is divided by eight serrated horizontal brick bands. A decorative band with a pattern of intersecting blind arches in plaster is placed beneath the balcony of the minaret. The base of the minaret, which is built of rubble masonry, is about 5 m. high. There is no trace of an inscription on the minaret. The doorway of the minaret is placed at the ground level, beside the present entrance of the mosque. The lower shaft of the minaret is outset than the enclosure wall of the mosque and is not bonded in to that wall. This shows that this minaret was originally free-standing. It seems, however, that it was constructed contemporary with the northern *īwān* in the Qajar period.

### **Decoration**

The main decorative element of the mosque is its *mihrāb*, which is situated in the *qibla* wall of the southern *īwān*. This *mihrāb* is adorned with wonderful carved stucco (Pl.15.5) and several inscription bands. The decoration includes vegetal and knotted geometrical patterns. The variety of styles shows that parts of the *mihrāb*

were made at different times. It seems that the earlier part of *mihrāb* consists of a pointed arch niche within a rectangular frame. This niche is 1.43 m. wide and 2.25 m. high. The arch of the niche rests on the two identical decorative capitals, which themselves is placed on two decorative columns. The profile of the arch is semi-elliptical, a form of arch that was often used in the early Islamic architecture in Iran. A decorative niche of smaller size is to be found in the end wall of the large niche. The style of its decoration and also its inscription in *nasta'liq* suggests that it was built in the Qajar time. Above this niche is situated a projecting pattern, whose profile resembles a stylized bird (Pl.15.6). This kind of stucco is called *gachbury-yi tūrī* in Persian and deserves mention as perhaps the earliest surviving in this style. Such a relief pattern of plaster was once placed above the entrance of the Chihil Dukhtarān.<sup>1</sup> Above the *mihrāb* is placed a decorative eight-pointed star flanked by two decorative blind arches. This kind of decorations can be seen in the Qajar time.

### **Inscriptions**

There are several inscriptions, in Kufic, *naskhi* and *thulth* are to be found in the *mihrāb* of the mosque.<sup>2</sup> Two inscriptions are placed inside the niche of the *mihrāb*:

(A) on the right hand (Pl.15.7), a Kufic bands with six lines, (B) on the left hand, a historical Kufic band with six lines (C), a single band of elaborated Kufic in tympanum (Pl.15.8) of the niche of the *mihrāb*, (D) a religious inscription band of Kufic in the panel above the apex of the arch of the *mihrāb*, (E) a *ḥadīth* inscription band of *naskhi* in the outer arch of *mihrāb*, (F) a *ḥadīth* inscription of elaborated Kufic in the inner band of the *mihrāb*, (G) a decorative band in *naskhi* of smaller size in the middle band of the *mihrāb*, (H) the name of the Fourteen Pure Ones in *thulth* dated 960/ 1570-1 in the outer band of the *mihrāb*.

Three inscription bands about the restoration of the mosque are placed above the entrance of the building. One of them is dated 1300/1910 in Qajar time. The three inscriptions inside the niche of *mihrāb*, which are relevant to date of building, will be discussed.

**Text:**

فى سنة ثلث و ستين و ثلث ما ئه / فى سنة ستين و اربعمائه/ فى سنة  
ستين و خمسمائه مع السقف/ امرالموالى عماد الملك و الدوله/ و عزه نصره فى  
جمادى الثانيه ...

امرعمارهم جميع الجامع ترمم و اصلاح ... الصدر اسعيد و الشهيد  
المرحوم قياس الملك كريم الدين روزبه ابن محمد روح الله و وجه و عماره هذا  
المحراب و امرها الصدر على المطهر امير الحاج محمد...  
مظفر الدنيا و الدين الموء يد ينصرالله محمد بن ناصر الدين المويد  
ينصر الله محمد ابن مبارك ناصر الدين الموسس

**Translation:**

(A) The date of the first *mihrāb*, the year 363/973-4, and the second, in the year 460/1070-71, and the third, in the year 560/1170-71 with roof and the forth, ordered the chief (lord), the supporter of the world and the religion, may [God] glorify his victory in Jumada II...

(B) Constructed, repaired and amended the building, who has high honour. Prosperous man and martyr of the right way, the late Malik Karīm al-Dīn Rūzba the son of Muḥammad Rūḥallāh and took efforts and ordered the construction of the *miḥrāb*, the wise and well-intentioned, Amīr al-Hāj Muḥammad...

(C) The victorious of the world and religion, supporter, may God victor him Muḥammad b. Mubārak Nāṣir al-Dīn al- Mū'assas.

Several dates survive in the niche of the *miḥrāb*, and they show that the *miḥrāb* and probably the mosque itself were repaired and developed in different times.

The oldest date; 363/973-74 is concurrent to the time of Fanākhusrāw ('Aḍud al-Dawla), the Būyid governor in Fars.<sup>3</sup> According to the historical texts, Fanākhusrāw built several monuments in Fars province.<sup>4</sup> It seems that the *miḥrāb* was built at this time.

The second date, 460/1070-71, falls within the reign of Aḥmad Qāwurd ('Imād al-Dīn 'Imād wa'l-Dawla),<sup>5</sup> the Saljuq governor in Kirman and the third one, 560/1170-71, dates to the time of Tughril Shāh (Muhyī'l-Dunyā wa'l-Dīn),<sup>6</sup> another Saljuq ruler.

The style of epigraphy and decoration of the inscription in the inner band is very similar to the inscription in the tympanum of the niche of the *miḥrāb*, therefore it seems that they were contemporary. Similarly, the three inscription bands of the

*mihrāb*- the middle inscription band, the outer arch of it and the panel above the outer arch- are in the same style and it seems that they were written at the same time.

Godard mentions only the inscription that is placed on the right inside of the niche, and he claims that it was originally written in eight lines.<sup>7</sup> The words *duwum*, *sivum* and *chahārum* are Persian. Writing in Persian is scarce in the early Iranian monuments and it was not appeared in the Iranian world, earlier than 447-51/1055-60, in the tomb of Shāh Faḍl at Sifīd Buland.<sup>8</sup> In addition, the year of date in the end of the inscription is vanished and *Jamada* II remains. The style of epigraphy in this inscription is very similar to the other inscriptions in the 6<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup>/12<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> century. The name of ‘Amād al-Mulk may imply the ‘Amād al-Dīn Sa‘d b. Zangī who ruled in Shiraz in 591-623/1200-1223.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, it is more likely that the original *mihrāb* was built earlier and the inscription on the right hand of the *mihrāb* was re-written contemporary with its re-decoration in 591-623/1200-1223.

### **Material**

Baked brick 24 x 24 x 4/5 cm. in the main *īwān*.

### **Dating**

The name of Nīrīz is mentioned in such historical sources as *al-Masalik wa’l-Mamālik* (3<sup>rd</sup> /9<sup>th</sup>),<sup>10</sup> *Masalik va Mamalik* (4<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup>)<sup>11</sup> as a village and in *Aḥsan al-Taqāsīm* (4<sup>th</sup> /10<sup>th</sup> )<sup>12</sup> and *Fārs-nāma* (6<sup>th</sup>/12<sup>th</sup>)<sup>13</sup> as a town. The last two especially notice that existence of a *jāmi‘* in Nīrīz.

However, the earlier date 363/973-74, was written later in the *mihrāb* and it is possible it is not the exact date of construction the building, but one can consider that the original plan of the Friday mosque in Nīrīz was built in the 4<sup>th</sup>/ 10<sup>th</sup> century.

## Discussion

Godard claims that the *qibla īwān* was imitated from the Sasanian period and that this *īwān* was originally built as the mosque itself. He also, owing to the date of 363/973-74, mentions this building as another type of Iranian mosque, which appeared in the early Islamic period.<sup>14</sup>

The general plan of the *shabistān* of the mosque suggests a hypostyle type, but the presence of a deep *īwān* distinguishes it from the earlier mosques of Arab plan.<sup>15</sup> However, the equal intercolumniation on the north-east and the north-west parts of *īwān* implies that it is possible that the *shabistān* was originally entirely of hypostyle plan. The reconstructed plan of the *shabistān* shows a hypostyle plan with a wider aisle in the middle of it, such as those of Tārī khāna and the Friday mosque at Fahraj.

The type of construction seen in the *īwān*; the rectangular niches with blind arches, the size of the baked brick, and the five lateral wide arched opening on each side all combine to establish that this was an advanced form that did not appear earlier than the 6<sup>th</sup>/12<sup>th</sup> century. Considering the date 560/1170-1 given in the *mihrāb* of the mosque which includes a reference to the roof (*ma'al-saqf*), this *īwān* was added to the mosque at that time. The closest parallel for this style of construction is the *qibla īwān* of the Malik mosque in Kirmān which according to a recently discovered inscription was built in the time of Tūrān Shāh (476-489/1086-1099) and the *qibla īwān* of the Friday mosque of Gunābād (609/ 1219). The Gunābād *īwān* especially has measurement very close to that of the Nīrīz *īwān*; approximately 9 m. wide and 18 m. deep. Considering the date of 560/1170-1 given in the *mihrāb*, it is possible that this *īwān* was imitated from other mosques, such as the Masjid-i Malik at Kirman, and that it was added to the previously hypostyle plan of Friday mosque of Nīrīz in the 6<sup>th</sup>/12<sup>th</sup> century contemporary with the re-development of its *mihrāb*. Therefore, the Friday

mosque of Nīrīz cannot be mention as the first instance of a *qibla īwān*-mosque or single *īwān*-mosque in the 4<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> century.

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<sup>1</sup> Adle and Melikian- Chirvani, *Monuments, SII* (1972), 229-97. pl. XXIII.

<sup>2</sup> “Masjid-i Jāmi ‘ Nīrīz”, *Faṣlnāma-i Hunar* IV(1362/1982), pp.188-89. see also, Sajādī, *Sair Tahvvūl-i Mihrāb* ,pp.120-21

<sup>3</sup> Bosworth, *New Islamic*, p. 154.

<sup>4</sup> Busse, *CHI* IV, pp. 283-84.

<sup>5</sup> Bosworth, p.186.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> Godard, *Ael* I, p.172.

<sup>8</sup> Blair, *Monumental*, pp.128-29.

<sup>9</sup> Ibn al-Fawti, *Majm ‘a al-Ādāb* II, p.73.

<sup>10</sup> Ibn Khardābih, *al-Masālik va al-Mamālik*, p.36.

<sup>11</sup> Iṣṭakhrī, *Masalik wa’l -Mamalik*, p.101.

<sup>12</sup> Muqqadasī, *Aḥsan al- Taqāsīm*, p. 375.

<sup>13</sup> Ibn Balkhī, *Fārs-nāma*, p.128.

<sup>14</sup> Godard, pp.163-68.

<sup>15</sup> Such as Tārī khāna and the Friday mosque at Fahraj.

## The Friday Mosque at Simnan

### Location

Simnan city, Simnan Province.

### Description

The Friday mosque is located next to the traditional bazaar in the city centre of Simnan. The building of the first mosque on this site is attributed to the 1<sup>st</sup> / 7<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>1</sup> but there is no surviving element from its original structure. An archaeological investigation of this mosque, which was carried out by the Simnan office of the NOPAM in 1352-54/1974-76, did, however, unearth some evidence about the earlier mosque,<sup>2</sup> though this was not the hypothetical mosque from the 1<sup>st</sup>/7<sup>th</sup> century.

At present this mosque contains a dome chamber, a lofty *qibla īwān*, two *shabistāns* and a building around a central courtyard (Fig.16.1) This courtyard

measures 19.10x 20.15 m. The *īwān* is on the south-west side of the courtyard and is 10.48 m. wide, 3.95 m. deep and about 21 m. high. An inscription band in this *īwān* gives the date of its construction as 828/1424-25.

A dome chamber is placed behind this *īwān* (Fig.16.2). According to *Mir'āt al-Buldān*, a 19<sup>th</sup> century historic text, this dome chamber was built in the reign of Sultān Sanjar in the 6<sup>th</sup>/12<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>3</sup> It measures 10.25x9.78 m. at the ground level. This dome chamber has eleven openings in all—two in the *qibla* wall and three on each of the other sides (Pl.16.2).<sup>4</sup> This dome chamber is of baked brick and a herring-bone pattern in cut brick covers the inside of the dome. The dome is high and is of single-shell construction. It is placed on a transition zone, which contains four fairly wide blind squinches. Above the octagonal transition zone, the corners are bridged by eight multi-stepped arches, each recessed rectangular frame. The arches of the hexadecagon, herringbone patterns, trilobed decorative arches as in of the *mihṛāb* (see below) and the form of squinches of the dome can be seen in the Ribāṭ-i Sharaf Caravansarai. All this suggest that a Saljuq date (6<sup>th</sup> /12<sup>th</sup> century) is plausible.

A gap is to be seen at the north-western and south-eastern corners of the *qibla* *īwān*, from ground level to a height of 5 m., between the wall of the *īwān* and the north-eastern wall of the dome chamber.<sup>5</sup> This suggests that the *īwān* was corporate with the dome chamber at a later period.

A *shabistān*, which is five bays wide and five bays deep, is located on the north-east of the courtyard, opposite the *qibla* *īwān*. According to *Mir'āt al-Buldān*, this *shabistān* was built in the time of sultān Sanjar (6<sup>th</sup>/12<sup>th</sup> century),<sup>6</sup> but there is no physical evidence of this. The columns of this *shabistān* are built up of alternating horizontal and vertical courses and are roofed by domical vaults (Pl.16.3). Each column has a diameter of 1 m. and rests on a square base.

A second *shabistān* occupies the area to the south-east of the courtyard. This *shabistān* is nine bays wide and four bays deep, and is roofed by domical vaults (Pl.16.4). According to *Mir'at al-Buldan*, this *shabistān* was built in the reign of Arghun Shāh in the late 7<sup>th</sup>/13<sup>th</sup> century, and was repaired in Qajar times.<sup>7</sup> Most of the columns of this *shabistān* like those of the north-east *shabistān*, are built of alternating courses of horizontal and vertical baked bricks. This *shabistān* is roofed mostly by domical and also some quadripartite vaults (Pl.16.5).

A further *shabistān* of the same size is located directly beneath it in the basement. Nine steps lead from the courtyard into this *shabistān*. It contains fairly massive piers and it is roofed by quadripartite vaults.<sup>8</sup> The arch over each bay is low. This combination of piers and vaults can be seen in the Friday mosque in Abarkū.<sup>9</sup> The exact date of its construction is not certain.

An irregular building is to be found beyond the western corner of the courtyard. Owing to several changes and repairs, there is no physical evidence from its original construction. According to *Mir'āt al-Buldān*, this building was built by Khāja Kīqubād b. Malik Sharaf al-Dīn Simnānī.<sup>10</sup> This building is adjacent to the Bāzār-i 'Alā al-Dawla, and it is possible that it was originally added to the mosque in the 7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup>/13<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> centuries. The two bays flanking the *īwān* are two-storeyed. It is, therefore, likely that these arcades were built in the Timurid period. The closest parallels for this type of construction are the Masjid-i Mīr Chaqmāq in Yazd<sup>11</sup> and the Masjid-i Jāmi ' of Ghūrīān.<sup>12</sup>

The main entrance of the mosque is placed on its north- western side. Behind this entrance is a corridor, which has two recessed niches in its wall, opposite each other.<sup>13</sup> These niches were found in 1352-54/1974-76 in the course of restoration, beneath a layer of plaster.<sup>14</sup> The style of construction and the size of the bricks of these

niches remind the north-east *shabistān*. However, the height of this *shabistān* is lower than the corridor. It is likely that the entrance was built later, in the 7<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> / 13<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> century.

Another doorway to the bazaar is on the north-east of the mosque. A cylindrical minaret in baked brick, which is dated 422-25/1031-35 stands at north corner of the mosque,<sup>15</sup> adjacent to the north-east *shabistān* (Fig.16.3). This minaret is the earliest surviving part of the mosque. The minaret is incorporated into the walls of the mosque; and originally it was free-standing (Pl.16.6).

As mentioned earlier, an archaeological investigation of this mosque revealed the remains of earlier buildings, which have vanished (Fig.16.4). Unfortunately the record of this investigation is very short and it does not distinguish these findings chronologically. According to this investigation, the remains of a building, namely some piers and part of a wall in mud brick, were found beneath the courtyard and the dome chamber.<sup>16</sup> The original level of this building is 4.10 m. lower than the present level of the courtyard.<sup>17</sup> The piers measure 2.10 x 2.10 m. and the mud bricks measure 34 x 34x 8 cm.<sup>18</sup> The size of mud brick is similar to the size of the baked brick in the Tārī Khāna mosque at Damghan. This building diverts about 20 degree from the *qibla* direction. Such diversion can be seen in other mosques in this area in the early Islamic centuries, such as the Tārī Khāna mosque.<sup>19</sup> However, it is likely that this building was a pre-Islamic building, which was destroyed in the course of the development of the mosque in the 6<sup>th</sup>/12<sup>th</sup> century.

This archaeological investigation also uncovered the remains of several square piers in the north-east *shabistān*. These piers are of mud bricks, measuring 29 x 29 x 7 cm.<sup>20</sup> In addition, the remains of the springing of earlier arches can be seen in the walls projected at right angles to the back wall to the north-west of this *shabistān*. All

this shows that there was a building, whose original level was found to be 1.30 m. lower than the present level of the north-west *shabistān*. The remains of a building that resembled a water tank were found in the course of excavation beneath the courtyard.<sup>21</sup>

### **Decoration**

There is no trace of decoration of the earlier buildings.

### **Inscriptions**

There are some inscription bands, but there is no vestige of any the inscription from the earlier mosque. The earliest surviving band is an inscription in baked brick on the shaft of the minaret (Pl.16.7), which is datable c.422-25/1030-34.<sup>22</sup>

An inscription band runs around inside of the *īwān* at a height of 8 m. It contains a historical text that gives the name of patron the *īwān* as Kwaja Muḥammad Balīcha Simnānī the *vazir* of Shāhrukh and it is dated 828/1424-25.<sup>23</sup> This inscription is in *thulth* and is written in white on blue tiles. Beneath this band is placed a large pointed- arched opening. A Qur'ānic inscription band in plaster runs around it. This band is in *nast 'līq* and is dated 1278/1857.<sup>24</sup> A further band of *thulth* is set over the doorway of dome chamber (Pl.16. 8). This band is a part of an endowment text.<sup>25</sup>

Several large stone tablets – all dates from Safavid are to be seen inside of the *qibla īwān*.<sup>26</sup>

### **Material**

Mud brick measures 34 x 34 x 8 cm. and 29 x 29 x 7 cm. belongs to the earlier buildings.

Baked brick 23.5x 23.5 x 5 and 24 x 24 x 5 cm. in the north-east, south-west *shabistān* and the corridor of the main entrance.

Baked brick 20 x 20 x 3 cm. and 21 x 21 x 3 cm. in the south-east *shabistān* in the basement. Baked brick 23 x 23 x 4.5 cm. in the shaft of the minaret.

## **Dating**

The name of Simnan is mentioned in most of the geographical texts of the early Islamic period. Muqaddasī, in his *Aḥsan al- Taqāsīm* (4<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> century) says, “The Congregational (Friday) mosque is placed in the bazaar; water flows and its tanks in turn are filled”.<sup>27</sup>

The excavation by the NOPAM reveals the remains of a building on the north-west side of the mosque. The existing minaret is adjacent to this building, just as the minaret beside the Tārī Khāna mosque attests that there was an earlier mosque there. The order of the piers suggests that it was built according to a hypostyle plan. All this suggests that the earliest Friday mosque at Simnan to survive was probably built in the 4<sup>th</sup> /10<sup>th</sup> century.

## **Discussion**

Investigation of the physical remains of the Friday mosque at Simnan shows that there was a hypostyle mosque here in the 4<sup>th</sup>/ 10<sup>th</sup> century, though, its exact size is not clear. In the second stage, a minaret was built adjacent to it in the first quarter of the 5<sup>th</sup>/11<sup>th</sup> century. In the third phase it was developed toward the *qibla* side and a dome chamber being added in Saljuq times. The next step was to add the south-eastern *shabistān* and an irregular building to the west and north-west of the courtyard

were added to the mosque in the 8<sup>th</sup>/14<sup>th</sup> century. Finally, a lofty *īwān* was built in front of the dome chamber in Timurid times. All this suggests a powerful architectural continuity in the construction of this mosque.

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<sup>1</sup> I ‘timād al-Saltāna, *Mirāt al-Buldān* IV, p.2014.

<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately the report of this investigation is short and unpublished. The original copy of this report is available at the central archive of the ICHO in Tehran. Archive No. 12118018- 3015.

<sup>3</sup> I ‘timād al-Saltāna, p.2014.

<sup>4</sup> The closest parallel for this plan is the Friday mosque at Barsīyān. See Hillenbrand, *Islamic Architecture*, p.489, fig.2.242.

<sup>5</sup> The unpublished report by the NOPAM.

<sup>6</sup> I ‘timād al-Saltāna, p.2014.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> This kind of vault can easily provide a flat surface, which is suitable for constructing upstairs. See Pīrniyā, “Chifdhā va Ṭāqhā”, *Athar* 24 (1373/1994), p.83.

<sup>9</sup> *SPA* VIII, p.301.

<sup>10</sup> I ‘timād al-Saltāna, p.2014-15.

<sup>11</sup> Golombak and Wilber, *Timurid Architecture* II, pl.450.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, pl.150 and fig.72.

<sup>13</sup> Anisi, “Friday mosque”, *Iran* XLIV(2006), p.219 and fig.19.

<sup>14</sup> The unpublished report by the NOPAM.

<sup>15</sup> Adle, “Minaret”, *SI* IV (1975), p.177.

<sup>16</sup> The report by NOPAM.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> Godard, “Tarikhān”, *Gazette des Beaux Arts* XII (1934), p.226.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> Adle, p.177.

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<sup>23</sup> Haqīqat, *Tārīkh Qūms*, p.297.

<sup>24</sup> Anisi, p.221.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid*, p.222.

<sup>26</sup> Haqīqat, p.83.

<sup>27</sup> Al- Muqaddasī, *Ahsan al- Taqāsīm*, p.313.

## Ispī Masjid at Ṭālīsh

### Location

At a point 25 km along the road from Rizvānshahr to Ṭālīsh, Dīnāchāl area, to the north-west of Rasht, Gīlān Province.

### Description

The remains of a ruined building (Pl.17.1), which is locally known as Masjid-i Abdullāhī or *Ispī Mazgit*<sup>1</sup> are to be seen inside a woodland park<sup>2</sup> to the close to the Dīnāchāl river. In the Ṭālīshī dialect *ispī* means white and *mazgit* is the Ṭālīshī version of the ‘Arabic word *masjid* (mosque). Thus, this word literally means “white mosque”.

The building at present comprises two sides of a *riwāq* (arcade), which is one bay deep on the north and west side of the building. (Fig.17.1). the walls to the south and east have disappeared. Each side of the *riwāq* has three openings; all of them originally though these is no wall to the west of the southernmost piers on the west

side. The middle bay is 2.30 m. wide and each bay flanking it is 1.90 m. wide. The existing *riwāqs* are on average 3.37 m. deep. Each bay of *riwāq* in the courtyard façade has a four-centred pointed arch, which has a high stilt and an outset (Pl.17.2). This arch is set within a rectangular frame.

A doorway is set on the north side of the building and is 1.55 m. wide and 2.47 m. high (Pl.17.3). The remains of a wooden lintel are to be seen over it. This door itself is placed in a pointed arch frame, which is approximately 5 m. high. This arched frame is inside a projected frame that is about 8 m. high. The remains of a further smaller door are to be seen on the west side. It is possible that a further and similar doorway was once placed opposite on the east side. In comparison with earlier mosques such as the Tārī Khāna, Fahraj and Na'in, the height of the entrance is noticeable and it seems that it acted as a symbol of the mosque. It may be that the same was true of the west entrance, but this is now too damaged to allow any certainty on this point. The enclosing wall of the building is 1.51 m. thick.

An excavation, which was carried out by the ICHO in 1382/2003 shows that this building originally comprised a *riwāq* and a hypostyle space that was two bays deep to the south of courtyard (Figs.17.2 and 17.3). This courtyard is fairly square; it measures 9.50 x 10.5 m. Thus, this *riwāq* was three bays wide and one bay deep on all sides except the deeper *qibla* side.

The form of ground plan of the Ispī Masjid is similar to the Friday mosque at Fahraj. Given that the existing middle bay on each side of *riwāq*, the *riwāq* that survives is wider than those that flank (Pl.17.4). It is likely that identical form was once placed on the south and east side.

A barrel vault, with a central horizontal ridge supported by half two diagonal ribs, covers the arcade. A gently pitched tiled roof is set directly over this vault with

no intervening space. This roof is covered with roof tiles (*sufāl*), each of which measures on average 40 x 60 x 2 cm.<sup>3</sup> In contradistinction to other local building these tiles have been installed on the roof by lime mortar.

This mosque is oriented to the cardinal points and thus diverge significantly (23.51°) from the correct *qibla* direction.<sup>4</sup> This building is built of baked brick, measuring 23.5 x 23.5 x 6 cm. and 24 x 24 x 6 cm. The remains of revetment show that this building was coated with lime. The word *ispī* (white) in the name of the building refers to the colour of this coating.

Three courses of cobblestones are to be seen under the walls. It seems that the building has only a shallow foundation and that the walls seem to rest directly on the ground because that foundation is below ground level. The remnant of a water-well, which is 1.89 m. in diameter, is to be seen in the courtyard.

## **Decoration**

The dado of the back wall behind the *riwāq* of the building is decorated with floral patterns executed directly in lime plaster (Pl.17.5). This use of lime was perhaps due to the humid weather in this area; lime is more durable than stucco in these conditions. No parallel has yet been found either for the decorative use of lime or for the pattern itself. It is possible this pattern was inspired by local flowers. The dado is 1.35 m. high and it is likely that it originally ran around the enclosing wall of the mosque, inside the *riwāq*. This decoration is large in size and has been executed rather coarsely. The closest parallel is to be seen on the dado of the fore-hall of the Jausaq,

al-Khaqānī (221/836), in Samarra.<sup>5</sup> This style of decoration is known as the third style of Samarra.

A floral pattern in lime plaster adorns one spandrel of one each arch in the *riwāq* façade, but probably all the spandrels were originally decorated in this way. The pattern contains a bud with pendant lobes (Pl.17.6).

To use of lime plaster and native floral patterns shows that the builder was familiar with indigenous conditions.

### **Inscriptions**

The remains of a single line of an inscription band in Kufic is to be seen at a height of 3.30 m. on the inner side of the north enclosing wall of the building (Pl.17.7). This band contains Qur'ān (9:18, in part)<sup>6</sup> and is set inside a baked brick frame. The band is 47 cm. high. It seems that this band once ran around the whole building inside the *riwāq*. This Qur'ānic text can also be seen in the Friday mosque at Na'in. In this band the letters *alif* and *lam* have bevelled upper terminations. The letter *waw* has a concave serif as its termination. The letter *ya* has a high hump-backed profile and a lengthy horizontal reverse termination. The two letters *sin* and *shin* have pointed concave terminations.

The remains of a further similar inscription band are also to be seen on the façade of the *riwāq* in the courtyard (Pl.17.8). This inscription is badly damaged and illegible. In comparison to the early Iranian mosques such as Tārī Khāna, Fahraj and Na'in, the placing of an inscription band in the façade of the *riwāq* is exceptional. Both of these inscriptions in the White Mosque are of lime plaster.

The best-known early example of an inscription band on the courtyard façade of a mosque in Iran is to be seen in the Friday mosque of Zavāra (6<sup>th</sup>/12<sup>th</sup> century).<sup>7</sup> A further parallel is to be found on the courtyard façade of the Great Mosque of Sūs in Tunisia (236/850-1).<sup>8</sup>

**Text:**

Qur'ān 9:18 (in part).

**Translation:**

...and fears none but *Allāh*; so (as for) these, it may be that they are of the followers of the right course.

**Material**

Baked brick 23.5 x 23.5 x 6 cm. and 24 x 24 x 6 cm.

**Dating**

The Ispī Masjid is located to the west of Gīlān (Jīlān), in the Ṭālish area. Information on this area is very limited and the history of it is unclear. This area has historically been a part of Gīlān and its name seems not to have been mentioned in any of the Islamic geographical texts before Yāqūt.<sup>9</sup>

The information of the early Islamic architecture of Gīlān is very scant, for sources, and confined to literary there is no monument that survives from this period.

Owing to the humid and rainy climate of the Gīlān region, the standard type of building is focused on the exterior and has no central courtyard. In addition, to use rubble masonry laid in plaster mortar with limited use of timber is very common in Gīlān. Thus the construction of the Ispī Masjid in baked brick and its use of a central courtyard imply that these details could have been imitated from other areas.

As mentioned above, the closest parallel for this type of plan is the Friday mosque of Fahraj (3<sup>rd</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> century). The brick size of the building is close to the size of bricks in the tomb tower at Lājīm (c.400-25/c.1009-33) and in the Pīr-i ‘Alamdār (417-1026/27)<sup>10</sup>. In addition, a similar style of epigraphy is to be found in Bīsutūn (ca. 400/1010)<sup>11</sup> and Sarmaj (c. 400/ c.1010).<sup>12</sup>

All this combines to suggest that this building was built in the early years of the 5<sup>th</sup>/11<sup>th</sup> century.

## **Discussion**

The Ispī Masjid is important on several counts. It shows the remains of a monument from the early Islamic centuries built in the north-west of Iran close to the Caspian Sea, and hitherto almost unknown. It also implies the influence of the common style of construction in this period. The appearance of an inscription band and floral patterns on the courtyard façade of the mosque show a new style of exterior decoration in this period. In comparison with other earlier mosques, such as Tārī Khāna, Fahraj and Na’in, the lofty main entrance acts as a landmark and this becomes a principal element in identifying mosques in the following centuries.

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<sup>1</sup> Sutūda, *Az Āstārā* I, p. 70.

<sup>2</sup> This park is now named Dr. Duruskār.

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<sup>3</sup> Kishāvarz Khalīqī, “Ispī Mazgīt”, *Athar* 36-37 (1383/2004), p.308.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p.304.

<sup>5</sup> Creswell, *EMI* II, pl.53 c.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p.72.

<sup>7</sup> For this mosque see, Godard, *AeI* I, pp.296-305 and p.304, figs. 200,201.

<sup>8</sup> Creswell, pl. 60 e.

<sup>9</sup> Le Strange, *Lands*, p. 173.

<sup>10</sup> Adle and Melikian- Chirvani, “Monuments ”, *SI* 1 (1972), p.233.

<sup>11</sup> Blair, *Monumental Inscriptions* , p.69.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p.71.

## Tomb tower at Rādkān West

### **Location**

Near Rādkān<sup>1</sup> village, south of Kurdku City, in the province of Gulīstan.

### **Description**

A cylindrical tomb tower with a conical roof (Fig. 18.1) perched on a hillside in an isolated mountain valley, in the Alburz Mountains at the south-east corner of the Caspian Sea and. The monument overlooks the old route from Damghan to Gurgan.

The doorway, which is 1.29 m. wide and 2.05 m. high, is in a recessed rectangular brick frame. The arched doorway with a fragment of plaster inscription over it is on the south side and facing a valley (Pl.18.1). The circular interior wall of the tomb is blank and coated with plaster. The tomb floor is 1.25 m. higher than the surrounding level. The floor height could be due to a static or constructional reason; also it was presumably where the corpse was placed. This might be the transformation of the pre-Islamic burial tradition to protect the earth and its combination with Islamic tradition.

Inside there is no tombstone, nor stairs to the roof. The monument is completely built from baked brick of high quality. The exterior appearance of the monument is simple. Unplugged scaffold holes placed at regular distances are found on the wall. A rectangular window sits approximately 2 m. above the band inscription on the shaft in the east of the tower. It is about 1 m. high and 0.70 m. wide. This window, unlike that of Gunbad-i Qābūs is not on the roof. Vertically impressed joints are a notable feature of the on exterior of the building (Pl.18.2). This type of decoration is visible in other later monuments such as Lājīm, Risgit, Pīr-i ‘Almdār, Sangbast and Ribāṭ-i Sharaf. As at Gunbad-i Qābūs, the conical roof is technically the finest part of the monument. It is placed directly on the shaft and a small corbelled cornice supports it.

The roof comprises rhomboid baked bricks but they are smaller than the roof bricks of the Gunbad-i Qābūs.

### **Decoration**

A row of projecting brick niches whose profiles resemble stylised birds with an abstracted band of plaster flowers encircles the tomb beneath the roof and over the inscription band (Pl.18.3). Two narrow decorative brick bands with a counterchange wavy, looping design flank the inscription band.

In comparison with Gunbad-i Qābūs , the appearance of the decorative band over the inscription and also two narrow decorative bands are of a new style. In fact it is the starting of the decoration of tomb towers, which can be seen in different shapes and sizes on other tomb towers in the 5<sup>th</sup> /11<sup>th</sup> century.

### **Inscription**

(A) A plaster plaque of two lines within a decorative brick band was once placed over the entrance<sup>2</sup>, (B) a further plaster band with a single Arabic inscription in

interlaced Kufic, followed by a two-tiered band of Pahlavī within a decorative frame encircles the tower below the roof (Pl.18.4).

**Text:**

(A) بسم الله هذا قصر الامير السيد الخطير ابو جعفر محمد بن وندارين باوند  
مولى امير المومنين فى شهر ربيع الاخر سنة سبع و اربع مائه.

(B)

بسمله امر با بتداء بناء هذا المشهد فى ايام الحيوه الا سهبد ابو جعفر محمد ابن وندارين باوند  
مولى امير المومنين اكرمه الله بالغفران و الرضوان و الجنان فى سنة سبع و اربع مائه.

**Translation:<sup>3</sup>**

(A) In the name of God. This is the palace (*qaṣr*) of the Amīr, the important Lord, Abū Ja‘far Muḥammad b. Wandarīn Bāwand<sup>4</sup>, client of the Commander of the Faithful. [It was ordered] in the month of Rabi‘II of the year four hundred and seven [September 7-October 5, 1016].

(B) *Bismallāh*. The Ispahbad Abū Ja‘far Muḥammad b. Wandrīn Bāwand, client of the Commander of the Faithful, may God honour him with forgiveness and satisfaction and paradise, ordered the commencement of the construction of this martyrrium (*mashhad*) during the days of [his] life in four hundred and seven [10 June 1016-29 May 1017]. It was finished in the year four hundred and eleven of the *hijra* [27 April 1020-16 April 1021].

The Pahlavī text is a translation of Arabic and its date is given in the Yazdigird era, 633 years less than the Christian is. Herzfeld read the Pahlavī text as follows<sup>5</sup>: The ordered to build this dome (*gunbad*) in his own life time, the Ispahbad Abu Ja‘far Muḥammad-i Wandārin Bāwand, the client of the commander of the faithful, in the year 380(and) 3 (and) to 380(and) 7.

The Arabic text runs around the tomb and at the end, repeats the Pahlavī in two tiers but in small place rather than Arabic (Pl.18.5). Two six-pointed stars in brick separate them from each other. The Kufic letters are longer and more visible than the Pahlavī one. Both state that the patron was Abu Ja‘far Muḥammad ibn Wandrīn Bāwand and give the precise dates for the construction.

The use of Pahlavī shows the co-existence of the Islamic and the pre-Islamic culture and language, with dominance of Arabic as the official language. It is more likely claims that the situation of the society in this area at that time: the transition from pre-Islamic culture to Islamic culture was almost completed.

The tomb is referred to by different names in the inscriptions; the inscription below the roof calls it *mashhad*, the another one above the door calls it *qaṣr* and in the Pahlavī it is called *gunbad*. The term *mashhad* is the earliest surviving epigraphic use of this term<sup>6</sup> and has several meanings; it is possible that the special sense here is of a holy place. By using this word, the patron intended to make the monument holy and also to bring himself religious respect. In fact, erecting this building is not only a pious act but also is a commemoration action. The term *qaṣr* (palace) shows the honour and glory of the deceased. In addition, it probably legitimises the construction of this tomb tower.

Gunbad is a Persian term for a domed monument, which was known as a type of building in the pre-Islamic era. In addition, it especially implies a conical or pitched roof.

The Rādkān inscription marks a dramatic step forward in the development of interlaced Kufic.<sup>7</sup> The interlacing has been removed from the body of the letters and transferred to the upper zone where it is combined with other themes and devices. By removing the ornament to the upper zone, the basic letter shapes become simpler again, thereby making the script more legible and suitable for a historical text.<sup>8</sup>

This inscription was typical of the other contemporary developments in ornamental Kufic in other media such as pottery, coin, woodwork and metalwork.<sup>9</sup>

### **Material**

Baked brick 23 x 23 x 4/5 cm. on the shaft.

### **Dating**

According to the inscriptions the construction of the monument was begun in 407/1016-7 and was finished in 411/1021.

### **Discussion**

The tomb tower at Rādkān West is an imitation of the Gunbad-i Qābūs, however in a smaller size. The various names of the tomb were written at two separate levels; the symbolic and spiritual name placed under the roof and the physical and secular title was mentioned above the door. Nobody could read the cornice inscription above the roof from the ground level, but the other one is readable. The appearance of inscription over the doorway, established a new trend, which was continued in later tomb towers in Iran.

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- 1 The tomb tower, known as Rākān East, is located near Rādkān village, 84 km. west of Mashhad in Khurasan province
- 2 Rabino visited the tomb in 1910 and claimed that the previous Russian consul had destroyed the plaque. See Rabino, *Mazandaran and Astarābād*, p.59.
- 3 Blair, *Monumental*, p.85 and ill.48.
- 4 The Bāwandids were the longest-lived of the petty Caspian dynasties, they ruled for a period of six or seven centuries. They claimed descent from one Bāw and traced their genealogy back beyond this to the Sasanid emperor Kawadh. See Bosworth, *New Islami*, p.165.
- 5 Herzfeld, “Postsasanidische Inschriften”, *AMI IV* (1933), p.144.
- 6 Blair, *Monumental* , p. 86.
- 7 *Ibid.* 87.
- 8 *Ibid.*
- 9 Volov, “Plaited Kufic”, *AO VI* (1966), pp.107-133.

# 19

## Tomb tower at Lājīm

### **Location**

Lājīm village is in the Zīrāb area, to the north-east of Savadkū City, in the province of Mazandaran.

### **Description**

This tall, cylindrical, domed tomb tower (Pl.19.1) is known locally as the Imāmzāda ‘Abdallāh, is located in an isolated grove and the cemetery of the village is now placed beside it at the present. Andre Godard visited the monument in 1933. He states based on his observation that the tomb was located in a mountain stronghold and it is the important part of it. The stronghold had been built in the forest and far from the road. Hence, he concludes that the monument was the tomb of a local prince or governor who was waiting for a good time to come back to power.<sup>1</sup>

The inner diameter is 5.53 m. and the thickness of the wall is 1.5 m. (Fig.19.1). The entrance with seven steps in front of it, is to the south-east; the steps

were built later. The recessed doorway is 1.2 m. wide and 2.8 m. high. A plaster panel of hexagonal network, 1.2 m. wide and about 80 cm high placed over it (Pl.19.2).

The floor is some 1.5 m. higher than the ground level. The interior wall is covered with plaster. As at Gunbad-i Qābūs, a window, but square and smaller is set in the roof on the east side. As at Rādkān West, vertical impressed joints on the exterior wall are notable features. The dome is not conical and could rather be called a conico-spherical dome. It sits directly on the shaft and corbels support it. Its brick colour is somewhat darker than the bricks of the shaft and has probably been reconstructed or restored at some time.

### **Decoration**

The exterior surface of plain baked brick is adorned with two inscription bands below a row of blind outset arches with a curved back and outset short pillars, all directly under the roof (Pl.19.3).

A decorative square brick band in relief, with featuring adjoining panels each filled with a diagonal cross made up of five elements, is placed over the Pahlavī inscription. Also, a serrated brick band is set over the blind outset arches. The Kufic inscription is sandwiched between two narrow decorative bands: the upper band is a row of lozenge-shaped bricks and the lower is a double wave shape of brick within a bracket.

### **Inscription**

A cut brick Kufic inscription in high relief encircles the tomb below the upper band in Pahlavī script (Pl.19.4). They both sit on a plaster background and are separated by a narrow decorative brick band. The Pahlavī is higher and in smaller script than the Arabic text. Hence, it is harder to read and has slightly a symbolic

presence. The existence of the Pahlavī inscription above the Kufic one shows the pre-Islamic Iranian culture and language were current in this area at that time.

**Text:**

بسمله هذا قبر القبه الكيا الجليل ابى الفوارس شهريار مولى امير المومنين رحمه الله امر  
ببنا السنة الكريمة چهرا زاد بنت سلييا خورفى سنة ثلث عشر واربعمائة عمل الحسين بن  
على.

**Translation:**

*Bismallāh.* This dome (*qubba*) is the grave (*qabr*) (?) of the great prince (*kiyā*) Abi'l-Fawāris Shahryār b. al-‘Abbās b. Shahryār, Client of the Commander of the Faithful, may God have mercy on him. The noble lady Chihrāzād, daughter of Sh-l-y-x-v-r [?] ordered it built in four hundred and thirteen [?]. The work of al-Ḥusayn b. ‘Alī.<sup>2</sup>

The name of the deceased is Abu'l Fawāris Shahriyār b. ‘Abbās b. Shahriyār, Client of the Commander of the Faithful and the name of the patron (his mother) is Chihrāzād. The presence of the deceased's mother's name is remarkable since she is the first woman recorded in eastern Islamic epigraphy<sup>3</sup>. Also, the inscription mentions the artist's name.

Neither the name of the deceased nor that of the patron is mentioned in the sources, but his grandfather could be Shahriyār II b. Shirwān II, who ruled for thirty-seven years in Ṭabaristān.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, Shahriyār name and the titular were common in this family.

In contrast to the Gunbad-i Qābūs and the tomb tower at Radkan West, this tomb was not built in the lifetime of deceased. It seems he died young and that his mother ordered the tomb to be built in the memory of him.

The Pahlavī text and the Arabic text on Lājīm tower are not identical; the Pahlavī text contains more information. It gives the name of the patron's grandfather, the month of Sapandarmat and Farvardīn (the 12<sup>th</sup> and 1<sup>st</sup> month of the Persian year) and the year 313 in digits.<sup>5</sup> The recent reading of this inscription by ICHO in 1386/2007 gives the year 390 in digit.<sup>6</sup> This date is possibly in Bāwandid calendar and equals the year 391 in Yazgirdī and 413/1022. No artisan's name is given in Pahlavī. The Pahlavī text reads *this is the gumbadh*, the word used in the Pahlavī inscription at Rādkān West, and it usually refers to a domed tomb. Furthermore, the grammatical construction used on the Lājīm tower is also attested on the Pīr-i 'Alamdār in Damghan. The Lājīm inscription is the first documented example of the word *qubba*. This refers only to the form of the building as a domed structure and not to its function as a funerary monument.<sup>7</sup>

### **Material**

Baked brick 23 x 23 x 5 cm. on the shaft.

### **Dating**

According to Godard's reconstruction of the fragmentary Kufic inscription, the date of the building is 413/1022-23, but this date and the name of the artist were reconstructed in words by Godard based on fragmentary remains. He didn't publish details of the part of the band with the date; instead he gave in a drawing his interpretation of how it showed be reconstructed. As mentioned above the recent reading of Pahlavi inscription confirms the date of construction as 413/1022.

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<sup>1</sup> Godard, *AeI* I, 110.

<sup>2</sup> Blair, *Monumental*, p. 88.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p.89.

<sup>4</sup> Bosworth, *New Islamic*, p. 164.

<sup>5</sup> Herzfeld, “ Arabische Inschriften ”, *AMI* 8 (1936), p.78-81.

<sup>6</sup> The report of this reading has not been published yet.

<sup>7</sup> Blair, p. 88.

## Pīr-i ‘Alamdār at Damghan

### Location

Damghan city, Simnan Province.

### Description

A cylindrical domed tomb tower is located near the Friday mosque in the east of the city (Pl.20.1 and Fig. 20.1). Near the door, opposite the tomb is the remains of an inscription, which belongs to an 8<sup>th</sup>/14<sup>th</sup> century mosque.<sup>1</sup>

In contrast with earlier tomb towers, this monument has a decorative entrance (Pl.20.2). The door is on the south-west, towards the direction of *qibla*. It is 1.50 m. high and 80 cm. wide and is placed in an arched niche, which is 1.30 m. wide and 2.70 m. high.<sup>2</sup> Over the door is a band of inscription and above it at the height of 2.40 m. is a four- pointed arch. Two polygonal engaged columns flank the door. The diameter of each one is 30 cm. and they are 1.50 m. high. All of them are situated in an outset rectangular brick frame. That frame is 2.90 m. high and 2.02 m. wide.<sup>3</sup> There is a

square window above the rectangular frame on the shaft, measuring about 30 x 30 cm. and seems was added later.

There are some decorative brick bands and an inscription band runs around the tomb beneath the projecting cornice (Pl.20.3). The height of the tomb on the north side is taller than on the southwest and southeast.<sup>4</sup> The tomb's floor is at the same level as that ground on the north side and there are no steps in front of the door. The interior diameter of the tomb is 4.70 m. and the exterior diameter is 6.40 m.<sup>5</sup> Inside the building is no tombstone, nor any trace of a grave.

The building is constructed of baked brick. Such of the earlier tomb towers; vertically impressed joints are notable features on the exterior wall. The colour of the bricks shaft around the entrance door is brighter than that of the rest. This shows that they are replacement work.

Contrary to earlier tomb towers, the roof is not conical or conico-spherical; it is a low pointed dome with a low stilt. It is possible that the dome form relates to the climate condition.

### **Decoration**

The exterior decoration appears on two different surfaces: horizontal on the upper part of the shaft and vertical on the lower part. There are seven decorative brick bands, which encircle the tomb beneath the roof (Pl.20.4). They are of different types and sizes.

First come two compressed serrated designs in which the upper and lower points end in a three-pointed star, flanking a chain of S shape and its inverse, and sitting beside each other. A wide band with a geometric pattern is located over them. It consists of horizontal bricks in four tiers with star and square brick shapes filling in

the distances between them. A narrow decorative band of consecutive *S* shapes runs over it and below the inscription band. This band and another similar one, sandwich the inscription band. The second wide decorative band is placed over it, below another narrow band with a lozenge pattern. This band in three tiers supports the projecting serrated cornice.

In contrast to the upper decoration, the decoration of the oblong frame of the doorway is executed in plaster (Pl.20.5). Above the inscription band that is placed over the door entrance are some varied decorative elements. There is a network of eight-pointed stars over a narrow band of square bricks that are joined to each other from the corner. Over it sits a band with a chain of circular shapes, with another chain of semi-circular shapes superimposed. Upon it above the arch is a network of eight-pointed stars. On the arch, square and lozenge shapes are visible. Finally, another eight-pointed star network is repeated over the arch. An outset arch separates it from the niche arch.

In comparison with earlier tomb towers, the surface which leaves decoration has been increased. In fact it covers nearly a quarter of the tomb shaft. Moreover, the entrance doorway is adorned with decorative brick bands and also has two engaged columns. These columns are new decorative elements and appear on such later tomb tower as Chihil Dukhtarān in different shapes.

### **Inscription**

There are three inscriptions of three different styles and sizes in this monument (Pl.20.6): (A) an interlaced Kufic band between the bands of decoration around the tomb beneath the corbelled cornice. (B) one line of simple Kufic over the entrance

door. (C) a band of interlaced and plated Kufic around the interior of the tomb. It is Qur'ān 39:53-54.

**Text:**<sup>6</sup>

(A)

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم هذا القبة قصر الحاجب السعيد ابي جعفر محمد بن ابراهيم قدس  
الله روحه امر ببناءها ابنه بختيار عمل على بن احمد بن الحسين بن شاه البناء سنة سبعة  
عشر و اربع مائه.

(B)

بسم الله الملك

**Translation:**

(A) In the name of God, the merciful, the compassionate.  
This tomb (*qubba*) is the palace (*qaṣr*) of the fortune governor Abū Ja‘far Muḥammad b. Ibrahīm, may God sanctify his spirit. His son Bakhtiyār ordered its construction. The work of ‘Alī b. al-Ḥusayn b. Shāh, the builder, son of the builder [?], in the year four hundred and seventeen [22 February 1016-10 February 1017].<sup>7</sup>

(B) *Bismallāh*. Dominion belongs to God.

(C) *Bismallāh*. Say “O my people who have been prodigal against yourselves, do not despair of God’s mercy; surely he is the All-forgiving, the All-compassionate.”<sup>8</sup>

The first inscription is a 75-cm foundation text and is executed in cut bricks set in relief against a plaster ground.<sup>9</sup> According to the inscription, the deceased is one Abū Ja‘far Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm, and he was dead when the inscription was composed.<sup>10</sup> At the time that the tomb was built, Damghan was under the control of the Ziyārid prince Falak al-Ma‘ālī Manūchihr, and one can assume that Abū Ja‘far Muḥammad was his governor.<sup>11</sup> The patron of the tomb is Abū Ja‘far Muḥammad’s son Bakhtiyār, who gave the order to build two minarets, one beside the Tārī Khāna mosque and the other in the Maṣjid-i Jāmi‘ at Simnan. The term *qubba*, as at the tomb tower at Lājīm was used of this domed structure.<sup>12</sup> Also, this tomb was called *qaṣr* (palace), a usage which one can trace back to the Gunbad-i Qābūs, erected for another Ziyārid ruler. The inscription also gives the builder name. Epigraphically, this inscription, thanks to its elongated proportions and curving letters, is more graceful than Rādkān West and Lājīm.

The second inscription is a carved stucco band in relief; it contains a pious phrase in a standard angular script. This is the first single inscription band of pious context to survive among Iranian tomb towers. It stresses on the character of the building as a religious place. The text has a strong and frank meaning, hence is written in a simple and clear fashion.

Finally, a 80-cm high blue painted plaster band is placed inside, at the height of 3.5 m. around the tomb, over the door level. It contains Qur’ān 39:54/53. It is an appropriate funerary text, which was used on other tomb towers such as the Gunbad-i

Surkh in Marāgha.<sup>13</sup> This inscription is in an elaborated interlaced Kufic with plaiting in the body of the letters, in rising tails and in stems. Blair claims that one detail, the unusually tall *fa/qaf* formed in both the relief brick and the painted inscription, shows that the painted inscription is contemporary with the building.<sup>14</sup>

The interior inscription band of Pīr-i ‘Alamdār is the first Qur’ānic text inside a tomb tower.<sup>15</sup> Also, after the inscriptions at the Na’in, it is the earliest surviving painted plaster inscription in Iran, though painted Kufic inscriptions remained popular in central Iran for centuries and flourished there until the Ilkhanids in the 8<sup>th</sup>/14<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>16</sup>

### **Material**

Baked brick 24 x 24 x 5 cm.

### **Dating**

According to the inscription the date of the tomb is 417/1026-27.

### **Discussion**

In general, this monument is similar to earlier, such as tomb tower. But its characteristics, such as the rich and varied decoration, the new type of the dome, the use of different types of inscription in three materials and scripts distinguishes it from the other contemporary tomb towers. In fact it establishes a new style and its characteristics are continued in the later tomb towers and mausoleums such as Chihil Dukhtarān and Davāzdah Imām.

Considering that most of the Damghan population was Shī‘ite, this tomb is probably influenced by Shī‘ite belief. Pīr-i ‘Alamdār, however, is a monumental building, but the Qur’ānic text shows the significance of the interior space of the

mausoleum as a holy and respectful place. The orientation of the entrance and the placing of the pious band over the door also stress this aspect. Hence, it could be considered as an early example of the Shī‘ite commemorative building in this area at that time.

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<sup>1</sup> Wilber, *Architecture*, pp. 149-50

<sup>2</sup> Adle and Melikian-Chirvani, “Monuments”, *SI I* (1972), p.234.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p.233.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* p.232-3.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 251

<sup>7</sup> Blair, *Monumental*, p.93.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p.94 .

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p.95.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, ill.58

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

## Davāzdah Imām at Yazd

### Location

Fahādān area, Yazd city.

### Description

A square domed building (Fig.21.1), which is locally known as the Davāzdah Imām (Twelve Imāms) is located in Fahādān - one of the oldest areas in Yazd. Placing the Gunbad-i ʿDiya’iya and Ḥusayniyya Fahādān, adjacent to this monument shows its significance position in this district.

The doorway is placed within a recessed arched niche on the north side of the building (Pl.21.1). The exterior face of the building on each side is fairly symmetrical. The repetition of facades from one side to the next creates a sense of unity. Narrow arched niches within a rectangular frame, with another fairly similar one above it, flank the central portion of each face of the building. This same form of arched niche, but in a smaller size, is repeated higher up on each side of the octagonal drum carrying

the dome. Apart from its decorative and structural role, this niche can be seen as a unifying element. The south-east corner of the building is different from the other corners (Pl.21.2). It is possible that this form was repeated at the other corners but they were not reconstructed in that form in the course of restoration. This form is reminiscent of the columns at the exterior corners of the Sāmānid mausoleum at Bukhārā. It is a corner cannular niche with a corbelled form above it. This same slender, attenuated form can be seen as a decorative element on both sides of the recessed centrepiece on each side of the monument. The projection, which marks the *mihrāb* on the exterior, is a modern restoration; two recessed niches on the south side flank it. A plain recessed rectangular, fairly large, oblong panel is placed above the doorway (Fig.21.2). It is possible that there was originally some decoration or an inscription band within it. It also shows that this is the main doorway.

The monument is skilfully built of baked brick. The profile of the dome is similar to that of the Pīr-i ‘Alamdār tomb tower; a low pointed dome with a low stilt, but in this case constructed over a bigger space.

Pope’s photograph<sup>1</sup> shows that the exterior of building was ruined in the 1930s; subsequently it was restored. This photo also shows the original dome of the building. This dome was covered with a new layer of baked brick in the course of restoration and seems somewhat deformed. The photography by Pope shows the remains of an arch on the west side. This suggests that a secondary structure was once annexed to the building.

The interior of the building has each side measuring 8.27 m. long while the exterior sides are on average 11 m. long (Pl.21.3). The thickness of the wall depends on its structural role, which varies along the each side of the monument. It is about 1.5 m. thick at the corners, which carry the weight of the dome. Internally, like the

exterior, on each side, one niche and another one above it are placed in each corner. They are on average 75 cm. wide. These arched niches have both a structural and a decorative role. On the middle of the west and east sides of the interior they are placed next to wide niches. The thickness of the wall is thin than other parts of the building. There is a tiny continuous gap around the inside of the arch on both the west and the east sides, between the arch proper and the wall, which fills the arch. This gap shows that the arch was blocked at some later time. It is entirely possible that originally there were two open doorways opposite each other. One window is placed at a height of approximately 5.5 m. on each side.

A *mihrāb* is placed opposite the doorway. It is 1.68 m. wide and 1.92 m. deep. The arched bay of the *mihrāb* is placed within another pointed arched frame. This arch is a low pointed arch with a high stilt. This form of arch can be seen crowing the niches on the exterior of the building and also in other contemporary monuments such as the arch over the *mihrāb* of the Friday mosque in Shiraz, above the entrances of the tomb tower at Lājīm and the Jūrjūr mosque in Isfahān.

A white marble tombstone was once placed in the wall in the centre of the back of the *mihrāb*. This stone belonged to the 9<sup>th</sup>/15<sup>th</sup> century and was installed in its present position at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>2</sup> Apparently, this stone replaced another one which was formed placed in the *mihrāb*.<sup>3</sup> On the inner border of this tombstone are written the names of the Fourteen Pure Ones (*chahārdah ma‘šūm*).<sup>4</sup> The dado of the *mihrāb* is covered with coloured tiles. They are very similar to the tiles around the Friday mosque at Yazd (the 8<sup>th</sup>/14<sup>th</sup> century) and the Amīr Chaqmāq mosque (the 9<sup>th</sup>/15<sup>th</sup> century) at Yazd. The extraordinary depth of the *mihrāb* and also its projection into the exterior of the building are noteworthy. Its projecting form is also out of proportion with the exterior of the building. It simply does not fit into that

elevation. Earlier *mihrābs* show a recessed feature within a wall without external projection. It is possible the original *mihrāb* was shallow and it was deepened at the same time as the tiles were installed.

The dome of the building is placed on a zone of blind pointed arches. There are four remarkable squinches, which each contain a trilobed arch within another four-pointed arch spanning the corners (Pl.21.4).<sup>5</sup> In the Davāzdah Imām it seems that the builder first erected a broad arch above each corner, and then built the *patkāna* within it. Two niches flank the corner itself next to the outer quarter-dome shape and with the further arch above- namely the uppermost lobe of the tri-lobed arch; they play both a decorative and a structural role. The area behind the uppermost lobe of the trilobed squinch appears externally as a quarter-dome on the roof in the lower part of the two-part octagonal drum of the dome (Pl.21.5). Returning to the squinch, the two lowest niches flanking the corner itself also have a structural role and all together, these elements transfer the dome load throughout the piers behind and below the squinch. Each squinch is about 3 m high and they carry a further octagonal band supporting the dome.

The floor of the building is about 38 cm. higher than the ground level. This implies that there is possibly another space beneath the building. Pīrniyā claims that there is a crypt and its entrance is behind the *mihrāb* outside the building, but it was blocked at an earlier date and there is no access to it now.<sup>6</sup> There is no trace of a tomb inside the building. The inside revetment of the building is of plaster and a panel of coloured stucco is placed above the *mihrāb*.

## **Decoration**

Apart from the painted inscriptions inside the building, there are three pairs of ornamented spandrels on the interior west, east and north sides of the building. Each contains a series of scrolling forms whose tendrils fill the space available. They are executed in white against a blue ground. A panel of curvilinear plaster in relief fills the tympanum above the *mihrāb* (Pl.21.6). It is laterally symmetrical and contains a painted scroll arabesque in Samarra II style. It was executed on a large scale and its aim was possibly to emphasise the *mihrāb* as the most important element inside the building. The leaves are in white against a red-brown ground. Two fragmentary panels of stucco (Pl.21.7) were discovered recently beneath the plaster revetment of the wall on the dado of the east side of the building during the restoration in 1379/2001. They display floral patterns in adjoining hexagons adorned with a rectangular border in a style reminiscent of Samarra II. The motif inside the hexagon is a scrolling tendril producing blooms and differs from the decoration of the flanking spindle shape. A similar type of stucco can be seen in the dado of the Pīr-i Ḥamza Sabz Pūsh mausoleum at Abarkū.

The dome once had a sunburst pattern with overlapping finger- like rays in blue, red, green and white.<sup>10</sup> Fragmentary remains of this pattern can be seen beneath the dome.

## **Inscription**

There are four inscriptions painted on the interior of the domed square building: (A) a one-line band (Pl.21.8) around the base of dome in elaborate Kufic whose shafts each display a central pair of interlaced motif (B) a one-line floriated

Kufic band on the north spandrels. (C) a one-line floriated Kufic inscription band (Pl.21.9) on the pair east of spandrels. (D) a floriated Kufic inscription band in three tiers on the west pair of spandrel (Pl.21.10) .

**Text:**<sup>7</sup>

(A): *Qur'ān* 2:256/257.

(B): *Qur'ān* 2:158/163.

(C): *Qur'ān* 40:67/65.

(D):

مما امر ببناء هذه القبه المباركه..... ابو النجم و الا سفهسلار الجليل المظفر كذا ابو يعقوب بدر و اسحاق ابنا ينال موليا امير المومنين ابتغا مرضاة الله و طلبا ثوا به فى شهر رمضان سنة تسع و عشرين واربعمائه.

**Translation :**

(A) God is no god but He, the Living the Everlasting. Slumber seizes Him not, neither sleep; to Him belongs all that is in the heavens and the earth. Who is there that shall intercede with Him save by His leave? He knows what lies before them and what is after them, and they comprehend not anything of His knowledge save such as He wills. His Throne comprises the heavens and earth; the preserving of

- them oppresses Him not: He is the All-high, the All-glorious.
- (B) Your God is one God: there is no god but He, the All-merciful, the All-compassionate.
- (C) He is the living One, there is no god but He, [So call upon Him, making your religion His sincerely].
- (D) The exalted amīr Abūl Najm and the exalted commander al-Muẓaffar [sic] Abū Ya‘qūb, Badr and Ishāq, sons of Īnal and clients of the Commander of the Faithful, striving for God’s satisfaction and seeking his reward, ordered the construction of this dome in the month of Ramadan of the year four hundred and twenty-nine [ June 7- July 8, 1038].

All the inscriptions are painted on stucco but in different Kufic inscription styles. In the paired spandrels of the north and east arches, the Qur’ānic bands are inscribed in white on a blue ground with arabesques and leaves. Both bands are placed against a background of leaves. Over the bands on the spandrels is placed a shallow illusionistically three-dimensional saw tooth frieze in blue and green. The foundation inscription on the west spandrel of the middle wall and the band around the base of the dome are painted in much-faded blue against the golden stucco ground. In comparison to the north and east spandrels, in which the inscription is of one line only, the

placing of the foundation inscription in three tiers is unusual. In comparison with earlier tomb towers, the foundation text should have been placed beneath the dome or the transition zone. It is likely that there was another band and that this surviving text replaced it or was added later. The foundation inscription on the west spandrel, to render the text legible, uses a simple Kufic with rising tails on *ra*, *fa/qaf*, *wa* and *nun*. The line of these rising tails is repeated in the curved haste of *ha*, *dal* and *ta*.<sup>8</sup> The use of the different-coloured background also helps with legibility. Such graceful curves counteract the stiffness and angularity of Kufic and give a sense of movement and rhythm to the script.<sup>9</sup> In contrast, the Qur'ānic band around the base of the dome is rendered in a stiffer Kufic in which paired stems with elaborate floral endings march in a stately circle.<sup>10</sup> This type of Kufic inscription, first documented here, will remain standard in Yazd and central Iran for centuries to come.<sup>11</sup>

The foundation inscription says that two brothers, Abūl-Najm Badr, and Muẓaffar Abū Ya'qūb Ishāq, ordered the construction of the building. According to the historical sources, these two were army officers and served the Kākūyids. Their name was also mentioned on the Khaṭīr gate at Yazd (432/1041-2).<sup>12</sup> The function of the building is not mentioned in the inscription. Blair says that the foundation inscription on the Davāzdah Imām mausoleum, owing to the mention of benediction for recompense or reward differs from the foundation inscriptions on the other earlier surviving mausolea (Gunbad-i Qābūs, Rādkān-i West, Lājīm and Pīr-i 'Alamdār).<sup>13</sup> She argues that the calling forth of a on the patrons shows that the commissioning of the building was a pious act and, considering the

Qur'ānic text on the north interior side of the building, that it was built as a commemorative monument to the Twelve Shī'ite Imāms.<sup>14</sup>

The Davāzdah Imām mausoleum was built under the Shī'ite Kākawayhids at a time when the fashion for commemorative buildings was being developed. The freestanding nature of the building with its four facades suggests that it was intended as a commemorative building. The building is called *qubba* in the inscription. This term was already used on the tomb tower at Lājīm and the Pīr-i 'Alamdār and refers to the form of construction. But this term does not occur earlier in monumental epigraphy for any other specific function and it is likely that this term was simply an acceptable one for a domed mausoleum. If one considers earlier inscriptions like wooden plaques in a tomb at Kūfa,<sup>15</sup> and on two bridges near Khurramābād,<sup>16</sup> the mention of the function of the building was unusual in monumental epigraphy. Apart from mosques, the Qur'ānic texts had been used in earlier mausolea such as the Shīr Kabīr at Dihistān in southern Turkmenistan (c.350-75/c.960-85)<sup>17</sup> and Pīr-i 'Alamdār (417/1026-7).<sup>18</sup> The remarkable decoration and inscriptions at the Davāzdah Imām tomb and the presence of a *mihrāb*, emphasise the interior of the monument as a religious space. The Qur'ānic text inside the building and on the stucco-work, and the placing of the doorway on the *qibla* axis, shows its similarities to Pīr-i 'Alamdār.

According to Shī'ite belief, the Twelfth Shī'ite Imām is alive and to construct a commemorative building to all twelve of the Imāms is irrational. It is said that the name of the building refers to the names of Twelve Imām, which are written in the outer border of the later tombstone set in the *mihrāb*

within the building. As mentioned, the name of the Fourteen Pure One occurs on in the tombstone and thus this is not acceptable evidence for the purpose of the tomb.

According to historical sources,<sup>19</sup> one of the descendants of the sixth Imām, who escaped from Baghdad in the Mutawakkil the ‘Abbasid Caliph times, en route to Khurasan from Baghdad, he settled in an area beside Fahādān at Yazd as an ironmonger. The governor of Yazd had a vision of him in a dream, summoned him, and honoured him with his daughter in marriage and the two villages of Fahraj and Tarzjān as income. When the Imāmzada died in 424/1037, his grave in the Muṣallā-yi ‘Atīq area became a place of pilgrimage. His grave is still the most important Shī‘ite shrine in Yazd. The present construction of his tomb dates from a later period. It is possible that this building was erected to commemorate him later, but for unclear reason his body not buried within the structure.

All of this suggests that the monument was constructed as a mausoleum for a holy man. It is likely, owing to the lack of the name of the tenant of the tomb in its existing inscriptions, the name of the tenant was originally written on the exterior of the monument. The three door ways and the height of the interior, which creates an imposing space attest to its other pious purposes such as a Ziyāratgāh (place of pilgrimage). From the architectural point of view, placing the three doorways suggest the impact of the tomb of Sāmānid at Bukhara and also the *chāhār tāq* construction type.

## Material

Baked brick 27 x 27 x 4 cm. and 25 x 25 x 5 cm. on the shaft laid in plaster mortar and 22 x 22 x 4 cm. for the brick on the floor. Baked brick 23 x 23 x 4 cm. in the foundation.

## Dating

According to the inscription band, the building was built in the 429/1038.

## Discussion

After the tomb of Sāmānid, this building is the second dated surviving Iranian domed from the medieval period. In general, they are similar but some exclusive characterises such as painted stucco decoration, the style of the inscriptions, the presence of a *mihrāb*, the height of the interior and the different style of the squinches make it distinct as a new type of mausoleum.

Davāzdah Imām is perhaps above all important from the architectural point of view. Its exterior articulation shows a new type of decoration, which emerged from the integration of the structural and the decorative elements with each other. This kind of articulation can be seen on other contemporary building like Gunbad-i Jabalaya at Kirman. This monument at Yazd illustrates a critical stage in the evolution of trilobed squinch, which continued in the Saljuq period, like the northern dome (Taj al-Mulk) in the Friday Mosque at Isfahān.

In contrast to the earlier tomb towers, this monument also lays stress on the inside to an extent that earlier monuments did not. The Davāzdah-i Imām is the first documented funerary structure with its original *mihrāb* in present-day Iran. It is a framed *mihrāb* and two short engaged columns are placed on the two sides of its bay.

As with the earlier *mihrāb* in the Friday mosque at Naʿīn, the arched bay of the *mihrāb* is placed within another pointed arch.

The Davāzdah Imām can also be noted as a landmark in the interior decoration applied to burial structures. In comparison with earlier monuments, it shows the extensive application of colour and of painted stucco. Its decoration in plaster also indicates something of the development of the Samarra II style in the first half of the 5<sup>th</sup>/11<sup>th</sup> century at Yazd.

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<sup>1</sup> SPA VIII , p.273.

<sup>2</sup> Afshār, *Yādgarhā-yi Yazd* 2, p. 314-5., and see p.1092, pl.103/2.

<sup>3</sup> According to the local office of ICHO at Yazd the original stone in the *mihrāb* was stolen in the 1920s.

<sup>4</sup> Afshār, p.315.

<sup>5</sup> As mentioned earlier, this form is locally called *patkāna*<sup>5</sup> In Persian, *kana* means *tāqcha* (small niche) and *patkāna* is also called *taqche-bandi*.<sup>5</sup> The earliest surviving example of *patkāna* exists in the Gunbad-i Qābūs entrance.<sup>5</sup> *Patkāna* is essentially a *muqarnas* form, but it is solid throughout. The typical later *muqarnas* hangs from the ceiling, but *patkāna* is a freestanding element.<sup>5</sup> *Muqarnas* is built from the top to the bottom, but in *patkāna*, the first niche has to be in place before the next one is placed over it.<sup>5</sup> See Pīrniyā, “Gunbad”, *Athar* 20 (1370/1992), p.38-9.

<sup>6</sup> Pīrniyā, *Sabkshināsī*, p.175.

<sup>7</sup> Qūchānī, *Barrisī-ya Katībihā-yi Banāhā-yi Yazd*, pp.14-15.

<sup>8</sup> Blair, *Monumental*, p. 107.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p.111.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p.106

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

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<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.41-2.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*p.66 and p.82.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.* p.56.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.* p.93.

<sup>19</sup> Ja'far b. Mḥammad, *Tārīkh-i Yazd*, pp.106-9 and see also Aḥmad b. Ḥusayn, *Tārīkh-i Jadīd-i Yazd*, pp.150-8.

## Chihil Dukhtarān at Dāmghān

### Location

Damghan city, Simnan province.

### Description

A cylindrical domed tomb tower (Fig.22.1) is located within the Imāmzāda J'afar enclosure. This site was outside the *hiṣār* (city wall) of Damghan<sup>1</sup> and was probably situated in an old cemetery. It was developed some time later owing its location on the way from Tehran to Mashhad and now is located in the centre of Damghan. Its location adjacent to the Imāmzāda reflects Shī'ite beliefs.

The entrance is on the south-east of the tomb, behind the Imāmzāda Ja'far, the tower is unusually close to its wall (Pl.22.1). It shows the Imāmzāda mausoleum had been erected before the tomb tower and that it was smaller at that time.<sup>2</sup> The door is 1 m. wide and 1.90 m. high. It is in a recessed arched niche (Pl.22.2), which is 1.10 m. wide and 2.50 m. high.<sup>3</sup> The niche is placed in a rectangular frame and it is 1.80 m. wide and 3.70 m. high.<sup>4</sup> Over this frame, there is an inscription band between some

decorative bands on the shaft beneath the corbelled cornice. In contrast to Pīr-i ‘Alamdār, the building has a semi-conical roof with a high stilt. This feature is more similar to the dome of Lājīm and Risgit. The tomb floor is at the same of the ground level. Inside, the tomb is simple and there is a small grave without any gravestone.

The building is built of baked brick and vertically impressed joints are noteworthy on the shaft. The interior diameter of the tomb is 5.45 m. and the exterior diameter is 7.80 m.; it is 14.80 m. high.<sup>5</sup> Hence, the ratio of the width to the height is approximately 1:2.

### **Decoration**

As with other contemporary tomb towers, the main decoration is placed below the cornice, at the top of the shaft (Pl.22.3). Hence, however the decorated surface is increased and its length is approximately one third of the shaft. This decoration comprises three decorative bands and an inscription. They encircle the tomb below the corbelled cornice. Two identical broad bands sandwich the inscription band. These bands have swastika shapes that flank a double saltier cross with four triangles around it. Over it is placed a small decorative band comprising of three tiers square shape in relief against the plaster. The cornice consists of two decorative bands. The lower is a serrated brick band of two tiers and the upper is a network of lozenges.

The lower decorations that on the entrance frame of the doorway is simpler than that above (Pl.22.4). As with the tomb of Sāmānid at Bukhara two circular brick columns with a flat square capital of brick flank the door. The surface of the columns is decorated with a series of outset square shape each divided from the next by slit. The diameter of each column is 40 cm. and each is 1.95 m. high. The plaster arch over the niche rests on the flat brick capital. The tympanum over the door is concave and

its plaster surface bears a multiple-stepped design. An inscription band frames the niche arch. A decorative inset panel comprising a network of the cruciform motifs with central slot is placed over the tympanum. An outset plaster arch, its profile regularly subdivided so that it mimics bricks separates the upper panel from the over the doorway arch. A narrow plaster moulding frames this topmost panel. A stylised stucco motif consisting of a flower crowned with pelmette-type leaves once placed between the apex of the outset arch and the upper panel with its plaster frame.<sup>6</sup> This form is perhaps inspired by Sasanian stucco patterns and with some changing and additions were recreated. In comparison to the Pīr-i ‘Alamdār tomb, the entrance decoration here is simpler, but the two circular columns, with foliated inscription and the decorative plaster motif all reveal a rather different style of decoration.

### Inscription

(A) a wide band in plaited Kufic with interlaced stems around the shaft; (B) an interlaced Kufic text over the door and framing the tympanum.

#### Text:<sup>7</sup>

(A)

بسمله امر ببنا ء هذه القبه الامير الجليل ابو شجاع اسفار بگى پير اصفهان رضى الله  
 عنه و غفر ذنو به مستعداً لنو مه تربيه له ولاو لاده و غفر الله لهم و الفه بنبينا محمد صلى  
 عليه فى سنه ست و اربعين و اربعما ئه.

(B)

بسم الله الامير الجليل ابو شجاع اسفار بگى پير اصفهان الملك الله.

**Translation:**<sup>8</sup>

(A) *Bismallāh*. The exalted amīr Abū Shuja‘ Asfār Bigī (?) Pīr (?) of Isfahan, may God be pleased with him and [forgive] his sins, ordered the construction of this cupola (*qubba*), preparing for his sleep a tomb for himself and his sons, may God forgive them and join him to our Prophet Muḥammad, may God bless Him, in the year four hundred and forty six [12 April 1054-1 April 1055].

(B) In the name of God. The exalted amīr Abū Shuja‘ Asfār Bigī (?) Pīr (?) of Isfahan. Dominion belongs to God.

The first inscription is executed in cut bricks in relief. It is a foundation inscription and states the patron’s name and the date of the building’s construction. The patron of the building was a Daylamite commander named Asfār b. Kurdwayha. Since the late 4<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> century, he had been a companion of the Zīyārid Manuchihr in the war between the Buwahids and the Zīyārids. He ordered the building of this family tomb when he was the lieutenant of Qutulmush at Dāmghān in 466/1055.<sup>9</sup> The letters of the main inscription are more elongated and the knots more repeated so that the decoration of the upper zone forms a complete balance to the letters proper in the lower one.<sup>10</sup>

The second band is a foliated Kufic inscription in plaster. It repeats the patron’s name with a pious phrase at the end. This phrase was mentioned before on

the Pīr-i ‘Alamdār in simple Kufic script above the door, but here it is repeated again in more elaborate script. This band is skilfully executed in the limited space available shows a degree of technical progress that it follows a curved rather than the hitherto normal horizontal format. It is the first example of a curved inscription band inside an arch. Both these scripts on Chihil Dukhtarān, shows the evolution of Kufic script in the thirty years since the erection of the nearby Pīr-i ‘Alamdār.<sup>11</sup>

As at Lājīm, the tomb is called *qubba*. This term generally refers to the domed shape of the building.

### **Material**

Baked brick 24 x 24 x 5 cm. on the shaft.

### **Dating**

According to the inscription the monument was built in 446/1054-55.

### **Discussion**

The specific features of the two tomb towers at Damghan, such as decorative patterns of brick, and notable inscription of cut brick below the cornice, elaborated entrance with engaged columns, the location inside the city, and the presence of graves inside the tomb shows an indigenous style of architecture, which was developed later in the star shape form of the tomb tower at Mihmāndūst (490/1096).

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<sup>1</sup> Adle, “Contribution”, *Le Monde Iranien et L’Islam I* (1971), pp. 69-96.

<sup>2</sup> The earliest tombstone was discovered by Adle in this mausoleum can be dated 287-289/900-1. See Adle, “Recherche archéologique”, *Comptes rendus des séances de l’Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-lettres* (1984), pp. 271-99.

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<sup>3</sup> Adle and Melikian-Chirvani , “ Monuments”, *SI I* (1972), p.238.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* pl. XXIII.

<sup>7</sup> Blair, *Monumental*, p.123.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> Adle and Melikian-Chirvani, pp.282-83.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> Blair, p.125.

## Gunbad-i ‘Alī at Abarkū

### Location

Abarkū city, Yazd Province.

### Description

An octagonal domed tomb tower known as Gunbad-i ‘Alī, is situated on the top of a rocky hill, on the east-side of the city, dominating the road to the old Abarkū city (Pl.23.1).

The tomb is placed on a stone octagonal base, which has an average height of 1.87 m. The entrance door is on the east side. It is 1.20 m. wide and 2.25 m. high. The door is placed in an arched niche, which is 2 m. wide (Pl.23.2). Above the door at the height of 3.40 m. is a band of inscription between two decorative bands. There is a four-pointed arch with a high stilt over the niche. All this is within an outset rectangular frame. It is 2.67 m. wide and about 6 m. high. The entrance combination is very similar to the blind recessed niches on the exterior walls of the Davāzdah Imām

at Yazd. At the side of the door there was a pair of decorative elements in the form of a stylized leaf. This shape is visible as a decorative element on the court wall of the Friday mosque at Fahraj. Only one of them survives, on the recessed corner of the entrance at capital level (Pl.23.3). The exterior diameter of the tomb is 13.04 m. and according to the placard by the tomb, it is about 22 m. high. The thickness of the tomb wall is 2.04 m.

Inside the tomb is simple and there is no trace of plaster on the wall. Four steps lead down to the crypt floor, which is located in front of the door. It is 3.70 m. long and 2.52 m. wide and 1.45 m. high. Neither on the tomb floor nor in the crypt is there a trace of the grave or gravestone. The remains of a *mihrāb* are opposite the door, on the left corner. This is of plaster in relief and is set against the rubble wall. It is 1.23 m. wide and 2.17 m. high. Its placing shows it was added later, because the *mihrāb* was usually placed in the middle of the wall exactly opposite the door. Besides, its orientation is correct, while the other *mihrābs* of the contemporary buildings in the area like Masjid-i Bīrūn,<sup>1</sup> the Friday mosque of Abarkū, the old Friday mosque of Mihrābād<sup>2</sup> and Pīr-i Ḥamza Sabzpušh were incorrectly oriented.

There are eight blind inset arches; each is placed within a rectangular frame, below the transition zone (Pl.23.4). Their arches are in trilobe form. It is possible they were covered with plaster at some time. Over them, eight simple, hemispherical, round-backed squinches are placed at the corners, beneath the dome. This form of squinch was usual in this area and is visible in the remains of ‘Alāqibandī mosque,<sup>3</sup> at Fahraj. Like to the exterior decoration band, the blind arches have a decorative role and also support the dome. Four small square windows are placed at the bottom of dome.

The building was built entirely of rubble masonry in different sizes and shapes. The use of stone in this area is very unusual and the extraordinary thickness of the shaft wall suggests that the builder aimed to build a durable monument, or it was probably designed for a double-shell dome at first. In contrast to other contemporary octagonal tomb towers (as those of Samīrān and Kharaqān), there are no buttresses at the corners of the exterior wall. The mortar of the building is a combination of plaster and sand. The dome is hemispherical with a high stilt. It was built of stone and there is a cover of baked brick on it. According to Godard's<sup>4</sup> and Pope's<sup>5</sup> photographs, there was a small layer of brick on the dome, but it is not clear that it was originally covered entirely with brick. It is more likely that it was covered with baked brick in its original form because this has always been the best material for protecting the roof in that climate and is also easy to repair. The exterior wall is plain and a band of inscription below the corbelled cornice is placed on the top of the shaft, beneath the dome.

### **Decoration**

In comparison to the contemporary tomb towers, this building has little in the way of decoration. Its main decoration, except for the inscriptions, is the corbelled cornice below the dome (Pl.23.5). This contains three tiers of arched niches of *muqarnas* shape set in relief around the tomb. The niches are made of stone and were executed in a very delicate and skilful way, which shows its originality. As earlier mentioned this type of projecting one above the other is called *patkāna* in Persian and is essentially a *muqarnas* form, but solid throughout it. It is usually found in the transition zone of the domes in central Iran. This shape can be seen in the Davāzdah Imām and the Friday mosque in Isfahan. This decoration continued to be popular in

the following centuries and is found in more complex guise in the Gunbad-i Dīya'īya at Yazd. This cornice is some four times larger than the inscription band and completely separates the dome from the shaft. Such stress on the exterior decoration shows the significance of the exterior expressiveness of the tomb as a commemorative building.

### **Inscription**

Two inscription bands in simple Kufic are on the tomb; encircling the tomb below the cornice (A) and placed over the doorway. Both of them are executed in cut brick and in relief (B).

**Text:**<sup>6</sup>

(A)

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم هذا التربه الامير الاجل السيد السعيد الماضى عميد الدين شمس  
الدوله ابى على هزازسب بن سيف الدوله ابى الحسن نصر بن الفيروزان نور الله قبر هما  
و غفر لهما مما امر ببناؤه ابنه الفيروزان فى سنه ثمان و اربعين مائه حسينا الله.

(B)

ولولدتها السيده الجليله ناز بنت دثمنزار رحمه الله عليها.

**Translation:**

(A) In the name of God, the merciful, the compassion. This is the tomb (*turbat*) of the exalted amir, the fortunate, *sayyid*, departed lord, Amid al-Dīn Shams al-Dawala b. ‘Alī Hazārasb b. Sayf al-Dawla Abu’l-Ḥasan Naṣr b. al-Ḥasan b. al-Fīrūzān, may God illuminate their two graves and pardon them both. His son Fīrūzān ordered it built it in the year four hundred and forty-eight [21 March 1056-9 March 1057]. May God bless us.

(B) And for his mother, the illustrious *sayyida* (lady) Nāz bint Dushmanzār, may God have mercy on them both.

The upper inscription encircles the tomb between two fairly narrow herringbone brick bands. It states that the building is the tomb of the deceased Amīr al-Dīn Shams al-Dawla, and that it was built by his son Firuzan in 448/1056-7. The deceased can be identified as the Fīrūzān amir, a local commander.<sup>7</sup> The Fīrūzān family was a Persian tribe who controlled Ishkawar in western Ṭabaristān in the

4<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>8</sup> The deceased's father, 'Alī Hazarasb was a commander in the service of the Buwayhids in Fars at that time.<sup>9</sup> The Hazarasb family was related to Būyids, because Saīf al-Dawla Abū'l-Ḥasan Naṣr, was Fakhr al-Dawla's uncle.<sup>10</sup>

The band over the door (Pl.23.6) gives the name of the deceased's wife. It was not clear and according to Godard's drawing though not his text one possible reading was Naz bent Kashmir. But 'Abdullāh Qūchānī read it as Nāz bint Dushmanzār. She could be the sister of Abū Ja'far Dushmanzār, the first Kākūyid amīr. He was the uncle of Majd al-Dawla, the Daylamite amīr.<sup>11</sup>

The inscription over the doorway was installed after the death of the deceased's wife. The upper band already invokes blessing on two people: the deceased's father and his grandfather. In fact the dual adjective refers to them. In addition, according to Qūchānī, the upper band mentions his son (*ibna*) and not their son (*ibnahumā*). It claims that the patron built the tomb for his father and not his parents. Furthermore, this band begins with "and" as a conjunctive word, which joins this band to the upper inscription. Several floral and foliated motifs in plaster are visible above the letters at the end of this epigraphic band. It is possible that such decorations were placed over the other letters too and also that the letters were coated with plaster. Like the upper band, this inscription is placed between two small herringbone brick bands, which are inlaid into the stone. Thus, they indicate that it might have been added later but not very long after the construction of the building.

In comparison to the Pīr-i 'Alamdār tomb at Dāmghān, which is the closest analogous case, the letters on the upper band are entirely angular, lacking curves, knots or elaboration. The base line is flat without bumps. But on the second band over the doorway, considering the use of stucco, the letters probably had rounded corners and were more elaborated.<sup>12</sup>

## Material

Rubble masonry with mortar which is a combination of sand and plaster.

## Dating

According to the inscription the tomb was built in 448/1056-7.

## Discussion

The deceased's family was related to other dynasties in northern Iran at that time. The concept of erection of the tomb tower refers to northern. Its site on a rocky hill and also the existence of a crypt inside the rock reflects a memory of the pre-Islamic burial tradition. The patron erected the monument for his parents as a pious action. The monument is material and also its form shows that it was probably modelled on another tomb tower in northern Iran or areas adjacent to it; stone was not an indigenous material. It is more likely that it was modelled on the Samīrān tomb towers or the other tomb towers at Ray. Hence, one can claim that while it is not the first octagonal tomb tower, it is the first dated one in Iran.

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<sup>1</sup> For this building see Shookohy, *Studies*, p. 22-41.

<sup>2</sup> According to an unpublished research about this monument by the present write.

<sup>3</sup> For this mosque see Zipoli and Alfieri, "Moschea Ğāmi ", *SI* (1977) pl. I, b. and see Afshār, *Yādġārġhā-yi Yazd* III, p.1300

<sup>4</sup> Godard, *Ael* I, p.50.

<sup>5</sup> *SPA* VIII, p.335.

<sup>6</sup> Qūchānī, *Barrisy-i Katībihāy-i Banāhāy-i Yazd*, p.24.

<sup>7</sup> Blair, *Monumental*, p.126

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p.121.

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<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p.122.

<sup>10</sup> Quchānī, p.18.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> Blair, p. 127.

## Caravansarai at Muḥammadābād

### Location

Qumrūd area, 20 km. to the north-east of Qum city, Qum province.

### Description

This is a large caravansarai in the Qumrūd (literally means the river of Qum) area, which is locally known as Qal'a-yi Sangī. This building comprises of two courtyards, and is about 120 m. long and 90 m. wide.<sup>1</sup> A courtyard that is about 62 x 61 m. is in the centre of the building and a *riwāq* (arcade), which is 2.41 m wide, and four *īwāns* surround it (Fig.24.1). Each bay of this *riwāq* comprises a fairly high blank pointed arch, with a further low open arch within it.<sup>2</sup> The higher arch is built in stone, but the shorter one is in baked brick (Pl.24.2). This brick measures 26 x 26 x 5 cm. and 27 x 27 x 5 cm.

A series of rooms (*hujra*) of rectangular plan, on average 4 m. wide and 4.30 m. deep, are in the back of this *riwāq*. The door of each room is on average 1.30 m. wide and opens directly to the *riwāq*, but on the east side of the courtyard, except for

two narrow rooms on each side of the entrance, which open directly into the corridor behind the *riwāq*, they are thus cut off from the easy circulation provided by the corridor which runs almost continuously around the courtyard, being broken only by the west *īwān* (Pl.24.3). An *īwān* is placed on the south-west and north-east side of the courtyard, in the back of the *riwāq* (Fig.24.2). The intercolumniation of the piers of the *riwāq* is on average 2.80 m. The partition walls of each room are not bonded to the enclosing wall of the caravansarai and structurally, they are adjacent to it.

This caravansarai is a fortified enclosure and has round towers (bastions) at each corner. In addition, a further tower is placed in the middle of each side. A large covered oblong space with three doorways is to the west north-west. It seems that it served as a stable, but its location suggests that this space was for storage. The huge size of courtyard is perhaps due to the number of animals and goods accommodated here.

The entrance of the caravansarai is on the east south-east side of the courtyard (Pl.24.4). This entrance is 4.30 m. wide and consists of a corridor that extends along the south-east *īwān* and projects well beyond the monument; two rooms flank it. Each room has a pointed-arched doorway and the remains of brickwork are to be seen over them. The corridor is built in two storeys. The upper floor has largely vanished, but some parts remain standing (Pl.24.5). The wall of the entrance corridor, which extends to the outside is not bonded to the original main body of the caravansarai and was probably added later in the Qajar period. Steps are to be seen in forming an outer staircase in the room just inside the building, immediately beside the entrance to the south-west and these provide access to the upper storey of the entrance. This staircase is also of a much later date.

The western corner of the building is of cruciform plan, and a small square courtyard occupies the centre of it. A further similar form, but in larger size and domed, is at the north-eastern corner of the building. The north-west corner of structure, unlike its counterpart, has two stories (Pl.24.6). Its form is reminiscent of the Zindān-i Hārūn and the isolated building in the middle of the Ribāṭ-i Karīm. The squinches of the dome survive and the outer appearance of this structure can be seen from outside the caravansarai. The style of construction of the upper floor clearly shows that it was added later. These corners probably served as private residential spaces in this caravansarai.

The roof of the caravansarai as a whole has largely vanished, but the remains of it show that it was a barrel vault in baked brick. In contrast to all the other rooms encircling the courtyard, two identical square rooms, each measuring 8.30 x 8.30 m. and placed slightly east of central axis of the building to the north-east and south-west, are covered by domical vaults. The squinches and the squinch backs of these rooms are in baked brick, but were roofed by masonry (Pl.24.7).

A further courtyard, measuring about 87 x 31.50 m., is placed in front of the caravansarai. This area has three axial doorways and its walls are built of rubble masonry. The north-east and south-west doorways are original; they are identical, and each is 4.58 m. deep. A semi-circular niche, which is 1.10 m. wide and 33 cm. deep, is to be seen in the middle of each side of entrance. The style of construction and the use of rubble masonry show that this extra courtyard and the two doorways were constructed at the same time as the main building; however, the eastern doorway is later. This courtyard shows the busy traffic on this route at that time. The water well of the caravansarai is placed inside this eastern courtyard.

### **Decoration**

The only surviving decoration is the remains of brickwork in herringbone pattern in the tympanum of the doorways in each side of the entrance of the building; this perhaps dates from the Qajar period.

### **Inscription**

Two unpublished photographs taken by the ICHO in 1364/1986-7, show a single Kufic inscription band in plaster which was once to be seen in a room beside the eastern *īwān* of the building (Pl.24.8). This band was already badly damaged at that time and is virtually illegible. According to ‘Abdullah Qūchānī’s reading this band repeats the word *li-Malik* that written back to front.<sup>3</sup>

### **Material**

Rubble masonry laid in plaster mortar. Baked brick 26 x 26 x 5-6 cm. and 27 x 27 x 5 cm.

### **Dating**

According to an archaeological study by the ICHO, Qumrūd is an ancient area. This study claims that 93 monuments and ancient sites are to be found in this area; they date from the prehistoric to the Qajar period.<sup>4</sup> This study also notes that this area had a considerable population (probably due to the existence of a river nearby) in the early Islamic centuries.<sup>5</sup>

The remains of an old building, which is locally known as Qal‘a-yi Gilī, is located about 40 m. to the north-west of caravansarai at Muḥammadābād.<sup>6</sup> An excavation was carried out by the ICHO in this building in 1366/1987. In the course of this excavation, a Sasanian coin and many sherds attributed to the Saljuq period were found.<sup>7</sup>

It is worth remembering that the caravansarai at Muḥammadābād is located on an ancient route from Isfahan (and Qum) to Rayy (and Varāmīn), which was once an important road, especially in the Būyid period. This building is about 3 km to the south of Kāj village. Iṣṭakhrī, in his *Masālik va Mamālik* (4<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> century) mentions the name of Kāj on the road of Qum (Rayy) to Isfahan. He says “... from Kāj to Qum is one stage”.<sup>8</sup>

According to *Tasā‘im al-Ashār*, a historical text (725/1324), this building was built by order Abū Naṣr Aḥmad Mukhtas al- Muluk Kashī, *vazir* of Sulṭān Sanjar in the first half of the 6<sup>th</sup>/12<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>9</sup>

The survival of Daīr-i Gachīn (possibly from the early Islamic period period)<sup>10</sup> and of Ribāṭ-i Karīm (the 4<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> century)<sup>11</sup>, suggests the existence of other caravansarais on this route. Ḥasan b. Qumī, in his *Tārīkh-i Qum* (378/988-99) says that some buildings were constructed by the order of Ardishīr, a Sasanian empire in the Qumrūd area.<sup>12</sup>

Four *īwāns*, barrel vaults, rubble masonry, a fortified enclosure, a projecting entrance and a *riwāq* around the courtyard are the main characteristics of this building. The closest parallel is the Ribāṭ-i Anūshīrvān at Āhuvān, on the road from Simnan to Damghan. This building has been attributed to Anūshīrvān b. Manūchihr, Abū Kālījār, a Ziyārid ruler (420-41/ 1029-49).<sup>13</sup>

Altogether, then, a date in the first half of the 5<sup>th</sup>/11<sup>th</sup> century for this caravansarai at Muḥammadābād seems defensible.

## Discussion

The information on pre-Saljuq caravansarais in Iran is limited. Several buildings have been attributed to this period; Daīr-i Gachīn, Caravansarai Sangī at Ribāṭ-i Karīm and Ribāṭ-i Anūshirwān at Āhūvān.

In the course of recent study and restoration by the ICHO (1382-83/2003-2004) at the caravansarai of Ribāṭ-i Karīm, several kilns in baked brick, and also sherds were found inside each room around the courtyard.<sup>14</sup> Similar kilns of smaller size and further sherds were also found inside the isolated building (*kūshk*) in the courtyard. According to the report of this restoration these sherds can be attributed to the Būyid and Saljuq period. According to this report a carbon 14 test estimates that the baked bricks of these kilns date from about 900-1000 years ago. The report claims that this building was originally constructed as an industrial work-place, however it is uncertain.

Iṣṭakhrī, in his *Masālik va Mamālik* (346/957), says that Ribāṭ-i Hūrān (or Kurān), which still survive in a ruined state, is built of rubble masonry and plaster, this was a standard building procedure at this time.<sup>15</sup> Muqqadasī, in his *Aḥsan al-Taḳāṣīm* (375/985), also mentions two caravansarais, known as Ribāṭ-i Kurān and Ribāṭ-i Āb Shuturān, to the Ṭabas road.<sup>16</sup> He says that Ribāṭ-i Āb Shuturān is a large caravansarai and that (here again) it is built of rubble masonry and plaster.<sup>17</sup> The remains of these two buildings<sup>18</sup> and the others that have been mentioned earlier show that a fortified enclosing wall with several towers on each side, barrel vaults, rubble masonry laid in plaster mortar, with limited use of baked brick, and two semi-circular towers on both

sides of the entrance of the building are the main characteristics of this type of building in this period. In the cases of Muḥammadābād and Āhuvān, the appearance of a *riwāq* around the courtyard is an innovation intended to create a private space between rooms and courtyard. This style of construction continued in the following centuries and was a prologue for the appearance of a kind of veranda (actually an *īwān*) in front of each room.

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<sup>1</sup> For a brief description of this building see Kleiss, *Karawanenbauten*, pp.69-70 and figs. 112,113.

<sup>2</sup> The same arrangement is to be found at Ribāṭ-i Anūshīrvān at Ahūvān. See Herzfeld, “Damascus”, *AI* X (1943), fig. 43.

<sup>3</sup> The closest parallel was found by the ICHO in the recent excavation at Shādyākh area in Nishapur, in 1383 /2003.

<sup>4</sup> Kabulī, *Barisīhā-yi Bāstānshināsī*, pp.130-31.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p.132.

<sup>6</sup> Kleiss, p.71, fig. 114.

<sup>7</sup> The report of this excavation is not published yet.

<sup>8</sup> Iṣṭakhrī, *Al- Masalik wa 'l- Mamālik* ,p.186.

<sup>9</sup> Naṣar al- Dīn Munshī Kirmanī, *Tasā'm al-Ashār*, p.68.

<sup>10</sup> For this monument see Shokoohy, “Sasanian Caravanserai”, *BSOAS* XLVI, pt. 3 (1983), pp 445-61. Shookohy says that this building was originally built in the Sasanaian period, but it seems that the *cāravānsarāi* dates from early Islamic times.

<sup>11</sup> For this building see Siroux, *Caravasérails*, fig. 14.

<sup>12</sup> Ḥasan b. Qumī, *Tārīkh-i Qum*, p.70.

<sup>13</sup> Herzfeld, pp.25-26.

<sup>14</sup> The report of this operation has not been published yet.

<sup>15</sup> Iṣṭakhrī, p.190.

<sup>16</sup> Muqqadasī, *Aḥsan al-Taqāsīm*, p. 433.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p.435.

<sup>18</sup> The remains of these two caravansarais were visited by the present writer in December 2004.



## Pīr-i Ḥamza Sabzpūsh

### **Location**

Abarkū city, Yazd province.

### **Description**

A small domed square building is situated near the Friday mosque of Abarkū. The doorway of the building, which is 94 cm. wide and 2.19 m. high, is on the north-east side (Pl.25.1). Two small exterior rooms flank the doorway; these are private tombs and were built in 1340s/1960s. This doorway is placed within an interior reveal. It seems that the present doorway was added later, possibly after the construction of the new alley in front of the monument (c.1340s/c.1960s). In the form of a niche a further doorway, which is now blocked, is set diagonally the present doorway on the west side. This doorway is 1.06 m. wide and 2.11 m. high and has a pointed arch. According to local people it is the original doorway of the monument.

The exterior of the building (Pl.25.2) is plain and is covered with a rough coat of *kāhgil* (a mixture of mud and small straw). Once the visitor enters through the doorway three steps lead down to the inside of the structure. The floor of the building is 65 cm. lower than the present ground level. Each side of the interior is on average 6.42 m. long and each wall is about 1.33 m. thick. Each side of the interior has been divided into two recessed parts by a brick reveal. Considering the unusual thickness of the wall, it is likely that these reveals have only decorative role. A niche with a segmental arch is within each of these divisions and is 2.60 m. wide. A further pointed arch niche that is 2.30 m. wide is placed within it. This pattern is known in the Saljuq period and is to be seen beneath the dome chamber of the Friday mosques at Sūjās and Qirva.

There is a remarkable *mḥirāb* on the south interior side of the building. It is 2.68 m. wide and 3.18 m. high, and is enclosed within an arched niche. The dado of the building is 1.07 m. high and the remains of carved plaster can be seen on it. This decoration once ran around the inside the structure but it was interrupted by the *miḥrāb*. This is a sure sign that the carved stucco dado predates the *miḥrāb*, though the date of the dado remains to be established. There is a Qur'ānic band in painting on plaster beneath the dome (see below), which runs around the inside of the building; most of this is now illegible and badly damaged.

The dome of the monument is fairly low, and was clumsily reconstructed in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Fig.25.1).<sup>1</sup> A small window about 50 x 50 cm. is set beneath the dome on each side of the building.

The building is built of mud bricks, which measure 32 x 32 x 8 cm. and 33 x 33 x 8 cm. This size of mud brick is to be found in the Friday mosque at Fahraj.

Two anonymous tombs are placed inside the building. One of these two tombs is raised and large. The title *pīr* (literally old man) is used to designate a Sūfī's spiritual teacher. According to local people, 'Azīz b. al-Nasafī,<sup>2</sup> a Šūfī thinker, who died at Abarkū in the late years of the 7<sup>th</sup>/13<sup>th</sup> century, is buried in this building; however, there is no evidence to support this event.

### **Decoration**

As already mentioned, the main decorative element inside the monument is an outstanding *mihrāb*,<sup>3</sup> which measures 3.20 x 2.70 m. It consists of floral ornament, arabesque patterns and inscriptions, all in carved plaster. All the inscription bands feature Qur'ānic texts, which are inscribed in both Kufic and *naskhi* scripts. To the top right of the remains of stucco within the tympanum over the *mihrāb* is the name of builder as Muḥammad b. 'Alī al-Faraj Irāqī. On the opposite side is the date of *mihrāb*, both in *naskhi* in a floral relief motif. According to Godard<sup>4</sup> and Afshār<sup>5</sup> the last word of this inscription is 500, but the exact date of the *mihrāb* is not clear, since a part of inscription was vanished. Godard has recorded the month of it as Ramaḍān,<sup>6</sup> but Afshār has read it as Muharram.<sup>7</sup>

There is a panel of curvilinear plaster in relief filling the lower part of the tympanum above the *mihrāb*; the upper part has been vanished. It is laterally symmetrical and contains a large central scroll. Godard says that this panel is similar to others in Pīr-i Bakrān, the Friday mosque at Varāmīn and the Masjid-i Ḥaydariya at Qazvīn.<sup>8</sup>

The *mihrāb* diverts about 47° from the *qibla* direction. The *mihrāb* of the Masjid-i Bīrūn at Abarkū is oriented about 18° and the Ilkhand *mihrāb* of the Friday mosque of Abarkū is oriented about 47° to the south of the correct *qibla* direction. It

suggests that the incorrect orientation of the *mihrāb* was a tradition in this area. However, in the case of Pīr-i Ḥamza Sabzpūsh such diversion is noticeable. Considering to the original doorway on the north-west, it seems that the builder aimed to place the *mihrāb* to the closest wall to the *qibla* direction, where it affects every visitor.

The *mihrāb* also not placed in the centre of the south side of the monument and is installed within a niche. It implies that this niche was built as a frame for *mihrāb* at the same time and other niches were decorated with segmental arch. Furthermore, as already mentioned the interior dado of the building is interrupted by the *mihrāb*. Moreover, the *mihrāb* is out of proportion with the interior of the mausoleum. In addition, the style of decoration of the *mihrāb* is different from that of the ornamentation of the dado. These evidences indicate that the *mihrāb* was added to an earlier building in the 5<sup>th</sup>/11<sup>th</sup> century. It is obvious that this building was already the mausoleum of a holy or honourable man that such a significant *mihrāb* was built for it.

The remains of decoration in carved stucco can be seen on the dado of the building (Pl.25.3). The dado is about 1.07 m. high and contains three elements; first a Qur'ānic inscription band in *naskhi*, which once was about 20 cm. long, second a small decorative band and finally a fragmentary panel of carved stucco in a hexagonal (or octagonal) pattern. This panel shows floral patterns inside the hexagon, which is similar to the decoration of the flanking spindle shape. This decorative panel resembles the fragmentary stucco in the dado of the Davāzdah Imām at Yazd<sup>10</sup> but shows a later style, which has not found a parallel yet.

There are two faded medallions in the east interior side of the building within the niches. These medallions are painted in blue; small red circles adjoin them. A

floral pattern in blue fills the inside of each medallion. This pattern is similar to the floral one in decorative panel of the dado. All of this shows that the building was thoroughly ornamented. This kind of ornament is to be found in the other monuments in this area such as the mausoleum of Ḥasan b. Kaykhusraw at Abarkū<sup>11</sup> and Gunbad-i Sulṭāniya,<sup>12</sup> both dated in the Ilkhanid period. To the left bottom of the *miḥrāb* is to be seen a double reverse broken arch (Pl.25.4).<sup>13</sup> This kind of arch is to be found in the Masjid-i Jāmi‘of Baṣṭām.<sup>14</sup> It seems that decorative arch was added at the same time as redecoration of the interior of Pīr-i Ḥamza-i Sabz-pūsh in the Ilkhanid period.

### Inscriptions

A one-line Qur’ānic text (Pl.25.5) in the interior is set between above the niches and base of the dome at a height of 5 m., in the wall (*Qur’ān* 63:1, 2 and the first part of 3).<sup>15</sup> This band is a painted inscription and 58 cm. high. It is an ornamented Kufic whose shafts each display a central interlace motif. In comparison with the inscription band around the base of dome in Davāzdah Imām, this band is less elaborate. This style of inscription can be seen in the other monuments at Abarkū and Yazd in the 8<sup>th</sup>/14<sup>th</sup> century such as the tomb of al- Ḥasan b. Kaykhusraw<sup>16</sup> at Abarkū and the Gunbad-i Ḍiya’iya at Yazd, and can be attributed to the Ilkhanid period.

Several Qur’ānic inscription bands are to be seen on the *miḥrāb*;<sup>17</sup> (A) a single band (*Qur’ān* 76: 21-25) in *naskhi* is on the outer band, (B) one line elaborated Kufic band (*Qur’ān* 2:182) of large size runs on the inner band of the *miḥrāb*, (c) another band (*Qur’ān* 41:30) is to be seen on the outer arch of *miḥrāb*. On top of right (1) and left (2) of outer most band of the *miḥrāb* are placed two pious Kufic inscription bands.

## Material

Mud brick 33 x 33 x 8 cm. and 32 x 32 x 8 cm. laid in mud mortar.

## Dating

Ibn K̄hurdādhbih, *al- Masalik wa'l- Mamālik* (3<sup>rd</sup>/9<sup>th</sup> century)<sup>18</sup> mentions the name of Abarkū (Abarqū). Abarkū is said by Ibn Ḥawqal (4<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> century) to have been a fortified town with great markets and Muqaddasī (4<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup>) refers to its fine mosque.<sup>19</sup> As mentioned earlier, the decorative *miḥrāb* was added to the original structure in the 6<sup>th</sup>/12<sup>th</sup> century. The building was probably redecorated after burying the second corpse, which is the raised and large tomb, in the Ilkhanid period.

Owing to the other surviving monuments in this city, such as the Friday mosque at Abarkū, the Masjid-i Bīrūn and the Gunbad-i ‘Alī, construction of such mausoleum in the early Islamic centuries is plausible. Moreover, Pīr-i Ḥamza-i Sabzpūsh is located in the core of the old city, near the Friday mosque, which would help to support an early date in association with other evidences. In addition the size of its mud brick is noticeable as a trademark of pre-Saljuq times. Finally, the decoration of the dado, which precedes the *miḥrāb* of 510/1116, has close parallels with that of Davāzdah Imām. All combines to suggest a date for this building in the first half of the 5<sup>th</sup>/11<sup>th</sup> century.

## Discussion

In comparison to the Davāzdah Imām mausoleum, this domed square building as a provincial monument, is less elaborated. The remains of interior decoration in the

three different periods show the importance of the inside of a mausoleum rather than its outside. Adding a *mihrāb* as the main decorative elements to a mausoleum in the 6<sup>th</sup>/12<sup>th</sup> century shows that this was standard practice in this area. The similarity of the carved stucco dado decoration to the Davāzdah Imām shows the continuous influence of the Samarra style, however, in simple form in Yazd area.

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<sup>1</sup> Godard, “Abarkūh”, *Ael* I, p.54.

<sup>2</sup> Ridgeon, ‘*Azīz Nasaḩī*’, pp.8-9.

<sup>3</sup> *SPA* VIII, p.391.

<sup>4</sup> Godard, p. 56.

<sup>5</sup> Afshār, *Yādgarhā-yi Yazd* I, p.344.

<sup>6</sup> Godard, p.56.

<sup>7</sup> Afshār, p.344.

<sup>8</sup> Godard, p.54.

<sup>9</sup> Shokoohy, *Studies*, pp.26-27..

<sup>10</sup> This fragmentary were appeared in the course of restoration in 1379/2001 carried out on the dado of the mausoleum.

<sup>11</sup> Godard, p.64, Fig.44.

<sup>12</sup> *SPA* III, pl. 384.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*, p.391

<sup>14</sup> Wilber, *Architecture* , pl.38.

<sup>15</sup> This inscription band was read by Abdullāh Qūchānī at my personal request.

<sup>16</sup> *SPA* III, pl. 384.

<sup>17</sup> Sajādī, *Sair-i Tahavvūl*, p. 13.

<sup>18</sup> Ibn Khurdādhbih, *al- Masalik wa’l- Mamālik*, p.36 and p. 39.

<sup>19</sup> Le Strange, *Lands*, p. 284.

## Mausoleum at Sangbast

### Location

Sangbast area, 35 km. to the south of Mashhad, Khurasan Province.

### Description

A square domed structure is located in the Sangbast area (Pl.26.1). This building is commonly known as Arslān Jādhīb's mausoleum and locally is attributed to Ayāz.

There is an arched doorway on each side of the building; three of these are now blocked. On the east side of the building, two projecting walls flank the doorway (Pl.26.2). The photo<sup>1</sup> that was taken by Schroeder in the 1930s before the restoration shows the exterior of the monument in a ruined state. It is entirely possible that these walls are the remains of a *pīshṭāq* (portal) on the east side of the building and that the main doorway was this one. The practice of placing a *pīshṭāq* in front of a domed square can be seen in the 'Arab 'Aṭā mausoleum (367/977).<sup>2</sup> Two projecting courses

of the east and south corner of the drum of the dome can be seen in Schroder's photograph, and possibly they show the relationship of the portal roof with the drum. The present doorway is situated on the east side of the building within a rectangular brick frame. A comparison with the other doorways of the building, now blocked, and the photo by Schroeder shows that this frame was added in the course of restoration about thirty years ago. The exterior of the building is plain and there is no decoration. As at Davāzdah Imām at Yazd, the dome of Sangabst is placed on a fairly high octagonal drum and creates a remarkable triple elevation (Fig.26.1). Such an elevation emphasises that this is an imposing building, of a kind appropriate for a commemorative structure. A wide arched window is placed at the centre of the four sides of the drum above the doorways.

The photo by Schroeder shows the remains of a brick course around the exterior of dome. Schroder says that this brick course is a clumsy way of diminishing the thickness of the dome, which acts by weight as a hoop against its bursting.<sup>3</sup> From the structural point of view, this is an inaccurate device, since the thickness of the springing of the dome itself acts by weight and offers resistance against loads. In addition, this brick course is laid separate from the dome and has insufficient consolidation. It seems that this brick course is the remains of the outer shell of the dome, which later vanished. Iranian domes are usually built without any centring for their construction; the thickness of the brick courses decreases gradually from the bottom to the top. This method of construction structurally decreases the weight of the dome and makes its erection easier. This style creates a stepped surface, which another shell usually covers. This, then, is an early version of the double-shell dome, in which the outer shell lies on part of the interior shell.<sup>4</sup> The outer shell is separated from the inner shell by a very thin space, which broadens out near the top.

The thickness of the wall of the building is about 2.7 m. In comparison with the Davāzdah Imām where the maximum thickness of the wall is about 1.5 m., this extraordinary thickness of the wall may possibly be a response to the weight of the double shell of the dome.

In the interior, the dome is placed on a zone of pointed arches (Pl.26.3). This zone contains four blind arched squiches in the corners with a further four open pointed arches between them. As with the Tomb of Sāmānids, it is possible that a fretwork of brick was placed within each open arch. The squinch in Sangbast is filled up and plastered over to create a concave form bearing brick decoration.

The interior of the building has each side measuring 10.47 m. A stepped geometrical pattern in plaster serves as the revetment of the interior wall beneath the painted inscription band. This inscription is placed directly under the transition zone. Over the transition zone, another inscription band in cut brick runs beneath the dome. A herringbone brick pattern covers the interior of the dome. A round opening (*nūrgīr*) is placed at the top of the dome. The large windows show that the builder aimed to provide ample lighting for the interior. There is an anonymous grave without a tombstone beside the present doorway inside the building.

The building is entirely made of baked brick. In comparison to other perhaps contemporary monuments such as Davāzdah Imām and later buildings in this area such as Ribāṭ-i Sharaf (baked brick measuring 26 x 26 x 4 cm. and 27x 27 x 5 cm.), the size of the standard brick here is notably large: 30 x 30 x 6.5-7 cm. and 31x31x7-7.5 cm. A similar brick size can be found at the tomb of Sāmānids.<sup>5</sup>

A brick minaret stands next to the domed building (Pl.26.4). The minaret similar to the mausoleum is built of baked bricks,<sup>6</sup> measuring 31 x 31 x 6-7 cm., and its exterior is ornamented with doubled stretchers and finger impressed joints. This

use of doubled stretchers and impressed joints can be seen in Ribāṭ-i Sharaf. However, in the case of Ribāṭ-i Sharaf they were executed skilfully. The size of the bricks of the minaret is the same as that of the bricks of the mausoleum. In comparison with other perhaps-contemporary minarets such as the minaret adjacent to the Tārī Khāna mosque (418/1027) and the minaret in the Friday mosque at Simnan (422-5/1031-5) the size of the normal brick here is large.<sup>7</sup>

There are the remains of a wall, which runs from the north-west side to the south-west side, against the minaret. Schroeder claims that there appears to have been a small porch around the doorway and a panel decorated with plaster over it.<sup>8</sup> On the south-east side of the wall is a half-round niche. Schroeder believes that this wall originally stood against the minaret to a height of about 9 m., and was one side of an entrance. A fragment of an engaged brick column (Pl.26.5), which is 80 cm. long and has a diameter of about 30 cm., was found in the course of restoration in the 1970s, and this detail suggests that there was an entrance. On either side of the ruined concave niche-whose brickwork has no doubled stretchers and can therefore be regarded as later than the minaret, are three courses of double stretchers resting on a single exposed course laid in common bond. These fragments are hard to interpret. They are certainly not part of an otherwise vanished square base for the minaret because elsewhere its cylinder reaches right to ground level. It is possible that they were part of a construction contemporary with the minaret, though there is not enough evidence to suggest what it was. But the engaged column was part of it. Unfortunately, the mass of brickwork above the fragments of doubled stretchers uses a later brick work technique. This makes it impossible to be certain about how this area originally looked. This minaret like the other minarets of the first half of the 5<sup>th</sup>/11<sup>th</sup> century, such as the minarets of Simnan and Tārī Khāna is a cylindrical one without a

square base. Brick laid doubled stretchers entirely cover all around the exterior of the minaret. In addition, the entrance of the minaret is placed at ground level facing the mausoleum. All of this suggest hat this minaret was a free-standing one. It is possible that an entrance was formerly attached to it and that it vanished at a later period. The remains of a brick wall in doubled stretchers, reaching to a height of 1m., which is placed along the east side, and which runs between the minaret and the domed structure (Pl.26.6) shows their relationship and suggests that they were contemporary or nearly so. Sykes says that until the previous generation two of these columns (minarets) had survived.<sup>9</sup> A photograph from the Gulistān palace museume (c.1311/1890) shows that the surviving minaret was then the only one to remain ((Pl.26.7)).<sup>10</sup>

### **Decoration**

A multi-stepped pattern of herringbone type in cut plaster that mimics brick covers the inside walls of the building (Pl.26.8). It starts above the dado and reaches up to the inscription band. A faded blue colour can be seen on its surface. This shows it that the plaster decoration was painted. In comparison with cut brick decoration, this style is an inexpensive one and allows a wide surface area in a monument to be covered in a short time. There is a plaster frame in the extrados of the arch of the doorways. According to a photograph that was taken by Diez, there was a painted Kufic inscription in the extrados of a doorway and his text makes it clear that this inscription was continuous around the building just above dado level.<sup>11</sup> A smaller Kufic inscription can be seen at the top of this band. All this indicates that the interior of the monument was once very thoroughly ornamented.

Three geometrical patterns painted on plaster are visible in the dado on the north interior side of the building, which recall that of Nishapur.<sup>12</sup> The first one depicts a star and cross design; two of the five elements of the cross are blue and three are white, and there is a circle inside each star, all outlined in green. This pattern is also found above the doorway of the Pīr-i ‘Alamdār. The second pattern is a network of alternating octagons and squares placed beside each other but overlaid by a polygonal network in blue (Pl.26.9). Like the first pattern, this one uses blue on a white plaster ground, and there is a circle within each octagon. The third pattern is a network of octagons and four-pointed stars in white or blue; the latter have a circle placed within them (Pl.26.10). Blue and green coloured plaster is also applied inside the Davāzdah Imām.

A remarkable decoration in a herringbone pattern in cut brick covers the inside of the dome. To judge by surviving examples, this is the first brick decoration that is applied to the inner dome in the history of Iranian architecture.

The squinch has a deep stilt and its concave tympanum is covered with an outset fret pattern in projecting brick. Its enclosing arches have false brickwork painted in white on yellow. A similar pattern is found on the wide decoration band beneath the inscription band in the exterior of the Pīr-i ‘Alamdār. This kind of ornament is repeated, even to the form of the arch, on the façade of Ribāṭ-i Malik.<sup>13</sup> This pattern can also be seen in Ribāṭ-i Sharaf. As with other contemporary monuments<sup>14</sup> the finger-impressed joint is used as an ornamental feature. It is applied in two tiers in the intrados of the arch over each squinch and can be seen around the rectangular frames in transition zone.

In contrast with the Sāmānid mausoleum and the Davāzdah Imām, the exterior of the building is plain and there is no applied any decoration or articulation. It is

likely that its exterior adornment, as in the ‘Arab ‘Atā monument, was placed in the *pīshṭāq* of the building and later vanished.

The interior decoration in the Sangbast monument, then, is executed in two different styles; cut and painted plaster in the walls and brick patterns on the walls and beneath the dome. The styles of plaster and brick decoration are complementary and in harmony with each other. This suggests that the builder aimed to create a unified space, which is appropriate for a religious structure.

### **Inscription**

There are two Qur’ānic bands inside the building:

(A) a one-line band around the base of the dome in simple Kufic .

(B) a one-line painted Kufic band beneath the transition zone.

### **Text:**<sup>15</sup>

(A) *Qur’ān* 21: 34-5/ Sourdél cites 35-6 and *Qur’ān* 12:101  
(part).

(B) *Qur’ ān* 10: 24-5/ Sourdél cites 25-6 (part).

### **Translation:**

In the name of God. We granted not to any man  
before you permanent life (here): if then you

should die, would they live permanently? Every soul should have a taste of death; and we test you by evil and by good by way of trial to us must you return. Dominion belongs to God, Thou art my Protector in this world and Hereafter. Take Thou my soul as one submitting to Thy will (as a Muslim), and unite me the righteous.

In the name of God. The likeness of the present is as the rain which we send down from the skies: by its mingling arises the produce of the earth-which provides food for men and animals:( it grows) until the earth is clad with its golden ornaments and is decked out ( in beauty): the people to whom it belongs think they have all powers of disposal over it: there reaches it our command by night or by day, and we make like a harvest clean-mown, as if it had not flourished only the day before thus do We explain the Sings in detail for those who reflect. But God does call to the Home of peace.

The interior Qur'ānic texts (Pl.26.11) suggest that the building is a funerary structure. As at the Davāzdah Imām one of the Qur'ānic texts is placed at the base of the dome. In the case of Sangbast, the inscriptions are executed in two different materials. One is in cut brick which is the material of the decorative pattern beneath the dome. This shows that it was built contemporaneously with the rest of the building. The inscription band around the base of dome has the cut brick set in relief against the brick masonry. In comparison to contemporary cut brick inscriptions such as Pīr-i 'Alamdār and Chihil Dukhtarān, it shows an unadorned Kufic script. Another inscription band is placed on the minaret. It too is a Qur'ānic text (*Qur'ān* 41:33) and the name of the builder (*bannā'*) of the minaret is written at the end of the band<sup>16</sup>. Sourdél and Sourdél-Thomine say that the style of this inscription is similar to the inscription at the base of the dome.<sup>17</sup>

The band beneath the transition zone is a faded painted Kufic inscription (Pl.26.12). This band contains white letters, which are placed on a dark blue ground.<sup>18</sup> The letters are tall and rigid and rendered powerfully.<sup>19</sup> The ground of this band is ornamented with a foliated pattern. Foliate scrolls in blue are attached to a broadly undulating stem. Narrow borders carry a double addorsed S scroll in black on blue. The interstices are filled with exquisitely rendered blossoms and leaves so that the entire band achieves a uniform texture.<sup>20</sup> In comparison to the other painted inscriptions in Pīr-i 'Alamdār and in the Davāzdah Imām it shows quite another style and ornament. Sourdél and Sourdél-Thomine say that this style of inscription and its ornament is similar to other inscriptions such as some at Ribāṭ-i Sharaf, and claim that this inscription is from the early part of 6<sup>th</sup>/12<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>21</sup> However, they say that it is possible that the monument was built earlier than this date.<sup>22</sup>

There are some similarities such as doubled stretchers, finger-impressed joints and epigraphic style between the mausoleum and minaret at Sangbast and Ribāṭ-i Sharaf. The inscription of the minaret mentions the name of builder as Aḥmad al-Sarakhsī. It is possible that this characteristics belonged to a local school of architecture centered at Sarakhs area in the north of Khurasan, which can be seen at an early stage at Sangbast and that developed later in Ribāṭ-i Sharaf.

### **Material**

Baked brick 30 x 30 x 6.5-7 cm. and 31 x 31 x 7-7.5 cm. on the wall laid in plaster mortar.

### **Dating**

The date of construction of the building is not very clear. Diez and Herzfeld, on the basis of Utbi's *Tārīkh-i Yamīnī* have both identified the builder as Arslān Jādhib,<sup>23</sup> the *vālī* (governor) of Tūs at the time of Sulṭān Maḥmūd of Ghazna (r.387/997-419/1028). The *Tārīkh-i Yamīnī* says that Arslān Jādhib built a *ribāṭ* at Sangbast and that his Mausoleum is placed there. Arslān Jādhib was the ruler of Tūs, but the date of his death is not clear. Further, it is not obvious why his mausoleum is placed in Sangbast, which is far from Tūs. The name of Sangbast has not been mentioned in any sources as an important town; however, it was situated on the route from Nishapur to Marv and to Ghazna at that time. In addition, the identity of the patron of the building is unclear. Each earlier mausoleum that belongs to a ruler or a prince usually has a foundation inscription. If it was indeed the tomb of Arslān Jādhib,

it is possible that there was another inscription with his name in the building-perhaps on the *pīshṭāq*- and that it later vanished. It is also possible that this building was built as his mausoleum but that he himself was not buried in it.

Sykes says that the patron of the monument was Ayāz (d.449/1048),<sup>24</sup> the lover of Sulṭān Maḥmūd of Ghazna.<sup>25</sup> According to Sykes, Ayāz founded this tomb and a *madrasa* for a saint named Mīrzā ‘Abd al-Qāsim, his religious leader. There is scarcely any information about Ayāz life, but locally it is said that he was a native of Sangbast. It is possible that the name of patron was originally written in the interior frieze of the building and that the Qur’ānic text replaced it after the patron lost power. Sykes suggest that the minaret, which is placed near the building, is the remains of the *madrasa*.<sup>26</sup>

All of this supports the theory that the building dates to the time of Sulṭān Maḥmūd. In addition, there are some similarities, such as the large brick size, the use of finger-impressed joints and painted plaster decoration to the other monuments such as Pīr-i ‘Alamdār, Rādkān West, Lajīm and Davāzdah Imām in the first half of the 5<sup>th</sup>/11<sup>th</sup> century. One can therefore suggest that this building was built no later than 450/1058-59.

## **Discussion**

The mausoleum at Sangbast is an echo of the type illustrated by the tomb of the Sāmānids. The four arched openings on each side, the heavy dome and triple elevation are its main characteristics.

This building is also should be considered alongside other monuments in Khurasan area and Transoxiana in the medieval Islamic centuries. The *pīshṭāq* and its

plain exterior show the influence of the ‘Arab ‘Aṭā mausoleum at Tim. However, in the case of Sangbast the dome clearly shows itself beyond the *pīshṭāq*. Two mausoleums; Abū’l faḍl and Abū Sa‘īd at Sarakhs in Turkmenistan,<sup>27</sup> both are attributed to the first quarter of the 5<sup>th</sup>/11<sup>th</sup> century like the building at Sangbast, have a *pīshṭāq* in front of the entrance and a doubled-shell dome. The act of placing a *pīshṭāq* and doubled-shell dome shows a new standard in this area, which was developed later in the Hārūnīya mausoleum at Tūs and the Bābā Luqmān mausoleum at Sarakhs.

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<sup>1</sup> SPA VIII, p.260.

<sup>2</sup> Hillenbrand, *Islamic Architecture*, p.532, fig. 5.79.

<sup>3</sup> Schroeder, “A Note” *Bulletin of the American Institute for Persian Art and Archaeology* IV, No.3 (1936), p.137.

<sup>4</sup> Pīrnīya, Gunbad, *Athar* 20 (1370/1992), pp.63-4.

<sup>5</sup> Boulatov, *Mavzoley*, p.63.

<sup>6</sup> Measuring 30/31x30/31x6/7 cm.

<sup>7</sup> The size of brick of the minaret at Damghan measuring 22x22x4/4.5 cm. and the size of the brick of the minaret at Simnan measuring 23x23x4/4.5 cm.

<sup>8</sup> Schroeder, p.139.

<sup>9</sup> Sykes, “Fifth Journey”, *The Geographical Journal* XXVII(1906), p.577.

<sup>10</sup> Gulistān Palace Museum, Archive of Historical Photographs, No. 240, p.25.

<sup>11</sup> Diez, *Churasanische Baudenkmaler*, Taf.17/3. No trace of the inscription has survived. There was a further small Kufic inscription enclosing it, as one can see from Diez’s Taf. 17/3. Another and larger painted Kufic inscription, of which some portions survive, runs continuously around the building below the transition zone.

<sup>12</sup> Wilkinson, *Nishapur*, p.163, fig.1.196.

<sup>13</sup> SPA III, p.1275.

<sup>14</sup> Such as tomb towers at Rādkān West, Lājīm and Pīr-i ‘Alamdār.

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<sup>15</sup> Sourdel and Sourdel-Thomine, “A Propos”, *Iran* XVII (1979), pp.111-13.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p.111.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.112-13

<sup>18</sup> *SPA* III, p.1277.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> .Sourdel and Sourdel-Thomine, pp. 112-13.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.* p. 114.

<sup>23</sup> Diez, pp.54-5 and Schroeder, p.136.

<sup>24</sup> For Ayāz see Maitni, “Ayaūz, *EIr* III, pp.133-34.

<sup>25</sup> Sykes. p.577.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> Pribytkova, *Pamyatniki Arkhitektury*, pp.6-21.

## Tomb tower at Risgit

### Location

Near Risgit village in the Dūdānga area, in the east of Savādkūh, in the province of Mazandaran.

### Description

The cylindrical tomb tower (Fig.27.1) stands on the edge of a rocky hillside and like Rādkān West is facing the valley below where the old road ran (Pl.27.1).

The building consists of a plain cylindrical shaft, a baked brick conico-spherical dome, and, between these two, an elaborate projecting cornice and an inscription band below it.

There is an annexed octagonal base around the tomb. The arched doorway opens south to the valley below and is 1.2 m. wide and 2.50 m. high. The interior diameter of tower is 4.57 m. and the thickness of the wall is 1.30 m.<sup>1</sup>

The circular interior wall is blank and there is no tombstone inside the building. The tomb is constructed of brick laid in common bond and like the earlier

tomb towers, vertical impressed joints are visible on the exterior wall. About 1m. below the inscription band runs a row of plugged scaffold holes. Most of the brick cover of the roof is damaged and needs to restoration.

### **Decoration**

At the top of tomb shaft under the cornice is some remarkable decoration (Pl.27.2). In fact it is the finest part of the monument. It contains a double tier of brick corbelled arches, of different sizes, which project below the dome to support it. At the top is a decorative band of cut plaster palmettes of plaster, which placed within the corbel arches (Pl.27.3). Below the palmettes, on the south side of the building, run a decorative plaster chain moulding and below it an arabesque cut plaster band and below that the second chain moulding. Finally, beneath the inscription, a small decorative brick bands, akin to those at Lājīm but simpler, encircle the tomb. The palmette and arabesque patterns remind of Sasanian patterns. The recent restoration on this building (1384/2005-06) revealed that the tomb was originally decorated with baked brick in different patterns (Fig.27.2) and the present decoration of plaster were added some time later.<sup>2</sup>

The decorative style and epigraphy of the tomb have similarities to the tombs at Rādkān West and Lājīm, but this is more elaborate and indicates some developments. In previous tombs the decoration and inscription band are completely separate and the height of inscription band is greater than that of the decorated surface. At Risgit, however, the surface of the decoration band is increased at the expense of that of the inscription and, with the integration of the plaster decorative elements with two outset brick bands, it seems more dramatic.

## Inscription

(A) A floriated Kufic inscription which has white letters in relief against a blue ground, encircles the tomb below the cornice, beginning over the doorway. (B) An oblong stucco plaque is over the doorway. As Godard has reported,<sup>3</sup> it contains four lines; the first three and a half are Arabic rendered in floriated Kufic and the last half is in Pahlavī. It has been badly damaged and the date of the building is not clear.

### Text:

(A) Bismillāh. *Qur'ān* 21: 36. Bismalla. *Qur'ān* 112.

(B)

لا اله الا الله مخلصا محمد رسول الله صادقا هذا القبه لهر مزديار ابن مسدرا  
ولحنو سيار ابن مسدرا ... اربعه...

### Translation:

(A): *Bismillāh*. Every soul shall taste of death; and we try you with evil and good for testing, then unto Us you shall be returned. *Bismillāh*. Say: “He is God, One, God, the Everlasting Refuge, who has not begotten and has not been begotten, and equal to Him is not any one”.<sup>4</sup>

(B): There is no god but Allāh, sincerely; Muḥammad (s) is God’s Prophet, truly. This is the tomb for Hurmuzdyār, son of M-s-d-r-a and for H-b-u-syar, son of M-s-d-r-a ... four ...<sup>5</sup>

Siting the plaque so that it projects beyond the inset doorway frame is a notable feature (Pl.27.4). The inscription usually sits within a frame or band, as at Rādkān West. This shows that the place of the plaque had not been pre-ordained and suggests that it was installed over the doorway later, possibly contemporary with the re-decoration of the building. This detail also suggests that the tomb was not built during the lifetime of deceased.

The first Qur'ānic text is a common one for mausolea and confirms the function of the building as a tomb<sup>6</sup>. In contrast to earlier tomb towers, it is the sole example with a Qur'ānic text under the roof. The foundation text is over the door.

### **Material**

Baked brick 21 x 21 x 5 cm. and 23 x 23 x 4 cm. on the shaft.

### **Dating**

As mentioned above, the date of the building is not clear. Godard interpreted the end of the text over the door as the date. He thought he could distinguish the month Shawwal and the final word “hundred”. He assumed that the word in between had to be four, as on architectural grounds neither three nor five would be possible. Therefore he suggested the exact date of 400/1010 for the building.<sup>7</sup>

On the other hand, Bivar compared the decoration and epigraphic style of the tomb with some later monuments like Ribāṭ-i Sharaf and claimed that the building must have been constructed a century later and suggested a date not far from 500/1106<sup>8</sup>. But this is not sufficiently strong evidence to prove it was built in the sixth century. In addition, as earlier mentioned the stucco decoration was added later.

The elaborate decoration of the tomb suggests that the building was erected after the tomb towers at Rādkān West and Lājīm. In addition, there are many close

similarities of this monument and other tomb towers in this area, such as the site of the tomb in an isolated spot at the edge of a valley, a similar shape and structure, fairly similar decoration and the use of Pahlavī, this time at the end of the inscription.

With allowing a logical time span for the continuation of this style, it can be attributed to a date not later than 450/1058-9.

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<sup>1</sup> Godard, *AeI* I, 119.

<sup>2</sup> The report of this restoration has not been published.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 120.

<sup>4</sup> Blair, *Monumental*, p. 208.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p.209.

<sup>8</sup> Bivar, "Tomb", *The Vth International Congress of Art and Archaeology* 1968, vol.II (1972), p.23.

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